Seeing Is Believing™ (SIB)
Using Guided Self-Observation to Promote Parental Sensitivity & Understanding

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STEEP™: An Evidence-Based Program
(The background & context for SIB)

• Guided by 37 years of longitudinal research on risk and protective factors in parenting and child development

• Proven effective in large-scale randomized controlled study

• Continuously informed by ongoing research with different populations in varied service delivery contexts

STEEP™:
Steps Toward Effective, Enjoyable Parenting

• Home visiting, beginning prenatally

• Seeing Is Believing video strategy

• Parent-infant groups, bi-weekly, led by same person

• Family nights
Principles of STEEP™ and SIB™

- Relationship-based
- Strength-focused
- Individualized
- Ecological

Original Program Evaluation: Project STEEP™

- Randomized controlled study
- 154 mothers and first-born babies (age 17 or older; no more than high-school education; low income; 92% single)
- Intervention from pregnancy through year one
- Delayed post-assessments, 19 & 24 months, 3 yrs.

Outcomes of one-year STEEP™ program:

+ Better understanding of child development
+ Greater sensitivity to child's cues and signals
+ More organized & appropriately stimulating home environment
+ Fewer depressive symptoms in mothers
+ Fewer repeat pregnancies within two years
Outcomes of one-year STEEP™ program (continued):

+ More active coping strategies
+ A buffer against the effects of life stress on parental sensitivity
+ Better outcomes associated with higher levels of participation and stronger connection with STEEP facilitator

Circle of Women
Substance-abusing mothers

Baby’s Space
(STEEP in childcare)

Toward Better Beginnings
(Short-term)

STEEP™ Program
(Selected adaptations and evaluations)

Tacoma, WA
NICU babies

Australia
Depressed, incarcerated, and teen moms

Germany
Multi-site replication

Seeing is Believing™

Let’s watch a video to begin to get the feel for this work. Please write down what you notice in this video.
Let’s consider more closely the theory and research findings that underlie the STEEP™ program and the Seeing Is Believing strategy.

Attachment Theory and Research as a Framework for STEEP™

- Secure attachment as a goal for the parent-child relationship
- Attachment theory as a lens for understanding the parent’s relational attitudes and behaviors
- Attachment theory as a framework for using our relationship with the parent in a purposeful way

Relevant Research Question 1:
How does attachment develop and how does it shape later development?
Secure Attachment

A primary source of resilience

Sensitive care → I can count on you! → confident, connected

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Distribution of Attachment Patterns

General Population
- Securely Attached: 70%
- Insecurely Attached: 30%

Among high-risk families
- Securely Attached: 55%
- Insecurely Attached: 45%

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Anxious Resistant Attachment

Increased risk for anxiety disorders

Erratic care → You're unreliable, I'm powerless → anxious, dependent

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Anxious Avoidant Attachment

*Increased risk of conduct disorders*

Andy

Unresponsive care ➔ It’s not OK to show that I need you ➔ aggressive, lacks empathy

Disorganized Attachment

*Increased risk of serious psychopathology*

Devon

Threat from caregiver ➔ Will you protect me or harm me? ➔ dissociation

Relevant Research Question 2:

What factors underlie parents’ capacity to be emotionally available, provide sensitive care, and form a secure attachment with their child?

Those factors become program goals.
Anticipating both the joys and hardships of parenting

Realistic Expectations About Becoming a Parent

Knowledge of Child Development

• Realistic behavioral expectations
• Understanding of key developmental behaviors
• Seeing through the eyes of the child

The biggest challenge lies in the space between what we know and what we do.

Insight from practice:
Social Support

- Formal resources
- Informal resources
- Skills and confidence to access those resources

Insight from practice:

Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear.

Ghosts in the nursery, Angels in the nursery.

Relationship History: Influence on Parenting

- Early relationships with parents and other caregivers shape parenting behavior
- So does how the person has come to think about that history ("remembered attachment")
Link Between Parental State of Mind and Parent-Infant Attachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)</th>
<th>Strange Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure-autonomous</td>
<td>Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>Avoidant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td>Anxious-Resistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td>Disorganized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Healthy Resolution (Secure-autonomous state of mind)

- Face the pain
- Acknowledge its ongoing influence
- Arrive at an understanding of why caregivers behaved as they did
- Identify what to repeat and what not to repeat from the past
- Muster all available resources to help you live out those choices

Looking back, moving forward: the legacy of my own journey
Now, thinking about these relevant research findings and insights from practice, let’s reconsider the video we watched earlier. (I’ll give you some background about the family.)

What new hypotheses or questions would you have now about the family in the video?

What can we do to promote strong relationships between parents and their babies?

Looking Back, Moving Forward: A Group Exercise

• Discuss messages you experienced in childhood
• Tear up those you wish you had not received
• Focus on positive messages you want to carry forward
• Practice those messages during parent-infant interaction time
Insight from practice:

Relationships change relationships.

Relationship as a vehicle for change

• Be a secure base; contradict working models
• Challenge all-or-nothing thinking
• Reflect on experience, coping and adaptation

YOU are the most important tool you have in doing this work!

Attitudes of an effective facilitator:

• I’m not here to judge
• We’re in this together
• You can do it!
When two "states of mind" come together: considering what YOU bring to the relationship

Climate for Successful Implementation

- The organization commits to continuity of relationship from recruitment to graduation
- Training, supervision, reflective consultation are never compromised
- The culture of the organization reflects parallel process in which the principles of relationship-based practice are part of every relationship (administrators, supervisors, front-line workers, clients)

Seeing is Believing™: Guided Self-Observation to Promote Parental Sensitivity and Understanding
What we will do:
video-record your relationship with your child

Why we will do it:
to discover together how your baby is growing and learning and how you best can meet your baby’s needs

What we will do with the recording:
give it to you as a memento of this time in your child’s life and yours

Who else will see the video:
our supervisor and colleagues, to help make sure you’re receiving the best help we can give you

Basic childcare tasks
New accomplishments of infant
Favorite activities
Staff-initiated experimentation with appropriate toys

Keep it short and sweet!
Capture the magic moments!

What to Observe (SIB)

- Baby’s development
- Baby’s cues
- Parent’s response to cues
- Parent’s use of language
- Parental beliefs

Sensitivity

- Recognizes child’s ability to signal needs
- Accurately interprets cues and signals
- Responds contingently
- Is consistent and predictable over time
Insensitivity

- Detachment, unavailability
- Misinterpretation of cues and signals
- Intrusiveness

*(may stem from erroneous beliefs, lack of knowledge, unwillingness to respond, and/or inability to respond because of personal stress or depression)*

Prepared by Martha Farrell Erickson

Viewing the Tape with Parent

(SIB)

- Focus on strengths
- Ask, don’t tell
- Encourage perspective-taking
- Address broader issues

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Let’s practice together:

(SIB)

- Strengths of parent?
- Strengths of baby?
- What would you like to see changed?
- What other information would you want?
- What would you say to the parent?
How will you use this information in your work?