

Enhancing visitation

Objectives

1. Strengthened relationship between foster and birth mother
2. Birth parent feels less rejected by child
3. Birth parent shows increased synchrony and delight with child

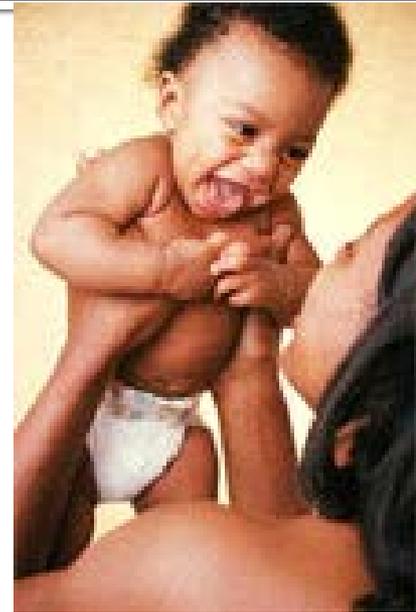


Why these are important targets

- Birth mother rejection by child
 - (show **YOU DON'T CARE** video) Insert here
 - Critical that she be able to re-interpret child's behavioral signals (not feel too rejected)

Why these are important targets

- Following the lead/synchrony:
 - When parents follow children's lead, children have better:
 - Behavioral control (Raver, 1996)
 - Attention
 - Cortisol regulation (Bernard et al., in 2013)
 - Telomere length (Asok, Bernard, et al., in press)



Order of videos

- Book (Following)
- Book (Not following)
- Testa
- What we found

Structure

- 5 sessions
- Who is there?
 - Mentor (for pre-visit interventions with birth parent)
 - Foster parent
 - Birth parent
 - Child

Structure continued

- 15 minutes prior to each visit (described in following slides)
- Visits include foster mother, birth mother, child

Objectives of session 1

1. Birth mother feels somewhat respected and supported by foster parent
2. Birth parent does not feel overly rejected by child
3. The first visit is reasonable (non-traumatic, parent doesn't pull child, etc.)

Session 1: Birth parent not feeling rejected by child

- Focus of pre-session 1 intervention
 - Description (Mary will run through)
 - Video (Mary will describe)



Session 1 continued

- Description “Child may not come directly to you because he or she has been separated. Not because foster parent has said anything to child to push away. It’s just that children depend on who they’re with. Once reunited, will come to you again.”
- Video “I want to show you a video of a child who has been with his grandmother for a week. Look at what happens when he sees his birth mother.” (Show video of child shying away.) “What did you notice?”

Session 1 continued

- “Yes, he backed away!
- You can imagine that the mother may feel really rejected by the child.
- She may also wonder if the grandmother said something negative about her, but this is just how kids often react when they haven’t seen their moms for awhile.
- But remember, once the child is living with her for a few days, he’ll be able to turn to her again.”

Session 1 continued

- So, it's important to keep in mind that your child may not turn toward you today.
- It's not that he doesn't love you – it's just been a few days (or however long – make specific).
- I've got some suggestions for you to make this easier.



Session 1: Video

- Show video of a birth mother sitting on floor in room with a bag of toys
- Foster mother some distance away with child who is wary
- Birth mother takes several toys out and offers interesting toy to child (patient, not pushy, etc.)

Session 1: Introducing following the lead

- Parents often worry about teaching their children things, or wanting to be exciting play partners.
- What we have found is that just following your child's lead is the most fun for your child
- We'll talk more about this next time, but just watch this parent and notice how she just does whatever her child does – and how much fun that is for the child

Session 2 and beyond

- More work on following the lead



Focus for Foster Mother

- Ask birth parent questions that make her expert
- For example:
 - How does he normally play at home?
 - Does he have a favorite toy to play with?
 - What makes him smile/laugh?

Focus for Foster Mother

- Start working to comment in the moment on following the lead and delight
 - E.g., “Oh my gosh, did you see him light up when you smiled at him like that?”
 - “You are so good at following his lead. They’ve been telling me how important it is, and I just saw you pick up the phone when he handed it to you. What a great example!”

Design

- First, 2 pilot foster/birth parents
- Then, small randomized clinical trial
 - Half do visitation as usual (whatever that is)
 - Half do Enhanced visitation

Measures

- Pre-intervention play (foster mother and child) coded for follow the lead and delight
- Post-intervention play (foster mother and child, and birth mother and child)
- Working alliance inventory (adapted) for birth parents
- *This is my client* for foster parents
- Parenting efficacy (birth parent self-report)
- Foster parent in the moment comments (coded from videotaped sessions)