The Attune Project
Using film to help workers
attune to children & their mother’s experience
after family violence

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Acknowledgement
Workshop overview

1. **Context for the Attune project**
   - Family violence sector reform
   - Themes arising in NFDVS consultation
   - The process of making the DVD

2. **Thinking creatively to reach the child after family violence**
   - Impact on children
   - Supporting the mother-child relationship
A child’s experience

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPzVUGE3dds
Time for Action: Systemic Change

Human rights issues requires law & political will for change

Impact on children included in legal definitions of family violence & child abuse
  - Family Violence Protection (Vic) Act 2008 (section 5)
  - Family Law Act (Cth)1975 (sect 4), 2011 Family Violence amendments

Time for Action: The National Council’s Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2009-2021
  - First ‘point of contact’ needs to be capable of responding to family violence
  - Build capacity to meet needs of children affected by family violence
Northern Family & Domestic Violence Service

Practice Frameworks

- Rights based – gender & culture aware
- Trauma-informed
- Strength-based / client led
- High focus on ongoing risk & safety assessment
- Including systemic advocacy for justice response

Programs

- across 7 local government areas
- provides an immediate response to women & children
- case work & site based outreach (eg courts, ELN, etc)
- secondary consultation
- Turtle mother/child therapeutic program
Activity

- At your table, please introduce yourself

Please discuss the following questions:

- Where you work
- Your primary client group
- Key frameworks that inform your work
- Why did you come to see this presentation today?
Activity: What planet/s are we from? (Hester 2011)

The three planets (Hester 2011)
Multiple clients: child, parent & parenting relationship

- Holding in mind:
  - child
  - mother/s
  - absent/present father
- AND
  - child/parent relationship(s)
Attune Consultation: Three Perspectives

- Mother/ survivors
- Practitioner Teams
- Experts & Researchers
Themes: advice to workers

- affirm the client’s capability as a mother
- recognize violence & impact eg. fear, risk & safety
- be clear about limited confidentiality
- advocate transparently
- foster agency & choice
- give emotional & practical support
- support mothers to understand children’s behaviour
- support mother to respond to her children
- positive changes do happen
Consultation: Practitioners

Film is a good medium as like to see ‘how to’

- discuss risk & safety with mothers who still live with violence at home
- sensitively to explain to mothers the impact of violence on their children
- contain mother’s disclosures about violence when a child is at an appointment
- discuss family violence with children
- discuss partners & fathers in a feminist framework
- balance competing rights child & mother
- apply theories in practice
Consultation: Aboriginal Practitioners

- VACCA Family Violence Teams
- Elizabeth Hoffman House,
- Aboriginal Women’s Services (EHH)

Themes

- Cultural considerations eg. re safety & community
- Holistic response including fathers, extended family
- Confidentiality & shame
- Choice of service key to safety
- Recognition of history & role of authorities
- Transparent practice & advocacy
Script process

Films to focus on initial engagement – to encourage child awareness in family violence risk & safety assessment

1. Role plays drafted drawing on consultation transcripts
2. Pairs of experienced practitioners, improved wording
3. Cross disciplinary team work-shopped
4. Modified for actresses style on filming day
Filming & editing process

- Role plays filmed with 1 camera
- Script read from auto-cue
- Or from paper in not being filmed
- Interviews filmed with expert & practitioner
- Client quotes audio taped

- All filmed in 4 days!
- Editing scripts developed
- Edited in around 10 days
- Reviewed by steering committee
- Re-structured into 10 minute sections
Activity Impact on children:

Taneka
‘He’s only little and wasn’t in the room at the time’

In your group identify

○ How did the worker in the role play privilege the infant’s experience?

○ What cultural issues might you consider?

○ How might a resource like this film be of use to you in your service?
Film Supporting the mother-child relationship

Tania
‘I feel like I am parenting in a fog’

In your group discuss
- Some of the ways family violence may impact on parenting
- Are there any strategies you might use to support the mother to reach the child?
Activity Supporting the mother-child relationship

Tania & Cassie

‘My friends can’t come around, we’re embarrassed.’

In your group identify

- How do you think the child experienced this meeting?
- What strategies did the worker use to balance the rights of child and mother?
Importance of mother-child relationship

‘The young’s child’s sense of self evolves in the context of relationships & enhancing the emotional quality of those relationships is the most effective vehicle for promoting the child’s healthy development’

Lieberman 2005
Concluding thoughts

“She helped me draw a parrot & helped me feel better about my daddy”
(Sally, 5 years)

- Children and their mothers remember how they are treated: this informs what they feel they may expect in future relationships.
- We model that even very violent situations can be thought about, rather than just reacted to.
- We do our best to show — through our careful thinking and action — what safety in relationships means, including showing them that help-seeking is possible.