

## Case Vignette

Fatima has been providing Infant Mental Health home-based services to families for almost one year. Three months ago, Fatima was assigned to a case referred by the area WIC office because they had observed a 30-month-old “wild toddler” with minimal language and no response to directions given by his very anxious-looking 22-year-old mother, Taylor. Taylor’s mother, who was described as “silent and tight-lipped” was always with them when they came to the WIC office, and was seen being rough with him and yelling at him. The referral source added, “I really would see them get services before CPS gets called on them.”

Fatima’s initial visit felt bewildering to her. She had seated herself on the floor to try to get a better sense of Jay. Taylor, silent and expressionless, sat at the edge of one of the two quite tattered upholstered armchairs. After explaining what kind of information was needed during this intake visit, and what future visits would be like, Fatima began the formal intake questions. When Fatima asked about any current stressors, Taylor’s face got a hard look and she said, “He’s got it good enough. Not like when *I* was his age!” Adding, “I had already been in foster care!”

At that moment, Jay’s grandmother came to the doorway and stood there silently, looking intently at Taylor. Then she went back to the kitchen. Jay didn’t sit at all, but wandered, silently, around and around the room, mostly looking straight ahead, but occasionally glancing quickly at Pat. He seemed unanchored and quite tense. As Fatima continued her questions, Taylor gave low-voiced responses to Fatima, and sharp commands to Jay to “settle down.” Jay did not settle down and began to kick his toys. Whenever Taylor heard the toys being kicked, she turned her head to him and said, “Didn’t I tell you to stop! If I have to call Grandma to come back you know what’ll happen!” Fatima felt so heavy watching and hearing all of this, and thought, “He’s such a cute little boy, but he sure looks scared.”

After that first meeting, it was usually just Taylor and Jay in the living room during their weekly visits, but Pat always had the sense that grandma was not too far away – and listening.

For the next two months, Fatima focused on developing a relationship with the family, observing and commenting on Jay’s development, particularly his high energy level and non-verbal communications. She offered suggestions about activities and strategies that Taylor might use to help Jay use more language, help him to settle down a bit, and hopefully, actually be fun for both of them. Taylor seemed to listen, but usually said that her son was just “too wild for all that stuff,” and then change the subject, usually to how her mother thought that Jay needed to be in school so “he can start learning how to behave.”

All the while, even as she explored ways to bring mom and toddler together, introducing activities that Taylor could hopefully get interested in, what she kept wishing was that she could talk with Taylor about how much Jay wanted his mother to be close to him, and what it would be like for them to enjoy just being together. She wished Taylor could talk with her about what made that so hard for her. Feeling pretty sure that she shouldn't go there just yet, she had to console herself by regularly pouring out her sorrow and fears for this harshly treated and confused little boy, his emotionally limited and impatient mother, and his "frankly scary" grandmother during her weekly reflective supervision sessions.

Nonetheless, at the last visit, Fatima was surprised and embarrassed when Taylor added to her usual statements about Jay's needing to be in school, saying that she didn't think that their visits were really helping. Grandma then came to the doorway from the kitchen, and stood there, her arms crossed, her fingers gripping her arms. She stared at Fatima and then said, "It seems to me that you are here to tell us how to raise this boy like we don't know what to do. We know what he needs. You act like we don't know what our boy needs. You act like he's an angel, but he's just fooling you. And you're not helping us get him to do what we tell him to do. Your way is just going to make him worse." Taylor looked from her mother to Fatima, an embarrassed look on her face. She got up quickly and said, "I'll help get the toys into your bag so you can leave."

Jay grabbed a small truck and propelled it around and around the room at a very fast pace, making very loud "vroom-vrooming" noises until Fatima was out of the door and walking down the porch steps. She heard Jay begin to cry and Grandma screaming at him, but she couldn't hear what was being said.

**HONORING DIVERSITY**

*Essential Steps Toward  
Providing Culturally Informed  
Infant Mental Health Services*



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Child Abuse and Neglect Conference  
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**Welcome – A Beginning!**

Your first assignment J

§At the sound of the bell, write  
a definition of 'diversity'

§Nothing fancy – not the  
'whole' definition

§Just a definition

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**Today we will  
consider...**

- Who am I and how did I get to be me?
- What does 'diversity wellness' look like –  
to me, to others?
- What gets in the way of diversity wellness  
– in me, in my working relationships?
- Why are the bridges to diversity wellness  
being built so high up in the mountains?
- How do we become effective bridge  
makers?

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## Charting the package of 'me'

- Who are we as individuals?
- What are the unchangeable 'facts' of me?
- How have my experiences shaped me?
- What does the 'package of me' look like?

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## Guiding Principles of Diversity Wellne

### Principle #1:

Diversity is an integral part of each one of us. It's an essential part of what makes us unique and complete – and builds a foundation for being in and understanding relationships.

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## Guiding Principles of Diversity Wellness

### Principle #2

§ Diversity is a dance where partners build respect through adaptive inquiry and positive intent creating a space for building trust and shared vulnerability.

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## Earliest lessons...

- The first lessons about differences come from the people in the baby's world.
- The cultural lens develops as the baby adapts to caregiving and social experiences.
- These earliest messages define our core beliefs about self worth.

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## Later lessons...

- Consider the impact of early lessons about diversity on adult beliefs, attitudes and behaviors
- Consider the role of diversity in:
  - life lessons that parents teach their infants/toddlers
  - the infant/toddler's developing internal working model
  - parent-infant/toddler assessment

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## Inequality, Discrimination and Intersectionality

- Inequality and Discrimination: Terms that are commonly based on single factors, such as racism, sexism, classism and ableism.
- Intersectionality: "Single factors" do not, in fact, function independently of one another, but are always interconnected and interactive.

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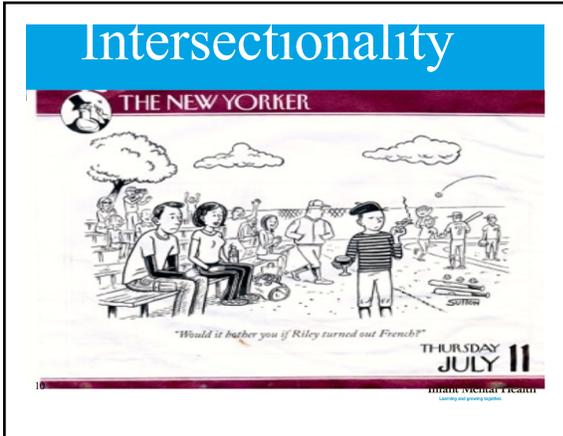
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Applying Guiding Principles of Diversity to Infant Mental Health Practice

Effective relationship based intervention requires us to:

- §Recognize
- §Acknowledge
- §Actively talk about commonalities *and* differences as we work with families.

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Guiding Principles of Diversity Wellness

Principle #3

Honoring diversity is an ongoing process of continuous self-awareness, including the examination of values, beliefs and behaviors

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### Guiding Principles of Diversity Wellness

#### Principle #4

The process of honoring diversity begins as we learn to value the experiences of others, suspend judgment, sit with tension and attention acknowledging others' behaviors as both meaningful

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### Impressions and Understandings

- A matter of balance, imbalance, rebalance
- Significance in IMH terms about being with an infant/toddler and family – in a context of diversity awareness:
  - What's it like for ME to be with this family?
  - How am I to be with this family?
  - What are my impressions vs. understandings?
  - What feels easy?
  - What feels challenging?
  - How can I be most helpful?
  - REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION

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### All is Not Always Well

- Why does my bridge feel shaky?
  - § Am I feeling self-protective?
  - § Am I stuck in an 'old script' of anger or resentment?
  - § Do I want to keep what's under the rug hidden?
- Who else is feeling any of these?

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## Sometimes it just feels too hard.

The problem with our Diversity Awareness committee is that nobody thinks like anybody else!!



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## Fatima, Jay, Taylor, Taylor's Mother

How **might** we describe the "package of self" of Jay, Taylor, Taylor's Mother?

- How do they see each other?
- What does Jay need from each of them?

What **might** be Fatima's "self" package?

- How does Fatima see Jay?
- How does her "package of self" impact her work with this family?

§ What's missing and/or not happening?

- What help might Fatima need?

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## Mountain Climbing

§ *Ouch!*

§ *Where am I?*

§ *How do I know?*

§ *What does it feel like?*

§ *How did I get here?*

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## climbing again?

- Breathe deeply
- Step out of our comfort zones
- Create the two platforms needed for a bridge-building connection
- Ask and wonder about what we don't know
- Repeat
- Trust the time needed for heart changes to grow out of any new awareness

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## I gotta talk to *somebody!*

THE NEW YORKER



"No, this is the elephant."

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THURSDAY  
FEBRUARY 5<sup>th</sup>  
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## REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION HELPS

- Look for evidence of positive expectations for success
- Notice any and all invitations to take a next step
- Look for glimmers of encouragement
- Maintain willingness to take a risk
- Hold on to hope

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### HOW DOES THE DEVELOPING BABY HELP US TO GET UP ?

Three sources of energy for development:  
 External Feedback Systems, Internal Feedback Systems, CNS MATURATION AS A FORCE, INTERVENTION SERVICES

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### THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

~~Diversity is an integral part of each and every one of us. It is an essential part of what makes us unique and complete – and builds a foundation for being in and understanding relationships~~

Diversity is a dance where partners build respect through adaptive inquiry and positive intent creating a space for building trust and shared vulnerability.

Honoring diversity is an ongoing process of continuous self-awareness, including the examination of values, beliefs and behaviors

The process of honoring diversity begins as we learn to value the experiences of others, suspend judgment, sit with confusion and attention acknowledging others' behaviors as

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### ACROSS MOUNTAIN TOPS

Essential ingredients for (shared) mountaintop bridge-building experiences:

- Guts (It takes courage!)
- Grit (It's hard work!)
- Belief (Keep calm!)
- Trust (Hang on!)

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## Associative Assumptions



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## N CLOSING: YOUR TURN!

**QUESTIONS/NEW THOUGHTS?**  
 What thoughts are occurring to you – to share now or to tuck away and reflect on at a later time or in a different setting?

**COMMENTS?**  
 What is one awareness (new, strengthened, or revised) that you're taking with you today?

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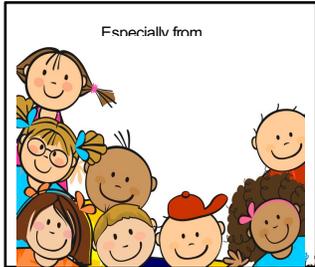
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## Thank You!

Especially from



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