

# Organizing Intentions

C.A. Childress, Psy.D. (2010)

## Growth-Oriented Intentional Sets

Expands the complexity and organization of the child's self-experience by bringing the organizing influence of the "eyes-of-the-other" to the child's internal self-experience.

Communicates fundamental messages of self-value and self-worth.

### The Intent to Understand

- **Simple curiosity** about the inner experience of the child.
- Communicates "I care more about who you are, than what you do;" and "you are of value."
- The parent's interest in the child's experience is free from judgment and any intent to change or alter the child's experience.
- A sense of wonderment drives a simple curiosity, "what's it like to be you?"
- The parent's emotional tone is gently positive; soft smiles, and simple curiosity.
- NO critiques/advice (i.e., judgment); NO suggestions/solutions (i.e., intent to change).
  - Critiques, advice, suggestions, solutions, judgment, and an intent to alter or change the child should be communicated in an entirely separate communication set. The intent to understand needs to retain its clarity of focus, and should simply reflect a simple curiosity about understanding the child's experience from the child's point of view. Simple, positive, curiosity about the inner experience of the child.
- Promotes dialogue and communication. De-escalates anger and frustration.

### The Intent to Be-With

- **Simple interest** in the activity and "being" of the child.
- Strong communication of "you are of value" and "you are loved."
- Watching the child with a gently-positive emotional tone, **describing** activity, attending to; being-with.
- Providing a "gift-of-time" to the child. A parental attitude of allowing; being together without pressure.
- A gentle sense of delight in the child drives a simple interest in the child.
- Mild critiques/advice/suggestions/solutions can be tolerated if let go of quickly.
  - Moderate to strong critiques, advice, suggestions, solutions, judgment, and intents to alter or change the child should be reserved for entirely separate relationship periods. The intent to be-with needs to retain its gentleness of focus that allows it to reflect a genuine interest in the child's activity and the shared experience of **being together**.

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## **Pruning-Related Intentional Sets**

Builds increasing complexity and organization of self-capacity by providing structuring limitations on the child's "degrees-of-freedom," forcing the child to constrain his or her impulses within the structure of external demands.

Communicates broader context factors of environmental and social expectations.

## **The Intent to Task**

- Goal-directed; task-oriented
- Focus is on the task to be accomplished. The child's inner state and experience is secondary and is relevant only as it impacts on the achievement of the task or goal.
- Communicates "I care more about what you do, than who you are."
- Parent offers suggestions, advice, solutions, critiques.
- Restricts and limits children's communication of personal experience.
- **An intent-to-task is the primary motivational set of most adults**

## **False Intent to Understand (an Intent to Task/Intent to Alter or Change)**

- The parent begins by asking the child a question about the child's motivation, which sounds like an intent to understand (i.e., the false intent to understand)
- Once the child provides a motivation, the parent invalidates the motivation and offers advice, suggestions, solutions, or critiques (i.e., revealing the true intent to task/intent to alter or change).

## **The Intent to Alter or Change**

- Influence oriented
- Focus is on altering or changing what the child is doing.
- "Communicates "You're not acceptable as you are" and/or, "My desires and needs are more important than your desires and needs."
- Tends to be motivated by parental annoyance at the child's activity or lack of activity or by activation of parental motivational sets.

## **Moral Suasion**

- A social expectation involving "right and wrong." We treat others with respect and compassion, and we expect to be treated with respect and compassion.
  - "Consider the rights of others before your own feelings; and the feelings of others before your own rights." John Wooden
- Involves the activation of social affects of empathy, shame, and guilt within the context of socially referenced obligations.