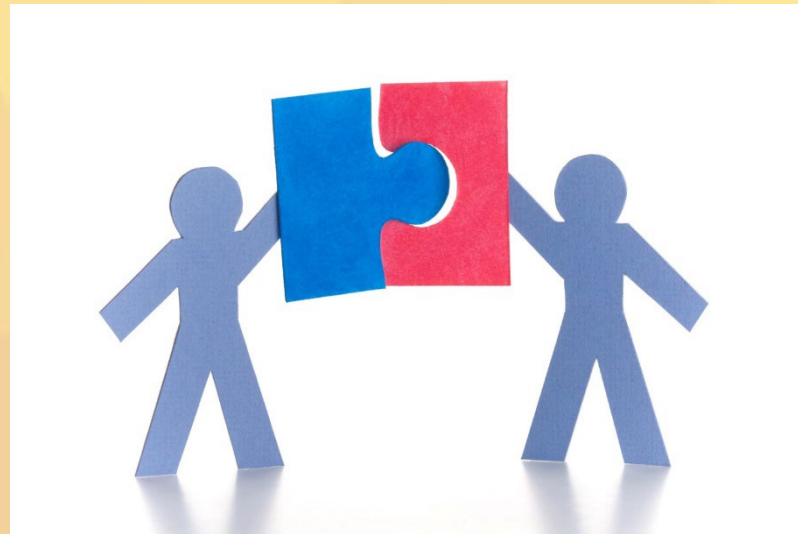




NORTHERN LIGHTS AT
COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF VERMONT

Introduction to Strengthening Families



Agenda for Tonight:

6:30-6:50 – Opening Activity

6:50-7:00– Overview of Strengthening Families

7:00-7:30 – Using a Strengths-based lens

7:30-7:40 –Break

7:40-8:00 – Five Protective Factors

8:00-8:25 – Mix & Mingle

8:25-8:30 – Reflection, Questions & Feedback





A little bit about me



Opening Activity

- Name
- Place of employment and position
- What are you hoping to learn in our training?
- What do you enjoy most about working with children and families?

Strengthening Families
is for ALL families.



Strengthening Families Framework & Protective Factors

The Strengthening Families framework is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect through building the five protective factors.

Protective factors are characteristics or strengths of individuals, families, communities or societies that act to mitigate risks and promote positive well-being and healthy development. Most often, we see them as attributes that help families to successfully navigate difficult situations.



Strengthening Families:

- ❖ Benefits ALL families
- ❖ Builds on family strengths, buffers risk, and promotes better outcomes
- ❖ Can be implemented through small but significant changes in everyday actions
- ❖ Builds on and can become a part of existing programs, strategies, systems and community opportunities
- ❖ Is grounded in research, practice and implementation knowledge
- ❖ Is engaging with family members to understand their lives, goals, strengths, and challenges and developing a relationship between family and practitioner.
- ❖ Is working with the family to set goals, strengthen capacity, and make decision
- ❖ Is providing individualized, culturally responsive, and evidence-based interventions for each family

Three Key Points:

- Our goal is to **protect families from being overwhelmed by stress in their lives**, thereby decreasing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.
- The Protective Factors are also called Promotive Factors because they **promote the best possible outcomes** for children, families and communities.
- *Strengthening Families* is not something we do to someone else or a program we work on a family. **Every individual and family already has the Protective Factors** and our job is to notice, name and explain them in our daily work.

“A strengths-based approach focuses on what is working well to support the growth of individuals and communities. It . . . is based on the assumption that people have existing competencies and resources for their own empowerment. It assumes that people are capable of solving problems and learning new skills; they are a part of the process rather than just being guided by a professional” (Centre for Child Well-Being, 2011, p. 2).



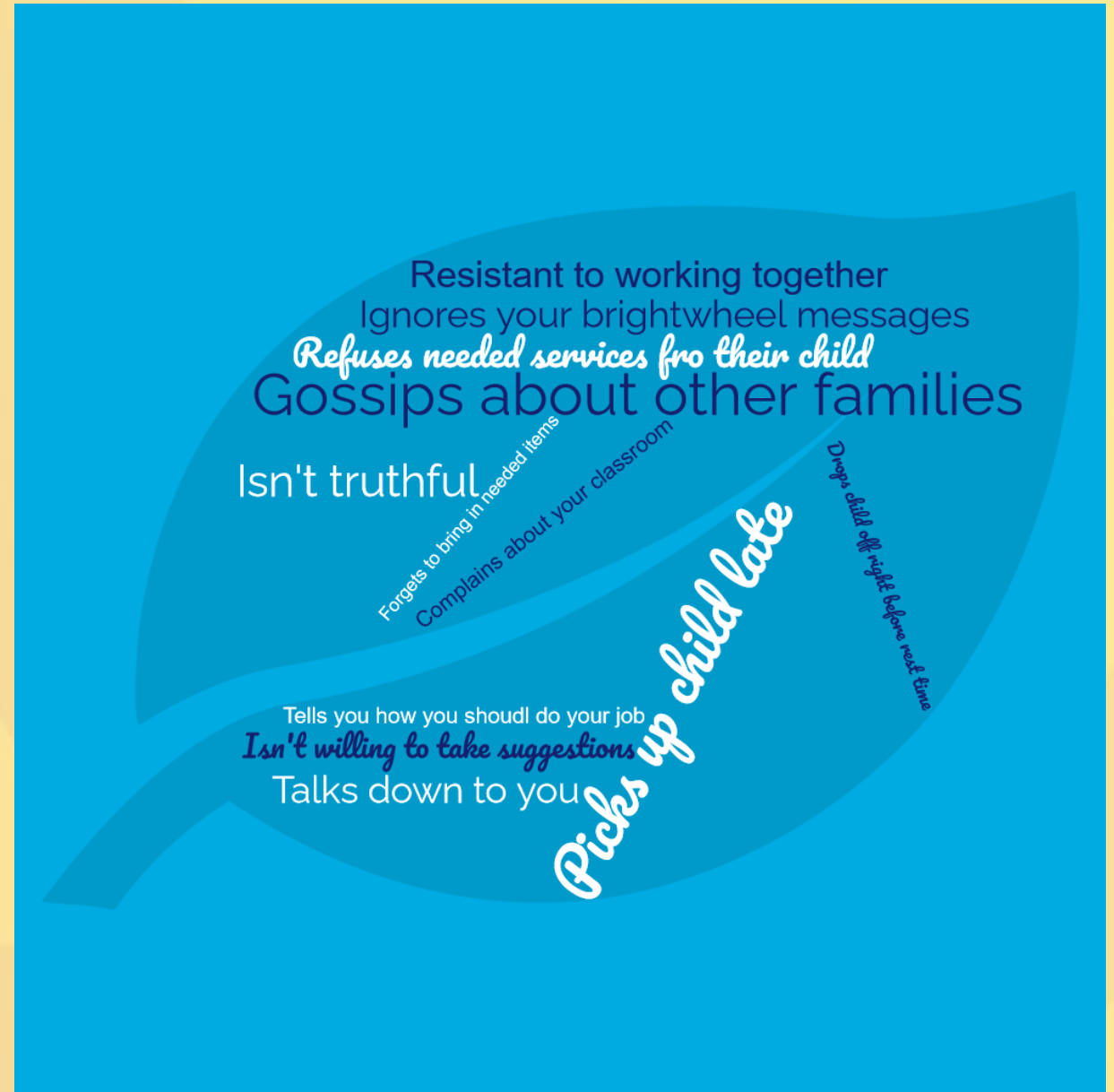
Identifying Strengths

Write in the chat one word that describes a characteristic, trait, action or descriptor of one of your own personal strengths.

Finding Strengths

Nash is on the hockey team but his fighting is out of control. He's never going to get seen by a college coach if he's always in the penalty box. He's almost flunking two classes and his tutor says he's missed appointments because he's always picking up shifts at work for someone who calls in sick. I don't like his friends -they stay up half the night playing video games on some league. Nash thinks he's better than anyone else because he's looking at fancy colleges but he's not going to be able to go anywhere if he doesn't stop spending so much on the girlfriend he's had for the last year.

Draw a word cloud of a family or individual that you find particularly challenging to engage or work with. Come up with as many challenges as comes to mind.



Parental resilience

Social connections

Knowledge of
parenting and child
development

Concrete support in
times of need

Social and emotional
competence of
children



Definitions

Parental Resilience: Managing the stressors of daily life and functioning well when faced with adversity.

Social Connection: Building trusting relationships, feeling respected and appreciated.

Concrete Support in Time of Need: Being resourceful, and able to locate and access the basic necessities of life.

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development: Having positive discipline techniques and appropriate developmental expectations.

Social and Emotional Competence: knowing social skills and how to talk about and handle feelings.

Parental Resilience

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma

What it looks like

Resilience to general life stress

- Hope, optimism, self confidence
- Problem solving skills
- Self care and willingness to ask for help
- Ability to manage negative emotions

Resilience to parenting stress

- Not allowing stress to interfere with nurturing
- Positive attitude about parenting and child



Social Connections

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support

What it looks like:

- Multiple friendships and supportive relationships with others
- Feeling respected and appreciated
- Accepting help from others, and giving help to others
- Skills for establishing and maintaining connections



Concrete Support in Times of Need

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges

What it looks like

- Seeking and receiving support when needed
- Knowing what services are available and how to access them
- Adequate financial security; basic needs being met
- Persistence
- Advocating effectively for self and child to receive necessary help

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development

What it looks like

- Nurturing parenting behavior
- Appropriate developmental expectations
- Ability to create a developmentally supportive environment for child
- Positive discipline techniques; ability to effectively manage child behavior
- Recognizing and responding to your child's specific needs

Experiences and Environments All Parents Need to Provide: Two Frameworks

Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2014b, p. 7):

- *Safety*: The extent to which a child is free from fear and secure from physical or psychological harm within their social and physical environment
- *Stability*: The degree of predictability and consistency in a child's social, emotional, and physical environment
- *Nurturing*: The extent to which a parent or caregiver is available and able to sensitively and consistently respond to and meet the needs of their child

Critical Parent Capacities for the Care and Support of Children (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010, p. 12)

- *Time and commitment* (i.e., the nature and quality of time spent with children and on their behalf)
- *Resources*—both *financial* (i.e., economic ability to purchase goods and services) and *psychological, emotional, and social* (i.e., physical and mental health and parenting style)
- *Skills and knowledge* (i.e., human capital acquired through education, training, interactions with child-related professionals, and personal experiences)

Social & Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships

What it looks like

For the parent:

- Warm and consistent responses that foster a strong and secure attachment with the child
- Encouraging and reinforcing social skills; setting limits

For the child:

- Age appropriate self-regulation
- Ability to form and maintain relationships with others
- Positive interactions with others
- Effective communication

Social and emotional competence is defined as, “the developing capacity of the child from birth through 5 years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learn—all in the context of family, community, and culture” (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, n.d., p. 6).

“Social emotional development within the first few years of life sets a precedent and prepares children to be self-confident, trusting, empathic, intellectually inquisitive, competent in using language to communicate, and capable of relating well to others” (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d., p. 1).

Factors That Promote Social and Emotional Competence in Young Children

- Parents and other adult caregivers whose social and emotional competence is well developed
- A warm, nurturing, and trusting relationship with at least one parent or other adult caregiver
- Intentional actions of parents or other adult caregivers designed to promote social and emotional competence (e.g., modeling skills; practicing skills with the child)
- Consistent, affectionate, sensitive, and responsive care and interaction from parents and other adult caregivers
- The positive and encouraging messages communicated to children—directly or indirectly—about themselves
- Regular and predictable routines
- A physically and emotionally safe environment that provides for basic physiological needs, protects children from harm, or mitigates the effects of adversity
- An interactive language-rich environment that promotes vocabulary development, talking, and reading, and encourages children to express their emotions
- An environment that encourages developmentally appropriate play and opportunities to explore and to learn by doing



Thinking about the Protective Factors in our own lives

Mix & Mingle

Who in your life is an
example of being strong in
the face of adversity?



Thinking about the Protective Factors in our own lives

Mix & Mingle

Who is your best friend and
why?



Thinking about the Protective Factors in our own lives

Mix & Mingle

Which is easier for you:
Asking for help or offering
help? Why?



Thinking about the Protective Factors in our own lives

Mix & Mingle

What is your best parenting
tip you would share with a
new parent?



Thinking about the Protective Factors in our own lives

Mix & Mingle

What makes you happy?

What makes you sad?



NDS – Intro to Strengthening Families Training

Practice Component:
Complete the practice
component in between
training sessions. We
will use this when we
meet again next week.

Practice Component

One of the guiding principles of Strengthening Families is that we can build the Protective Factors in our ourselves and others by intentionally performing “everyday actions.”

Think about what you have learned over the course of your lifetime and journal on each of the five protective factors using the questions provided reflecting on what your experiences have been.

After completing your reflecting writing piece, create a list of as many “everyday actions: you can think of for each of the protective Factors. You may use the chart provided. Bring this with you to the next class and will share and discuss our lists and consider what we might add to our “everyday actions.”

Reflection Questions:

Resilience

- What is your source of inner strength?
- Think of a time when you were challenged and you came back stronger than before.
- What is your favorite way to “take care of yourself”?
- What does it mean to be strong?
- Who in your life is an example of being strong in the face of adversity?

Social Connection

- What makes a friend a good friend?
- Think about the people who are really good for you. What do they have in common?
- Who is your best friend and why?
- If you had to move to a new city, what would you do to find new friends?
- How important is it to have healthy friendships?

Concrete Support

Questions? Feedback?

What is one thing you are taking away from the training tonight? Put your answer in the chat box.

References:

Center for the Study of Social Policy

<http://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies>

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The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching Out and Reaching Deeper, Charlyn Harper Browne, PhD, September 2014 – Center for the Study of Social Policy