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Treatment Protocol

The vast majority of families I work with are feeling stressed and overwhelmed. They are willing to put in the necessary work needed to achieve success with their children. During the initial consultation, I ask for all prior assessments and any information the family believes will be helpful. Then I request all known information related to the child's social, family, academic, treatment, behavioral, medical and developmental history, and the family's presenting concerns.

With this information, the family and I decide whether a referral for further assessment is needed. From there a treatment and or service plan is implemented. Together the family and I identify the family's strengths and the areas that need further development. This necessary baseline is reviewed frequently and progress is noted. The strategies implemented are agreed upon by all parties and safeguard the psychological, emotional, and physical well-being of everyone involved in the intervention process.

During Treatment, I make certain the children I see are receiving a multivitamin with iron and plenty of sleep. Our site is full of resources and books for all members of the adoption triad. I regularly ask parents to buy copies of the books I believe are most relevant for them. I work with parents to provide a high structure, high nurture environment for their child.

Early treatment is focused on history integration. The children's parents are involved and often help clarify the child's past. I ask parents to amplify their emotions so that their child can attain mirroring neurons. I teach parents how to regulate themselves so that their child can "borrow" that regulation. I work together to help parents become attuned to their child's needs and ask them not to add emotion to their child's emotion.

I stress the importance of developing predictability and interim goals for children. I work with families to help them understand how children their child's behavior was at one time, needed and adaptive. I attempt to create a feeling within the office and in their homes of "win, win". Rather than "winner, loser" or "control and submit".

I encourage hope and a sense of mastery by pointing out areas of improvement. I regularly engage the children and their parents in role play. In this way, both the children and their parents can practice teaching/learning about social situations and compliance in every day life. Much of the work I do with children and their parents includes practice and praise. I also use puppets, drawings and a sand tray with my clients and their families.

I teach both parents and children relaxation techniques which including deep breaths and guided imagery. I *always* work with parents on how they can obtain respite and repeatedly remind them that fatigue is a set up for Dan Seigal's "low road". I work with children to help them learn to lean on the relationships in their lives.

I recommend "Once Upon a Time" stories at bedtime to help with history integration as well as lessons children need to learn. I ask parents to reduce electronic stimulus and "toy pollution" and I regularly work from Deborah's "Safe Family" list.

I recommend high nurturing practices such as cradling, in which parents hold their children and tell them how sorry they are for their losses. Parents also tell their children that they will keep them safe and how they would have cared for them, had they had the opportunity. I encourage eye contact and compliance from the child, by having mom or dad hold a lollipop for the child during the cradling experience.

I often share stories from my own adoptive journey. Having adopted three older children thirteen years ago, I have experienced many of the struggles families are presently experiencing. I am told that my stories inspire hope and healing.

To date, I have received more than 50 hours of training directly from Deborah Gray.

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