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| Calming Upset People |  |

Therapist Bill Eddy of the High Conflict Institute talks about **EAR**:

**E**mpathy

**A**ttention

**R**espect.

Of course one of the cornerstones of supervised visitation is **respect**. **Attention** is crucial so that clients know you are listening. **Empathy** is simply showing someone you know how they feel. EAR puts these concepts together in a way that is easy to remember.

But I’d like to add “C” for **CARE**:

**C**alm

**A**ttention

**R**espect

**E**mpathy.

Neuroscience tells us that we tend to **mirror other people’s emotions**. Think about it, if you walk into a room where everyone is laughing, your mood is instantly lighter. If you are with a group of people who are crying, it is hard to be happy. Neuroscience explains this as mirroring emotions.

Instead, you could tell parents: “I respect your efforts”, “I respect that you showed up”, “I know this process can be confusing”, “I see how frustrated you are”, and “I’d like to help”.

Because research tells us that parents in the child welfare system often report that they don’t feel respected, try **actually saying** the word respect, not just trying to show it with your actions.

So stay calm, show the parents your attention, be empathetic and be respectful.

CARE doesn’t necessarily mean you agree or disagree with the person and it doesn’t mean you are required to sit for hours and listen to them.

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| Reframing the Conversation: A Tool for Navigating Parental Difficulties  By Michelle Altemus | *G:\Supervised Visitation\Counseling2015\Woman speaks to female counselor.jpg* |

*The Clearinghouse often receives questions about how to positively communicate with anxious parents. Below we provide information on a technique called “reframing.”*

**Purpose**

* Reframing refers to the process of looking at the same situation in **a new way**.
* Supervised visitation professionals can use reframing to help parents look at themselves and their circumstances from a **different, more positive perspective**.

Reframing demonstrates to parents that their initial reactions represent only one of **many possible responses** to a situation.

* Using reframing with parents also illustrates that parents have a choice in how to approach unfavorable situations or challenges

**Benefits**

Reframing is more than just a mental exercise. Seeing a situation in a new light can help individuals feel, think, and ultimately behave differently.

Reframing may help parents:

* overcome inactivity or stagnation
* feel confident to act
* solve problems
* shift from pessimism to optimism
* take responsibility instead of placing blame
* reduce stress

**Strategies & Examples**

There are a variety of ways to reframe a pessimistic comment into a more productive perspective. Below is a list of seven different strategies, along with examples of how each strategy may be applied to a supervised visitation case.

Strategy # 1: Shift from a passive

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “I am so tired of being forced to jump through all the hoops of my case plan. I’ll never be able to do it.” | “What is one step you know you can take to get started on your case plan?” |
| “My child makes me so frustrated during visits.” | “Can you think of any ways that you could respond differently to your child to avoid getting so frustrated during visits? |

to an active perspective.

Strategy #2: Shift from a negative to a positive perspective.

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “I hate supervised visits, it’s not natural.” | “What do you think some of the benefits of supervised visitation might be for other parents?” |
| “I don’t see my child enough.” | “What do you enjoy when you do get to see your child?” |

Strategy #3: Shift from the past to the future.

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “I can’t believe this happened and I just can’t seem to move on.” | “What will it look or feel like when you start to move on?” “What do you have to look forward to?” |
| “I feel like I’ve been working at this for so long and I haven’t made much progress.” | “What do you imagine will be different once you start to feel like you are progressing?” |

Strategy #4: Shift from future to past.

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “I know I’m supposed to get started working on my goals, but I just can’t move forward.” | “Can you recall what you did the last time you achieved one of your goals? Could a similar strategy help here? |

Strategy #5: Shift from others to oneself.

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Guardian ad Litem, Judge, Social Worker, etc.) doesn’t like me.” | “What do you think are your most likeable qualities? |
| “Other parents are so much better at this kind of stuff than I am.” | “What are your own parenting strengths?” |

Strategy #6: Shift from a liability to an asset.

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “I’ve got too much going on to balance all of these requirements.” | “What does your busy schedule show you about your work ethic?” |
| “I worry all the time that this will never get any better.” | “What do those worries tell you about your feelings for your child?” |

Strategy #7: Shift from victimization to empowerment.

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| Parent says: | Reframing: |
| “This always happens to me.” | “What did you learn last time that will make it easier to deal with this situation now? |
| “This whole thing just isn’t fair. No one treats me with the respect I deserve.” | “Even if it isn’t fair, you do deserve respect. What are some things you could do at each visit to try to earn the respect you deserve?” |



**Tips to Keep in Mind**

* Effective reframes have an emotional component that helps the client become more receptive to a new viewpoint. In other words, **evoking positive emotion** in relation to a new way of thinking helps overpower the old way of thinking.
* Identifying and focusing on **what is important to the individual** with whom you are working can help create an emotional appeal.
* Avoid giving advice. **Help empower parents** to come to their own conclusions by asking questions and making observations.

**Sources**

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**Resources**

https://www.porticonetwork.ca/documents/178489/205343/I2D14\_FINAL\_Dec29.jpg/0652b758-fb3b-4b45-9ee8-7f1d1acebe5a?t=1420475360000?t=14204

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* This graphic explains the theory behind reframing, which originates from a therapeutic technique called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). It may help supervised visitation professionals better understand client behavior.

https://www.get.gg/docs/ThoughtRecordSheet7.pdf

* This worksheet is an example of a thought record, which can be used by clients or social service providers as a guide for practicing reframing.

Contact the Clearinghouse at 850-644-1715

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