

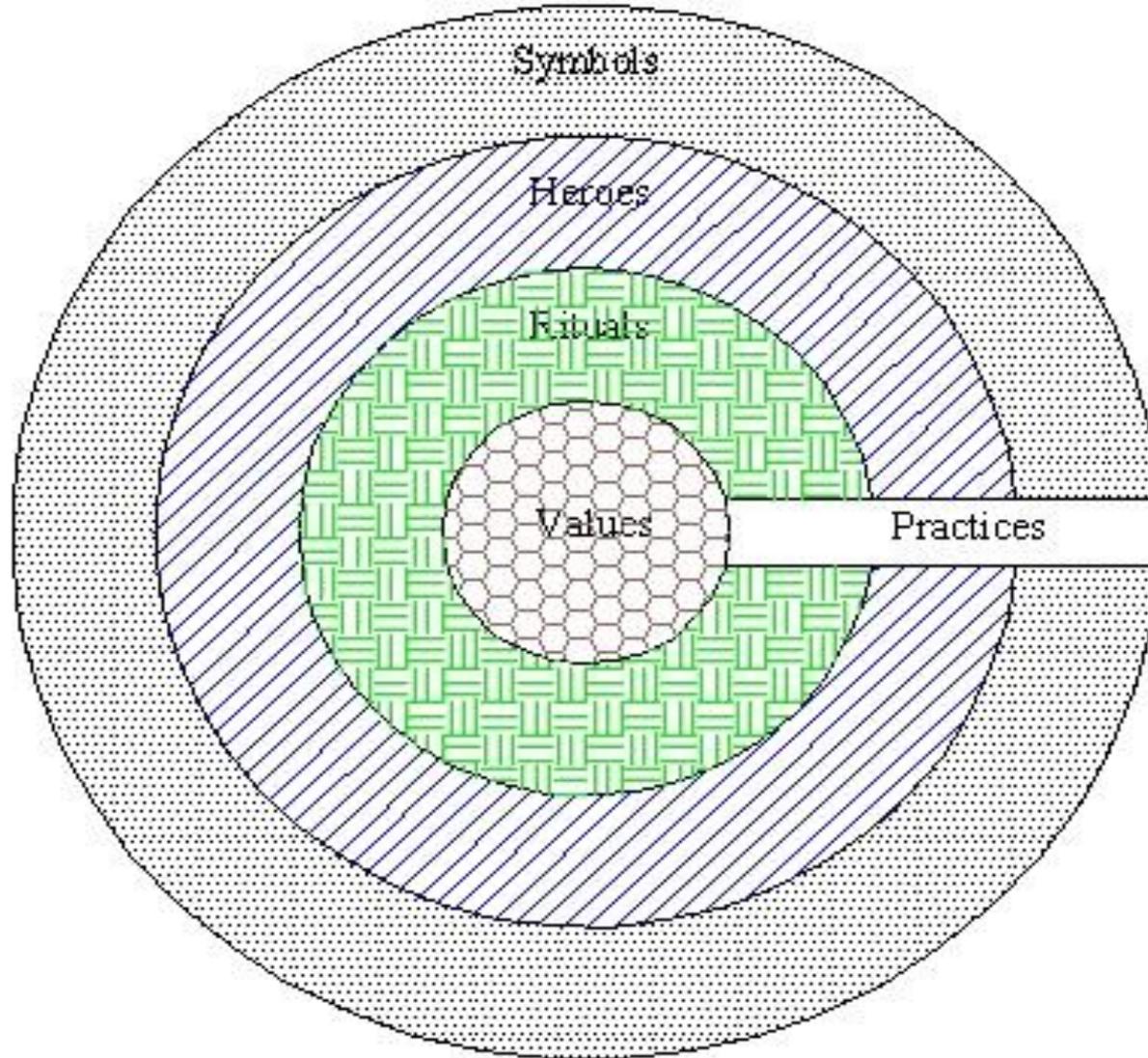


# Getting to the heart of relational work with families

**Nicki Weld & Cherie Appleton**  
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# Cultural symbols, heroes, rituals & values



# Opening the door to family culture

- What are the deeply held values, beliefs and attitudes that make this family unique?
- What is really important to them?
- Do they see their children as significant and unique - how?
- What hopes, dreams and aspirations do they have?
- What can we see, hear and learn about their culture?



# Can we influence family culture?



# Cultural competence

- ‘In many ways, a practitioner never reaches full competence in the assessment of culturally diverse persons because our world continues to become more and more diverse with respect to culture, language, and world views’

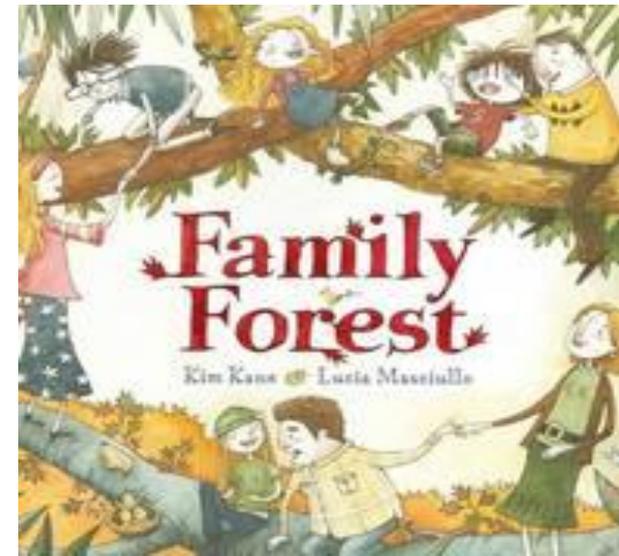
(Velasquez et al 2006: 109).

- ... like all areas of clinical work, conducting effective cross – cultural risk assessments involves a commitment to on-going professional development.

(Thakker, Vess, Ward 2008).

# Supporting safe practice in relational work

- Professional boundaries
- Scrutinising ourselves
- Building insight
- Continued professional education
- Use of supervision
- Never work alone
- Consult
- Social justice measurement



# Attitudes, values and beliefs that lead to harming children

1. Children viewed as objects or as an extension of the parent
2. Violence and child maltreatment accepted as normal
3. Children seen as a nuisance – ‘wrecked my life’
4. They’ll love me, make me feel better, look after me
5. The child will achieve the things I didn’t achieve.
6. They are my property I can do whatever I want with them
7. You should treat kids like you treat the dog – train them, obedience.
8. The child is just like.... who I hate.
9. Out of sight, out of mind.
10. Talking doesn’t work, hitting does
11. I never got it, why should you?
12. Get the state out of my face- don’t tell me how to raise my kids.

# An example

- A 3 year old female child died of severe brain injuries in New Zealand on the 3rd of August 2007.
- When brought into hospital she had no opening of the eyes or vocal response to any stimulus and had abnormal flexion of her limbs.
- There was a delay of 37 hours before seeking medical attention while her family planned a 21<sup>st</sup> party.
- She may have survived if she had received earlier medical attention.
- She was seen by neighbours to be tied to the clothes line and spun off.
- She was seen crying on top the roof of her house where she had been put and left.

- It was reported that she had been put in the tumble dryer and this was switched on.
- Her step grandfather was observed to go into her bedroom where she was sitting on her bed, tie a scarf around her neck, and lift her by it up into the air until she went purple. He then dropped her onto the ground.
- When she managed to get her breath to scream, he told her to: “Shut the f..k up or I’ll stomp on your head.”
- 5 adults have been prosecuted for her murder including her mother, step father, step grandfather, step uncle and his girlfriend.

**They all come from childhood backgrounds of abuse and neglect.**

**We know what goes wrong –  
it is time to talk about and  
explore what makes it go right...**

**Key relational factors (social and emotional  
competencies) that offer protection for  
children AND ensure they grow up less likely  
to harm others...HOPE EMPATHY LOVE and  
DIGNITY**



# Hope

We should all begin our interaction with a child with the hope that they will be given the best chances to fully participate in the world and to reach or exceed their potential.



# Loss of Hope

It is perhaps one of the most tragic experiences to encounter children who have lost hope. It is as tragic to meet parents, families and communities who do not have hope for their children. There is possibly nothing scarier as children without hope grow older and move further out into their interactions with the world seeking to answer the spiritual emptiness inside them.

# Empathy

For children the development of empathy, kindness, and compassion are essential to build successful relationships with people.

**The expression or language of empathy is kindness.**

Kindness requires taking time to understand, discern and then behave in a way that offers understanding and caring through an action of some sort.



**Without a combination of empathy and morality we have a world where children grow into teenagers and adults who can fire a gun at someone's head or use a knife on them and show little comprehension of their actions.**



# LOVE

To love and be loved enables the greatest freedom we can ever experience. It breaks down barriers in and around us and opens our eyes to the potential, passion, and meaning of life. By giving love to children we provide them with a universal language and enhance the light they bring to the world.



Love consists of awareness, acceptance, affection, and a commitment to another person or creature's happiness and joy.



# Dignity

Dignity offers strength through times of difficulty and challenge to help protect and support a person's integrity. It helps build protection against adversity that protects the heart and spirit.



Dignity can lift us beyond difficult situations to the true purpose and value of what it means to be human and honour the gift of life. It is therefore one of the most powerful resources we can help children develop that will preserve, sustain, and protect them in times of adversity.



Sam Rogers 5yrs  
Christchurch Earthquake  
September 2010

# ABCD – a simple assessment

A – Aspirations

B – Behaviour

C – Communication

D – Description



# Examples of observations that inform the ABCD assessment

## **Aspirations – Adult**

- What currently tells the parent they are doing a good job of raising their child? When their child has grown up what will tell them they have achieved this?

## **Aspirations – Child**

- Does the child express a sense of hope, possibility, and positivity about their future? What do they say? Who do they identify supports and believes in them and how do they know this?

## **Behaviour- Adult**

- How does the parent manage difficult behaviour? What techniques and skills do they use? Can they differentiate between punishment (meeting their needs) and discipline (meeting the child's needs)? How do they do this?

## **Behaviour- Child**

- How does the child show caring, co-operation and sharing in their play with other children and also with animals? Do they show any signs of cruelty? If so, what happens?

# Observations continued...

## **Communication - Adults**

- How do they talk to the child? (tone of the voice, developmentally appropriate?) Do they apologise and acknowledge their own behaviour if they find themselves reacting in a way they regret? What do they say?

## **Communication- Child**

- Do they seek reassurance through eye contact and physical contact with the parent? How do they convey their needs?

## **Description -Adults**

- How does the parent describe the child? What sort of words do they use for the personality of character traits they see? Can they separate the child as using these behaviours rather than being these behaviours? Are there any indicators that the child has been objectified in any way?

## **Description - Child**

- What does the child say a good friend or positively identified family member would say they like about them?

# Example strategies to give parents to help build HELD in their children

## Hope

Give them heaps of encouragement and lots of experiences through participation in everyday activities and special events.

## Empathy

Notice kindness and sharing that they do and model this to all people and animals in your home. Talk about right and wrong ways to treat people and animals including explaining what hurtful behaviour is not OK and help them find a way to make amends (Cotton 2000).

## Love

Show consistent affection toward your child – laugh and play with them. Say you love them with an action like a hug. Smile at them. Talk to your child about what you like and love about them –what makes them special and unique.

## Dignity

Make sure they live in a home that is free from abuse, neglect, drugs and violence and that they have clean clothes and adequate food. Make sure they have strong mentors and positive role models in their world and that you are one of them.

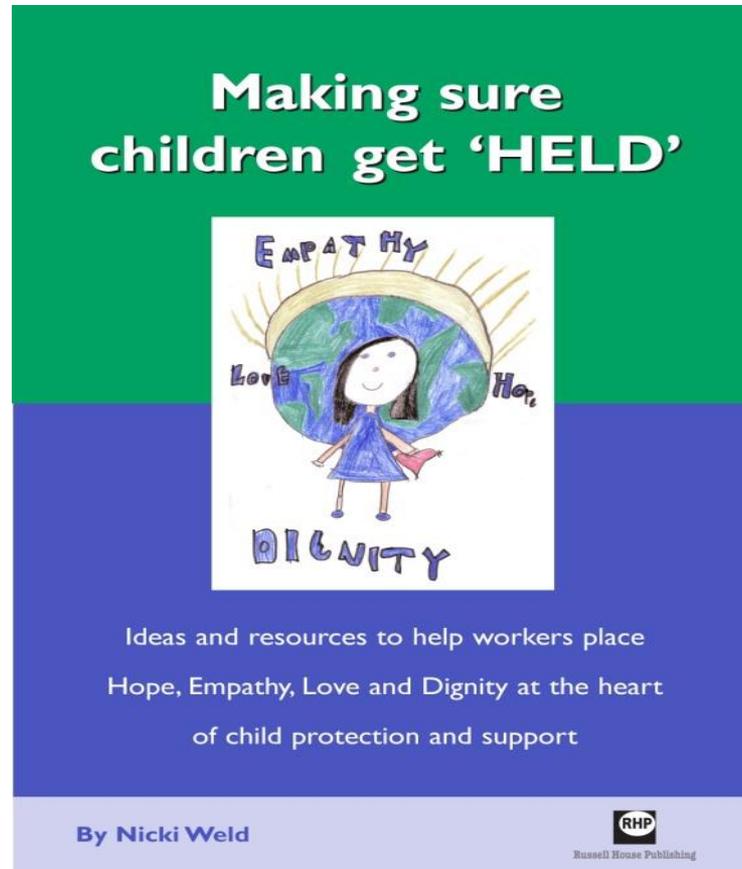
**It is time to be explicit in assessing and enabling parents to develop key social and emotional competencies that can help protect children.**

**Through this we believe we will create a brighter future for all of humanity.**



# HELD

Hope Empathy Love Dignity



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Thank you.  
Have a fantastic  
conference!

