



Big Ideas for the Care of Tiny Humans

Reflective Practice Guide

Lorrie McGee, RECE

Foreword by Dr. Jean Clinton

Forward

Today as I write the foreword to this Reflective Practice Guide, I'm warmed by the sun on an early spring day. The forecast is for a sunny day with a high of 17 degrees, and snow arriving by Friday! Such is Springtime in Ontario. My journey with Infant Mental Health has been a bit like spring: full of hope and promise but with lots of ups and downs. I'm reminded that the foreword to my book "Love Builds Brains", written eloquently by friend and colleague Dr. Robin Williams, begins with a window view of an ordinary spring day, and I think "oh, here we are again!" But no - this time feels very different, because here we are together! As a child psychiatrist and children's advocate I am walking side by side with ECEs and others who are called to a profession grounded by the pedagogy of care - those who have a gift for relationships with very young children and their parents. "Big Ideas for the Care of Tiny Humans" brings science and practice together and connects us all in a shared commitment to lifelong health and well-being for children.

As I think about the role educators have in healthy communities it brings to mind the indigenous view of the child as the sacred one. In traditional times, when families gathered together, the little ones, the sacred ones, were held closest to the fire, safely cradled and protected by

mother figures, and all surrounded by a close, supportive community. Today, it is you who are so incredibly essential in the family's circle of support.

We are here together this springtime, and I am filled with hope and promise. My promise is to continue to walk side by side with you, supporting your work in early childhood education. And my hope is that "Big Ideas for the Care of Tiny Humans" serves to ground you with an understanding of early brain development, guide you in fostering conditions for children to thrive, and inspire you to be steadfast in a pedagogy of care.

My warmest regards,

Dr. Jean Clinton,

Hamilton Ontario | April, 2024



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To enter into a style of teaching which is based on questioning what we’re doing and why, on listening to children, on thinking about how theory is translated into practice and how practice informs theory, is to enter into a way of working where professional development takes place day after day in the classroom.

— Sonya Shoptaugh

Welcome to the reflective practice guide! This guide has been created as a resource to support the video series “Big Ideas for the Care of Tiny Humans”. The guide is divided into modules each connected to one of the videos in the series. Each module has a set of thinking protocols to explore the key concepts within the video. While the guide is written to support your work as a facilitator, you will notice that there are places for you to reflect on yourself to consider your own learning in this process as well.

“

Reflection is more than thinking, although thinking and thoughtfulness are essential to begin. Reflection is thinking rigorously, critically, and systematically about practices and problems of importance to further growth...reflection is a disciplined way of assessing situations, imagining a future different from today, and preparing to act.

— William Ayers (2004)
Teaching the Personal and the Political.
Essays on Hope and Justice.



What is Reflective Practice?

When we listen to the words of William Ayers, we can see that reflective practice moves beyond just thinking about our thinking to taking action and making shifts in our work. Reflective practice requires each of us to be on a continuous learning journey, studying ourselves as we learn more from and with each other. The road to growing intentional practice begins with reflection but it doesn't end there. It also requires us to reflect on the impact of our shifts in practice, carefully noticing how our ways of being impact those around us.

We can take time to think and reflect on our own, which is an important part of our own personal learning journey, but collective critical reflection with others opens us up to many new ways of thinking. It invites us to consider perspectives outside of ourselves and offers us a much deeper learning experience. This guide has been written to support this kind of critical thinking as we know that learning happens best in relationship with others.

The Reflective Model

When facilitating through this guide you are invited to use a reflective model for gathering and thinking together. The model engages each of us in opportunities to construct knowledge together and be active participants in our own learning. A community of practice is only one part of the reflective model. The model also considers time, protocols, and facilitation. If you consider a table with four legs, each of these components provides stability for the table. When even one is missing, things are little unbalanced.

Community of Practice

The first component of the model is a community of practice, which is, essentially, a group that comes together for reflection and dialogue. These communities often share a common interest or passion, are supported by a facilitator, and meet regularly together over time. In this case the shared interest is a desire to consider the science and practice of understanding and impacting infant and early years mental health (IEYMH). The goals of a community of practice are to:

- Promote self-reflection and awareness
- Deepen the understanding of the power we hold as educators as it connects to IEYMH
- Strengthen our image of the child and families
- Seek the child’s perspective
- Learn to collaborate across different perspectives
- Become critical friends with our team mates
- Strengthen our image of the educators, children, and families

Time

The second piece of the reflective model is time for focused dialogue. We all know that time is precious. Thinking through these videos will take time. It will require that we gather together often to think together,

study our own experiences, and collaborate with ideas. It is necessary to allow time to linger on these big ideas in order to really dig deep and enact change.

Reflective Protocols

The third piece of the model is using a reflective protocol. A protocol is defined as the accepted or established code, procedure, or behavior in any group. Protocols are present in much of our work and in many of the day-to-day procedures for hand-washing, diapering, etc. When we use the reflective model we consider a protocol for thinking. Each video will offer you and your communities several thinking protocols to engage you in the big ideas within each module.

Essentially, thinking protocols offer questions to “think with” that engage participants in considering their own experiences and those of others in the community. They invite them to consider the science and practices that support IEYMH and co-construct new ways of thinking and being together. Protocols offer us a structure for openness. As defined by Deb Curtis, a protocol is a structure for openness or a shared defined process that helps us focus together on an idea or task; an open structure designed to invite many possible ideas and ways of learning and being. We can consider a structure

for how we study images, videos, experiences, and how we work through dilemmas. Structures for openness invite collaboration with respect to diverse perspectives as central to the work.

Facilitation

The final component of the reflective model is the facilitator. A facilitator or “critical friend” (also known as an essential friend, or someone who is essential for our learning) plays a key role in the reflective model. Although similar, the role of facilitator and critical friend are somewhat different. The primary role of the facilitator is to keep a group on task, ensure that equal voices are heard at the table, reflect back or summarize ideas and to make connections to values and perspectives.

A critical or essential friend plays a slightly different role and is critical to the learning for the group. As a critical friend the facilitator provokes new ideas, challenges people’s thinking, or brings forward new perspectives that may not have been considered. Trust is essential in this role so that the community understands that their ideas are questioned, not because they are right or wrong, but rather so that others can understand their thinking. As a result, new learning emerges. The role of facilitation in the reflective model is one of the most critical components.

Your role facilitating with this guide to study the video series is essential to growing and deepening our work around the principles of practice for IEYMH.

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Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before.

— Loris Malaguzzi



“

The kind of talking needed to educate ourselves cannot arise spontaneously and unaided just from talking. It needs to be carefully planned and scaffolded.

— Joseph P. McDonald, Nancy Mohr, Alan Dichter, and Elizabeth C. McDonald (2003)

Power of Protocols. An Educator's Guide to Better Practice

The Three Fields of Knowledge

One of the main goals of a facilitator is to support conversations that can generate new understanding and offer groups ways to learn from and with each other, gain new perspectives and see how together, new ideas can emerge. Understanding the three fields of knowledge can help facilitators intentionally support conversations that evolve thinking. The three fields of knowledge can support this process.

Karen Carter, Chris Cotton & Kirsten Hill “Network facilitation: the power of protocols” retrieved, April 2 2009, National College for School Leadership, UK

What do we know?

The knowledge of participants.

ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Reshaping what is known and understood.

What is known?

The knowledge from theory, research, and best practices.

ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Adding to what is already known.

What is new knowledge?

The knowledge we can co-create through collaborative work.

CREATIVE OR INNOVATIVE LEARNING

Discovering new meaning, new ways of understanding, and new actions to take.



Lorrie McGee and Anne Marie Coughlin fill out the ideas of the three fields of knowledge in their book “Creating a Culture of Reflective Practice: The Role of Pedagogical Leadership in Early Childhood Program”.

Additionally in their book, “Reflecting in a Community of Practice”, Deb Curtis, Debbie Lebo, Wendy Cividanes and Margie Carter share both the knowledge and skills necessary for strong facilitation. They describe the facilitator as one who promotes participation, ensures equity of voices as well as ideas and builds trust within learning communities. Facilitation requires both knowledge and skill but also a strong disposition for curiosity.

FIRST FIELD

Practitioner Knowledge

This is the personal and subjective knowledge that each of us constructs through our individual lived experiences and understandings of the world. While we often find others who have similar understandings on some topics, we will never find another person who shares exactly the same understanding on everything.

Entering conversations from the first field of knowledge means sharing what you know and understand, and why you feel that way. It is how each of us can offer our own perspective on things and is an important starting point for a generative conversation. However, conversations that stay in the first field don't shift or expand anyone's thinking.

What does a first field of knowledge conversation look like?

Everyone shares their personal perspective on something, but no one walks away thinking any differently. What I offer in a discussion might help someone recall their own experience or remember something that they already know, but it does not make them reconsider or think more deeply about an idea.

“I might know what you think, but I haven't changed the way I think.”

SECOND FIELD

Public Knowledge

This is knowledge offered by others, particularly knowledge gained through research or acknowledged best practice. Entering conversations from the second field of knowledge means exploring and being open to new ideas or interpretations that can either build on or challenge our personal understandings.

What does a second field of knowledge conversation look like?

A group brings curiosity and questions to explore a topic, often thinking with resources such as articles, books, lectures, podcasts, documentaries, exhibits, and so on. Ideas that are shared reach beyond the people in the discussion and consider insights and perspectives that offer new information and invite different considerations.

“I am aware that this is a new idea for me, and I am open to learning more about it.”

THIRD FIELD

New Knowledge

This is the new knowledge created within us when the first two fields of knowledge combine through collaborative inquiry. Ranging from tiny to mammoth, these are the shifts we make in our thinking as a result of combining our own understandings with that of others.

What does a third field of knowledge conversation look like?

Conversations are generative, and ideas grow off each other. There is an expansion of new ideas and questions and an awareness that our thinking is starting to change and new ways of thinking are emerging.

“What I am learning is helping me think differently than I did before. I have a different understanding and new questions.”





Facilitator Knowledge

- Understands the importance of diverse perspectives and the role they play in building new knowledge
- Understands that each person is responsible for their own learning. The role of the facilitator is to guide that process and hold space for learning to happen
- Understand that their role is not that of an expert but rather to help others fill out their own ideas and thinking.

Facilitator Skill

- Build rapport amongst the group
- Actively listen
- Ask questions to seek understanding

Moving into dialogue with these understandings is critical to support participants in building trust within the group. When facilitators build trust and move into conversations with a deep sense of curiosity, participants feel heard, valued, and appreciated. This requires empathetic listening, listening to understand. Growing and developing listening skills takes time and requires that we pay attention to how we listen. Stephen R. Covey, in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, talks about levels of listening and how we should strive for empathetic listening.

Pretend Listening

Do you ever start thinking about what you have to pick up on the way home? Or, what do I have to prepare for the meeting this afternoon?

Pretend listeners are often distracted by their own thoughts and while they maintain eye contact and lean in, they really aren't listening at all.

Selective Listening

Do you find that when you're trying to listen you become easily distracted until a word or sentence that you connect with draws you in?

Selective listeners often only see or hear what they want to hear, tuning out others' ideas or perspectives.

Listening with the intent to Respond

Do you start thinking of a story that you have about the same idea? Or do you think about how you are going to "fix" their problem or give advice?

This is the level that we most frequently use when listening. It often comes from our passions and deep desire to help others and give advice. When we listen to respond, we truly can't listen because we are often busy thinking about what we are going to say next.

Empathetic Listening

I wonder why they believe that?

Empathetic listening...Listening with real curiosity requires that we be fully present, interested to understand and open to hear others' ideas, perspectives and opinions.

Listening with Judgement

I can't believe they think like that!

This level of listening is one that is most detrimental when trying to build relationships with others. If you have ever felt judged, you will likely distrust, shut down and recall feeling undervalued. When people feel judged, trust is lost.

"Creating a Culture of Reflective Practice: The Role of Pedagogical Leadership in Early Childhood Program". Anne Marie Coughlin & Lorrie McGee (pg. 132)

Another important aspect of facilitation is the ability to ask good questions, questions that generate new knowledge, that open up and expand thinking and that shift perspectives and practice. Empathetic listening allows us to move into dialogue curious and consider questions that seek clarity, probe assumptions and viewpoints, and stimulate critical thinking.

Greek philosopher Socrates developed a theory of knowledge based on asking questions. These questions, now known as Socratic questions, can support facilitators to consider the different categories of questions that are most useful.

Questions that help clarify

To get people to think more about exactly what they are asking or thinking about. Use basic “tell me more” questions that get them to go deeper.

- Can you give me an example?
- Can you say that in a different way?
- How does this relate to what we are talking about?
- What exactly does that mean?
- What do we already know about this?
- What do you mean by...?
- What is your main point?
- Mary, can you summarize what you think John said? John did she get it right?
- Can you say more about that?

Questions that Probe Assumptions

To help people to think more about why they believe what they do and what they are basing their views on.

- Explain why you feel this way
- You seem to be assuming...what else could we assume?
- What is Karen assuming here?
- Does anyone have a different assumption?

Questions that seek Reason and Evidence

To dig into a reason for assumptions or arguments given. People often use unexamined ideas or weak reasoning to support their arguments.

- Can you give me an example of that?
- What do you think causes...?
- Why do you think that is true?
- What are your reasons for saying that? Are these reasons good enough?
- What other information would be helpful to have here?
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?
- Who is in a position to know if this is true?
- Where could we get more information on this?

Questions about opinions or viewpoints

To explore other equally valid viewpoints. These can come from others in the group or be offered by the facilitator.

- What alternative ways might we look at this?
- Who benefits from this?
- Why is this better than...?
- How are what you and ... are saying similar?

Continued on next page

- Another way to think about this is..., does that make sense to you?
- What would a child (family, coworkers, licenser...) think?
- How might you respond to Who says (something different)?

Questions that imply implications and consequences

To consider logical implications of what people are saying. To consider if these make sense or are desirable.

- Then what would happen?
- How does ...affect...?
- How does what you are saying link with what we want for children, families, each other...?

Questions about the question

To consider the quality of the question itself.

- What was the purpose or point of that question?
- How else might I ask this question?
- Can we break this question down at all?
- Is the question clear?
- Is the question easy or hard to answer – why?
- Why is this question important?
- Does this question lead to other questions or issues



Tips for Facilitators

Before you dive into how you will navigate the guide, here are just a few more tips to consider.

- Do your best to keep the group focused on the topic. It is easy to get off track in a conversation, as a facilitator you decide if the side conversation is useful or if you want to bring folks back to the protocol. You might say, “I’d like to bring us back to the ideas around....”
- Point out connections between people. This helps to build rapport and relationships amongst the group.
- Invite multiple perspectives. “I’m curious if everyone is feeling this way? “Does someone have a different understanding?”
- Offer your perspective when you feel it will be helpful to deepen the discussion or add a new perspective. Consider yourself a member of the community as well: you are also invested in this work.
- Be thoughtful when you are sharing something that is restating an idea that has been said, rather, think about adding your contributions to deepen or extend the thinking.
- Allow silence! This is often really difficult for people but silence is often necessary for the quieter voices to come forward.
- Make an effort to include all voices at the table without making people feel uncomfortable.
- Be thoughtful about how you ask a question. The purpose of a question is not to test to see if they have the right answer. “How does this fit with your current practice?” Is anything about this make you feel unsure?” Remember there are many ways to think about these ideas and no one right way.
- Keep eye contact with those who are speaking and lean in.
- Reflect back people’s ideas and connect them to the big ideas and values.
- Remember that your role is to keep others talking – resist the temptation to lead a discussion.



Navigating the Modules

Each module in the guide contains seven different reflective thinking protocols. Each protocol or process for thinking explores different parts of each video. As a facilitator once you become comfortable with the protocols you may want to evolve them or decide on different concepts that are more contextual for the individual communities of practice you are working with. While group size may vary in your community of practice, groups of five to seven work well. Where noted, the time allowance is only a suggestion and can act as a starting point. At the end of each module you will also find some reflective questions for you as the facilitator to consider your own learning in the process.

As a facilitator you can decide if your community watches the video together or if they watch it ahead of your time together. If you are watching it together you are encouraged to start with the questions laid out in the “Before you begin” reflective questions at the start of each module.

Thinking Protocols

Key Concepts

This protocol offers a broad look at the key concepts and the ideas that resonate with individuals. It invites participants to consider their own practice and what they are curious to learn more about. This protocol will be at the beginning of each module.

Thinking Lens

The questions in the thinking lens begin with exploring their own experiences, the perspectives and competencies of others and move participants to a place of actioning their thinking.

Text Rendering

This process is used to explore text that resonates with participants and invites individuals to reflect on the reasons why certain ideas stand out to them and share their thinking amongst the group. This protocol can often take a bit of time to move through so be sure to consider group size when planning this dialogue.

Deconstructing Big Ideas

Reflective questions used to explore specific ideas offered within the videos.

Personal Writing

Each module includes a space to do some personal writing before sharing with the group. This allows participants to hold a space for their thoughts before engaging in group dialogue.

Close Read

A close read offers participants the opportunity to deconstruct ideas, quotes or stories and connect them to their own practice and values.

Final Word

This protocol is a more disciplined way to share ideas and practice listening around some of the big ideas and key concepts within each video. This protocol, like the text rendering, often takes a bit more time so be sure to consider your group size when setting aside time for the discussion.

Facilitator Final Thoughts

These questions are for you the facilitator to consider what you are learning about yourself, your community of practice and how what you are learning is impacting and shifting your practice.

Module One

Care

“You really can change the world if you care enough.”

— Marian Wright Edelman

Before you begin...

- How would you define infant and early years mental health?
- What does it mean to care? Can anyone care?
- How are the ideas of care and Infant Mental Health connected?

Key Concepts

- a. What stood out and resonated with you when you watched the video?
- b. How do you see your current practice connected to the ideas and concepts shared in the video?
- c. Did anything challenge or surprise you?
- d. What ideas or concepts do you want to explore more?



Text Rendering

Take a minute to read the quote shown on the right together. Have each participant choose the following:

- a. A sentence that was meaningful to you and helped you gain a deeper understanding of the text.
- b. A phrase that moved, engaged, provoked or was in some way meaningful to you.
- c. A word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

Invite each participant to briefly share their responses to the group and explain why they selected the sentence, phrase and word that was chosen.

After each has shared, the group might consider the common themes that emerged from the conversation, and how the discussion deepened their understanding of IEYMH.

If you want to dig a little deeper with the group you may consider the following questions helpful.

- How does the text you selected connect to your values?
- What did you learn about yourself and others through this exercise?
- How have the ideas of others influenced your thinking?

“

Infant Mental Health is really the study and the practice of helping little ones develop their emotions and their social competency. It helps them form relationships with primary caregivers, with other caregivers and really importantly with getting along with their peers. It's also about learning all about emotion, how to experience emotion, manage them and express the emotions in ways that are socially more acceptable than biting for example. When you've got a secure base and your emotional experience is understood, then you get to explore, you're free to explore the environment. You learn in the social domain. All of this happens though, so importantly to know, in the context of the child and family's culture, the family's ways of knowing and being in the world.

— Dr. Jean Clinton

Deconstructing Big Ideas

- What does the concept of “care as curriculum” have you thinking about?
- What stories or scripts have we been carrying in our work about care and education?
- How does the idea of care as education connect to the concept of infant mental health?

Personal Writing

- What new understanding do you have now around Infant and Early Years Mental Health?
- How does this idea connect both care and education?
- Share your thoughts with the group.

Close Read

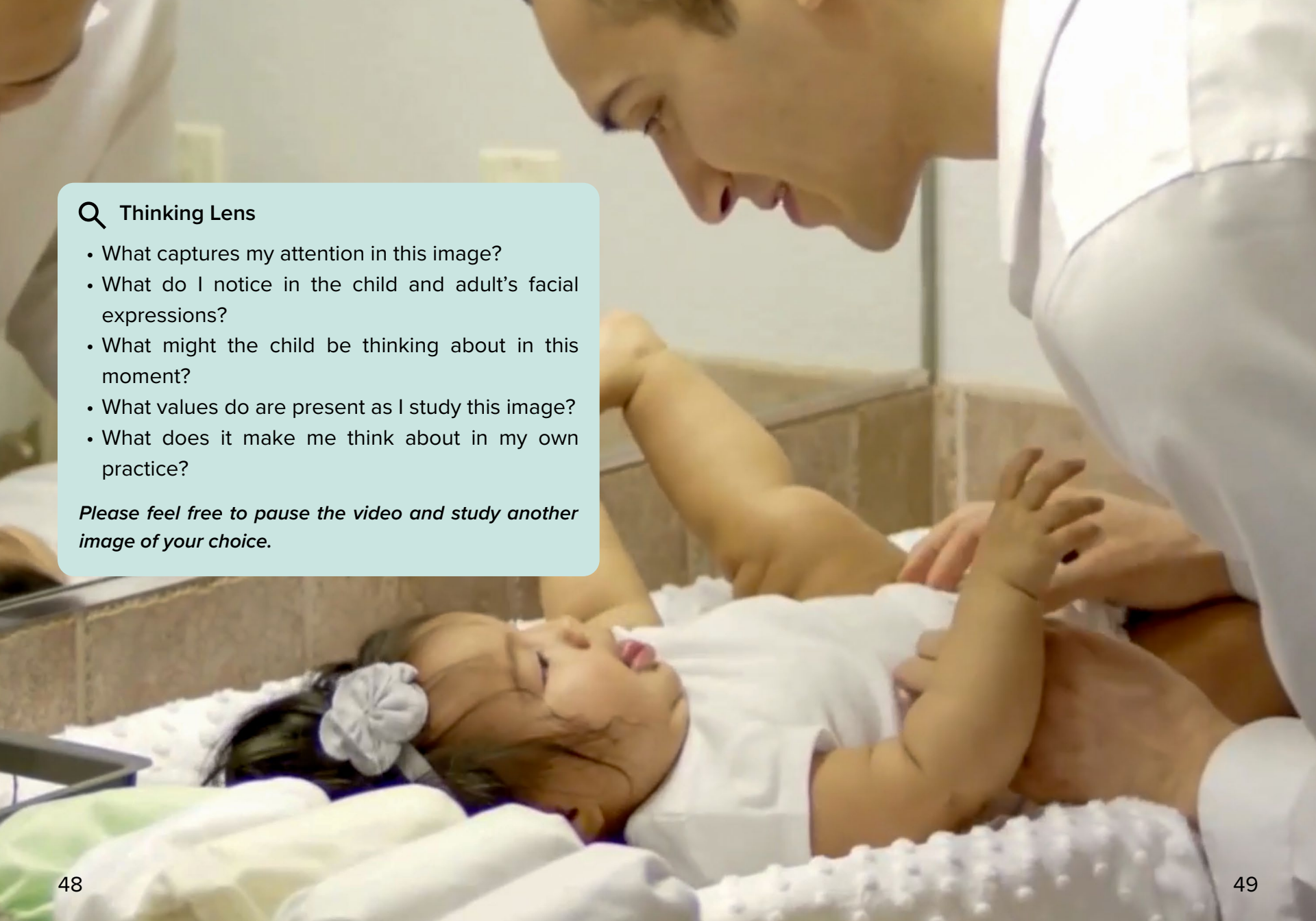
Refer to the quote on the right

- What do you think Lorrie is talking about when she says “we’re beginning to rethink the purpose of our work?”
- How do you see the power of care?
- What kind of world do you want to want to live in? What is your role in supporting that place? And how does it connect to mental health?

“

Right now, in our work in early childhood, we’re beginning to rethink the purpose of our work. And I think the pandemic has done that for us. It has invited us to see what has been illuminated in the world and what humanity has done to the care of the land and the air and the water and the non-human world. And when educators can see the power of care, that is going to have a lifelong impact on our world around us. And it will help us to think about what kind of world do we want live in.

— Lorrie McGee

A woman in a white lab coat is leaning over a baby lying in a hospital bed. The baby is wearing a white onesie and a white bow in her hair. The woman is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression. The background is a hospital room with a window and some equipment.

Q Thinking Lens

- What captures my attention in this image?
- What do I notice in the child and adult's facial expressions?
- What might the child be thinking about in this moment?
- What values do are present as I study this image?
- What does it make me think about in my own practice?

Please feel free to pause the video and study another image of your choice.

Final Word

- Invite each individual to write a short reflection of the big ideas that resonated with them in the video. What new understandings do they have? What questions are still lingering on their minds?
- Each participant then has the opportunity to present their reflection and shares with the group.
- The group then has a chance to ask probing and clarifying question and shares their thoughts.
- The presenter then responds to the discussion offering how the ideas and thoughts of others has influenced their thinking.
- Repeat the process for each member of the community of practice. (This is best done in groups of four or five).
- The group then considers the common threads and values that have been illuminated through the process.

Final Reflections

- This conversation makes me think about...
- This is important to me because...
- How will I bring these ideas into my practice
- What questions might I carry with me...

Facilitator Final Thoughts and Reflections

- What did you learn about yourself as a facilitator as you moved through module one?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What do you want to be sure to carry with you as you move into module two with your community?

“

Care is not a soft skill... it is a building block for a strong humanity.

— Illuminating Care – The Pedagogy of Care and Practice in Early Childhood Communities

Module Two

Attachment

“Attachment is not enough to love the child; it is necessary that they are aware that they are loved.”

— St. John Bosco (Italian Educator, est. 1850)

Before you begin...

- What comes to mind for you when you think about attachment?
- What do you notice about children who have a secure attachment?



🔗 Key Concepts

- a. What stood out and resonated with you when you watched the video?
- b. How do you see your current practice connected to the ideas and concepts shared in the video?
- c. Did anything challenge or surprise you?
- d. What ideas or concepts do you want to explore more?

Text Rendering

Take a minute to read the quote shown on the right together. Have each participant choose the following:

- a. A sentence that was meaningful to you and helped you gain a deeper understanding of the text.
- b. A phrase that moved, engaged, provoked or was in some way meaningful to you.
- c. A word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

Invite each participant to briefly share their responses to the group and explain why they selected the sentence, phrase and word that was chosen.

After each has shared, the group might consider the common themes that emerged from the conversation, and how the discussion deepened their understanding of IEYMH.

If you want to dig a little deeper with the group you may consider the following questions helpful.

- How does the text you selected connect to your values?
- What did you learn about yourself and others through this exercise?
- How have the ideas of others influenced your thinking?

“

The reality is that human babies are born completely helpless. It's why we are designed to be a social species. To be able to emit something that says 'help, I need you, look after me'. So, when infants are looked after in the way that their needs are met that is that there's somebody there when they are distressed, upset and sick, that is, it's called proximity seeking coming in. The stress that they first experienced is being emitted by them crying, by them running to you. But what happens when the stress system is responded to by you being there is that it gets quieted. But if it's not quieted, if you're not there for the baby, then their stress system stays up. And they cannot learn. They have to learn that there is somebody who's their best bet, and that's you. What happens when you build a secure attachment is a two-way relationship. It's so important and (as I said before) it changes your brain too.

— Dr. Jean Clinton

Deconstructing Big Ideas

- What does it mean for a child to have a secure attachment with someone? Can a child be too attached?
- What does the concept of “primary care” have you thinking about?
- What practices do you intentionally take up to support children’s secure attachment?

Close Read

Refer to the quote on the right

- What do you think Faith is referring to when she shares the idea that “children are born to teach us unconditional love”?
- Who are the children in your life that have been your teachers?
- How have those teaching influenced your work in early learning?

Personal Writing

- What experiences have you had in your own personal life with attachment?
- What have you learned about yourself or others?
- What have children taught you about attachment and how do you now bring it into your practice?
- Would you care to share your thoughts with the group?

“

Often people think that children are born into the world for us to teach and nurture. And then that happens. But I believe in our ways of knowing as Indigenous people that children are actually the teachers. And the way I can explain that to you is that, to give understanding and to make meaning a child when it’s born, it has work to do. And it teaches us unconditional love. So, I think creator in its entirety that we needed as adults to understand unconditional love. And what I mean by that is when a child is born anyone would give their life for that baby.

— Faith Hale



🔍 Thinking Lens

- What delights me as I look at this image?
- Where values are present?
- What do you think the children are thinking?
- How does the image connect to my practice?

Please feel free to pause the video and study another image of your choice.

Final Word

- Invite each individual to write a short reflection of the big ideas that resonated with them in the video. What new understandings do they have? What questions are still lingering on their minds?
- Each participant then has the opportunity to present their reflection and shares with the group.
- The group then has a chance to ask probing and clarifying question and shares their thoughts.
- The presenter then responds to the discussion offering how the ideas and thoughts of others has influenced their thinking.
- Repeat the process for each member of the community of practice. (This is best done in groups of four or five).
- The group then considers the common threads and values that have been illuminated through the process.

Final Reflections

- This conversation makes me think about...
- This is important to me because...
- How will I bring these ideas into my practice...
- What questions might I carry with me...

Facilitator Final Thoughts and Reflections

- What are you learning about your community?
- What did you notice about the kinds of questions that you asked?
- What do you want to learn more about as a facilitator?

“

The future isn't a place we get to go.... It's a place we get to create!

— Nancy Duarte

Module Three

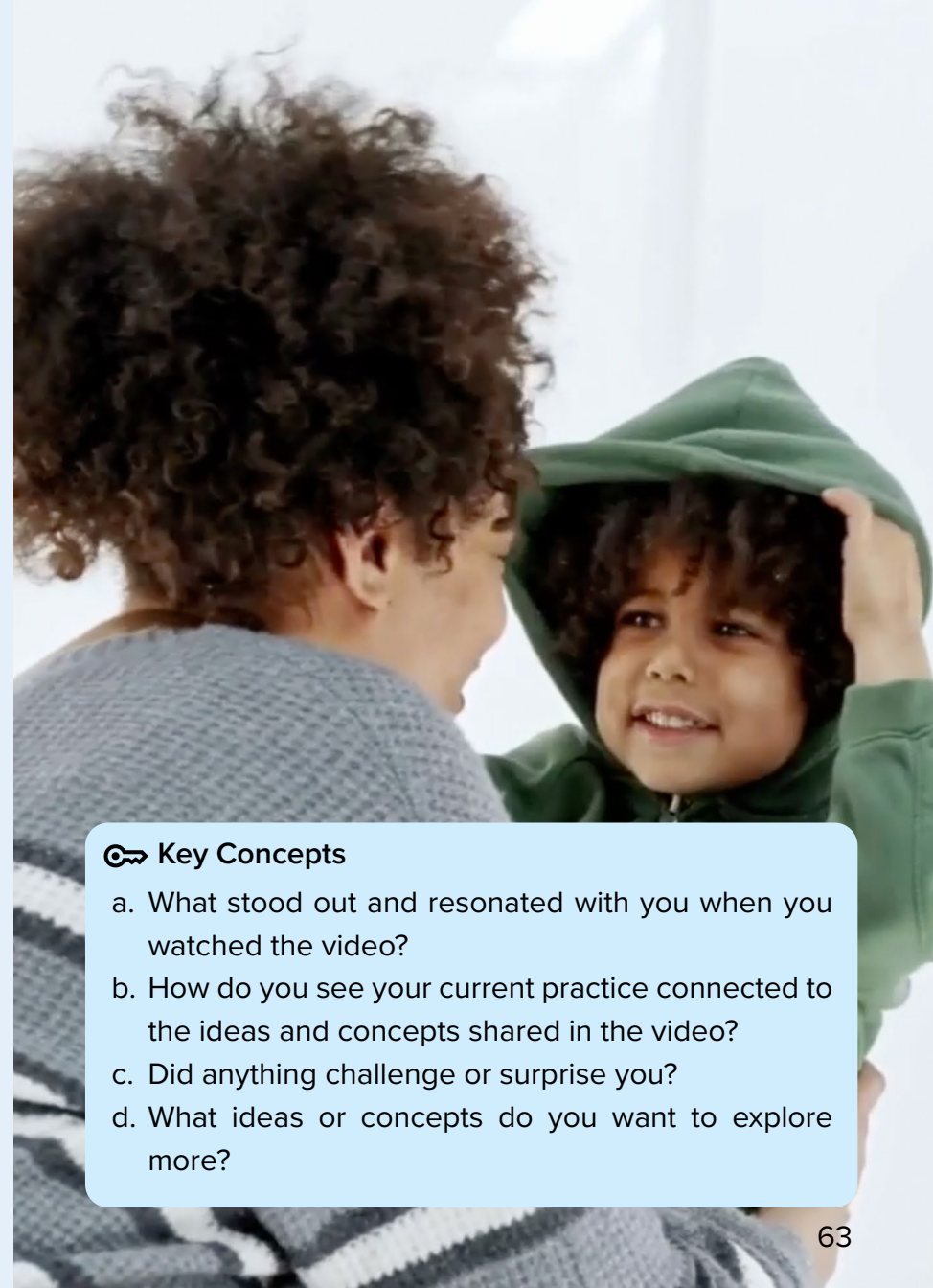
Emotions

“One reason big feelings can be so uncomfortable for small children is that they don’t know those emotions are temporary.”

— Dan Siegel

Before you begin...

- What do you notice about the emotions that you are most comfortable and familiar with?
- What are the scripts we carry with us when we consider emotions?



🔑 Key Concepts

- a. What stood out and resonated with you when you watched the video?
- b. How do you see your current practice connected to the ideas and concepts shared in the video?
- c. Did anything challenge or surprise you?
- d. What ideas or concepts do you want to explore more?

Text Rendering

Take a minute to read the quote shown on the right together. Have each participant choose the following:

- a. A sentence that was meaningful to you and helped you gain a deeper understanding of the text.
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- c. A word that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

Invite each participant to briefly share their responses to the group and explain why they selected the sentence, phrase and word that was chosen.

After each has shared, the group might consider the common themes that emerged from the conversation, and how the discussion deepened their understanding of IEYMH.

If you want to dig a little deeper with the group you may consider the following questions helpful.

- How does the text you selected connect to your values?
- What did you learn about yourself and others through this exercise?

“

What is the science behind emotion? What we know is you have a subjective feeling, you've got a physical response, you feel it somewhere in your body, and then you have an external behavior. You show it in your behavior. So, emotion in the brain is fascinating. We've got a limbic system, an emotional system, our amygdala's connected in there, and when we experience a stressor, boom, up go all of the stress hormones. Over time, as you learn to be able to express what you're experiencing, your feelings, then you're able to manage your behavioral responses. What's literally happening in the brain, particularly as you give language to feeling, is that there's a connection happening between the more primitive emotional part, the reactive part of the brain, and the stop, plan and think about it part of the brain.

— Dr. Jean Clinton

Deconstructing Big Ideas

- How do we embrace the fullness of being human and all of the emotions that come with it?
- What can we notice about how children regulate their emotions?
- What role do both educators and the environment play in regulating emotions?

Close Read

Refer to the quote on the right

- What do you think Adam is referring to when he says “emotions are always relational”?
- What might be the relational aspects that cause children to move to fight, flight, freeze, or fawn?
- How might you support children through these moments?

Personal Writing

- What do you notice about the emotions that you are most comfortable and familiar with?
- Which emotions in yourself and children are more challenging to deal with?
- What in your experience may be influencing this and how does it impact your practice in supporting children’s big emotions?
- Share your thoughts with the group.

“

I think that that’s really important to know that emotions are always relational because when you’re in an environment where you’re constantly in survival mode you want to take advantage of any opportunity you can to escape and get out of that space. Neuroscience talks about this with the fight flight freeze or fawn... Children will take advantage of one of those coping mechanisms in order to survive. And infants will do the same thing and will have even less tools to manage it and navigate it. Because again, our environment impacts us at such a young age.

— Dr. Adam Davies



🔍 Thinking Lens

- What captures your attention in this image?
- What in your background and values may be influencing your response here?
- What emotions are evoked for you?
- What language of emotions could we begin to build from this moment?

Please feel free to pause the video and study another image of your choice.

Final Word

- Invite each individual to write a short reflection of the big ideas that resonated with them in the video. What new understandings do they have? What questions are still lingering on their minds?
- Each participant then has the opportunity to present their reflection and shares with the group.
- The group then has a chance to ask probing and clarifying question and shares their thoughts.
- The presenter then responds to the discussion offering how the ideas and thoughts of others has influenced their thinking.
- Repeat the process for each member of the community of practice. (This is best done in groups of four or five).
- The group then considers the common threads and values that have been illuminated through the process.

Final Reflections

- This conversation makes me think about...
- This is important to me because...
- How will I bring these ideas into my practice...
- What questions might I carry with me...

Facilitator Final Thoughts and Reflections

- What surprised or challenged you in the dialogue with your community?
- What kinds of questions are you finding engage and deepen the conversations?
- What new strategies are you taking up and what are you learning through them?

Module Four

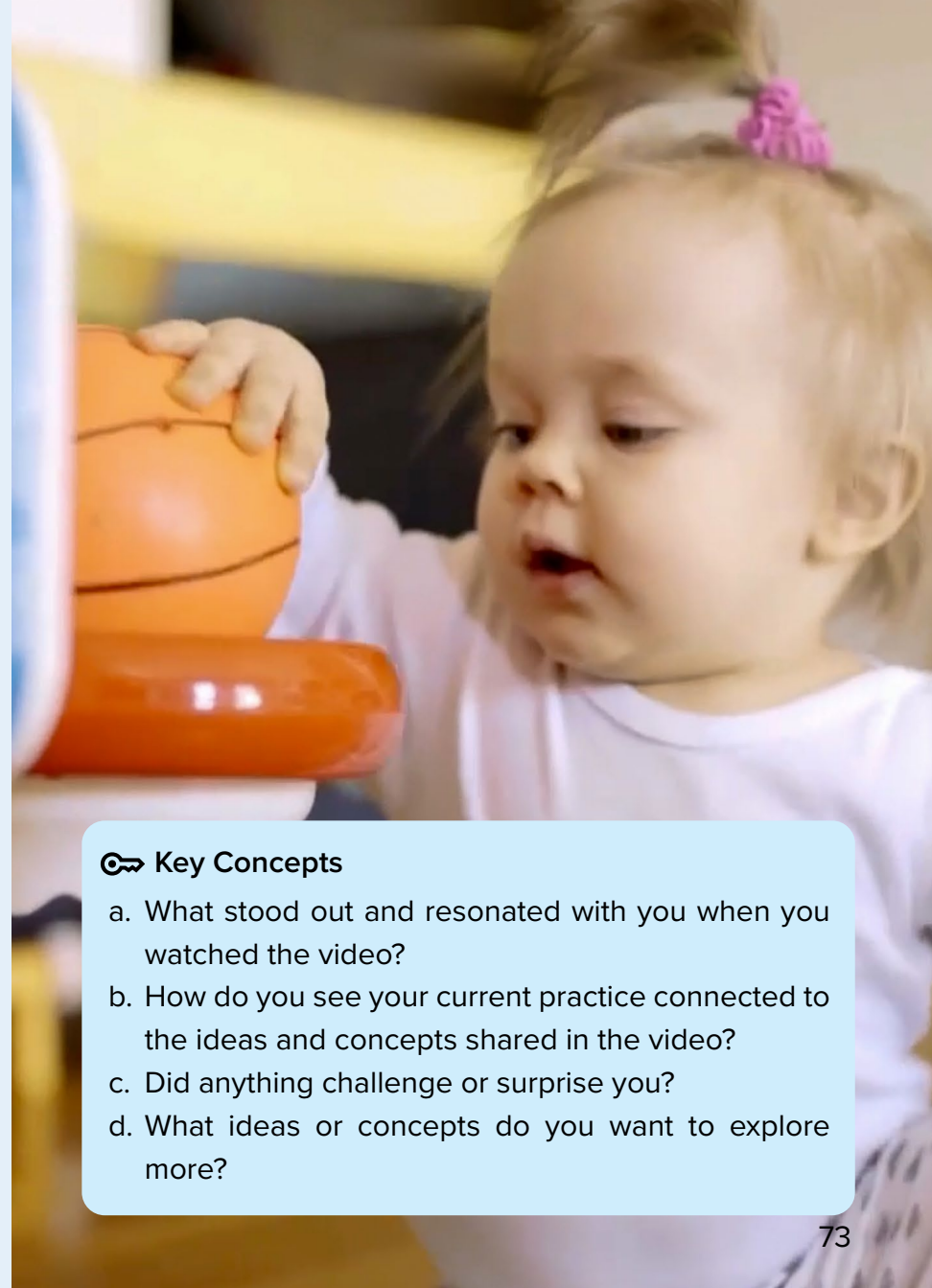
Self

“Every day in a hundred small ways our children ask, ‘Do you see me? Do you hear me? Do I matter?’ Their behaviour often reflects our responses.”

— L.R. Knost

Before you begin...

- What do you notice about the development of self in young children?
- How would you define the difference between a personal sense of self and social identity?



🔗 Key Concepts

- a. What stood out and resonated with you when you watched the video?
- b. How do you see your current practice connected to the ideas and concepts shared in the video?
- c. Did anything challenge or surprise you?
- d. What ideas or concepts do you want to explore more?

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If you want to dig a little deeper with the group you may consider the following questions helpful.

- How does the text you selected connect to your values?
- What did you learn about yourself and others through this exercise?

“

When a child is told that they are loved, when they are told that they're lovable and they actually feel lovable, that is massively important for releasing neurotransmitters in the brain that builds connection, oxytocin and other things.

But what if you're a child who gets told all of the time, don't do that, that's not the right thing to do. Children who are bathed in a sea of negativity, what happens in their little brains is they're getting the message, uh-oh, I'm not good, some of them even have told me over the years, I'm bad. How you interact and see their behavior, the messaging that you give to them is hugely important as they're developing that sense of who am I? And so, think deeply about the relationship that you have with children because it is forming the people they are and that they will become.

— Dr. Jean Clinton

Deconstructing Big Ideas

- What does it mean to belong?
- When do you know a child feels like they belong?
- What is the difference between belonging and fitting in?
- How do we create spaces where difference is welcomed?

Close Read

Refer to the quote on the right

- What role does leadership play in your role as an educator when you consider your work in supporting IEYMH?
- How do you think about “power” in your work?
- What are the kinds of decisions that you make each day that connect science and practice?

Personal Writing

- Who am I?
- What makes up my identity?
- How does my identity show up in your practice?
- Share your thoughts with the group.

“

I believe sometimes educators feel like if the leadership doesn't believe or value this work as they do, then we can do nothing, and may feel as if their hands are tied. But educators get to decide. They get to decide every day how they welcome a child into the classroom. They get to decide how they're going respond to a crying child. They get to decide when the lights go on and when the lights go off. They get to decide whose back gets rubbed. They get to decide when children go in and outside. They have an awful lot of power.

And I think that power can also build a very particular kind of culture. And when you think about your belief around the kind of world you want to live in and the ideas of inclusion and belonging, I think when you understand as an educator the impact of the science connected to the practice, when you can understand that, you begin to shift practice and you'll make it happen.

— Lorrie McGee

🔍 Thinking Lens

- What stands out for you when you look at this image?
- What values do you see present?
- What do you think the children may be thinking or feeling?

Please feel free to pause the video and study another image of your choice.



Final Word

- Invite each individual to write a short reflection of the big ideas that resonated with them in the video. What new understandings do they have? What questions are still lingering on their minds?
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Final Reflections

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- This is important to me because...
- How will I bring these ideas into my practice...
- What questions might I carry with me...

Facilitator Final Thoughts and Reflections

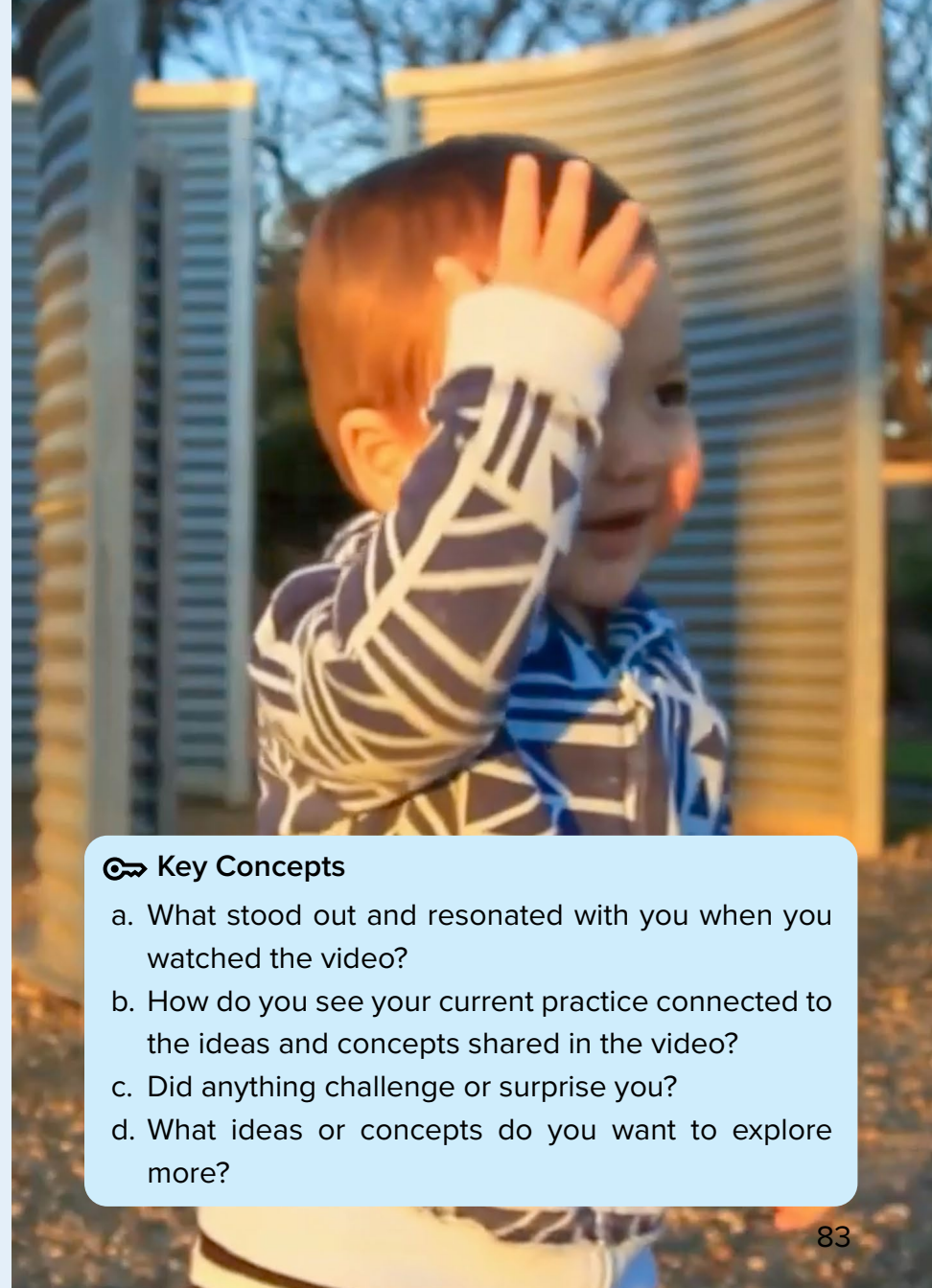
- What shifts in thinking are you beginning to notice in your community?
- How has this influenced your role as a facilitator?

Module Five

Self-Regulation

“We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.”

— Dolly Parton



Key Concepts

- What stood out and resonated with you when you watched the video?
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- Did anything challenge or surprise you?
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If you want to dig a little deeper with the group you may consider the following questions helpful.

- How does the text you selected connect to your values?
- What did you learn about yourself and others through this exercise?

“

It is absolutely impossible for a child in infancy and in toddlerhood and beginning in preschool, absolutely impossible for them to be self-regulated. They don't have the brain connections or the brain parts there. Their work is to develop the ability to recognize their stressor, to be able to figure out what do I feel like, what's happening in my body just now, and then do something about it. It evolves over time. And can I tell you, it can take a very, very long time Some of us are still in the process of figuring out self-regulation. Why is this so very important? Because what we know in infant and early years mental health the development of self-regulation is absolutely essential for managing emotion, for managing behaviors, for managing your sense of who you are.

— Dr. Jean Clinton

Deconstructing Big Ideas

- What comes to mind for you when you think about the idea that “all children will do well if they can”.
- What role does the social emotional environment impact a child’s ability to regulate?
- What strategies do you take up to support a child’s emotional and self-regulation?

Close Read

Refer to the quote on the right

- What do you think Lorrie is speaking about when she says “different ways of being in the world”?
- Consider some of the children that have challenged you in your work? What did they help you to learn about yourself, and how did they impact your practice?
- What does “all behavior is communication” may you think about?

Personal Writing

- Think about a place that you feel most comfortable in. Where are you? Who are you with? What does the environment around you look and feel like?
- How do you bring these aspects into your work with young children?

“

Every child brings different ways of being in the world and different dispositions, different temperaments, and all of these ways of being are for us as educators to learn to understand. All of these ways of being our gifts for us to learn about even when they challenge us. I often say that the children that challenge me the most offered me the greatest lessons in my work. When we can start to think about that there are going to be children that challenge our ways of being, there are going to be children that nudge us a certain way, but when we can look at the strengths of that child, and the gifts that they bring, and look deeply at that we can begin to understand that child. We also have to really understand that all behavior is communication, everything, they are giving us messages and our role is to listen.

— Lorrie McGee



🔍 Thinking Lens

- What captures your heart and mind as you look at this image?
- What do you notice about the relationships within the image?
- How might the environment be influencing this moment?
- How does this image connect to your own values?

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Final Word

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- Repeat the process for each member of the community of practice. (This is best done in groups of four or five).
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Final Reflections

- What are you most proud of in your role as a facilitator?
- What shifts did you notice in yourself through this work?
- What new challenges might you take up to continue to grow your practice?

Facilitator Final Thoughts and Reflections

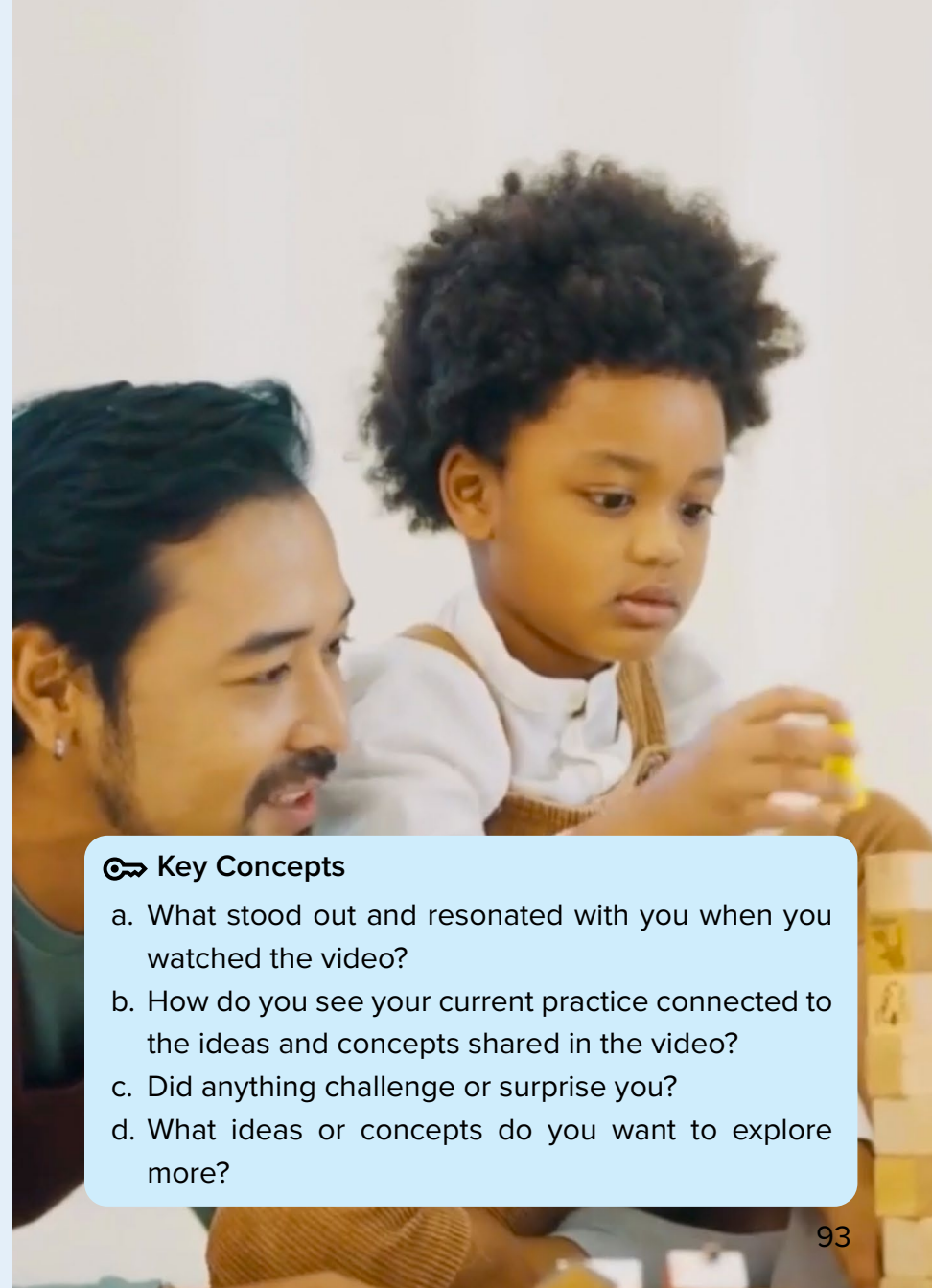
- What shifts in thinking are you beginning to notice in your community?
- How has this influenced your role as a facilitator?

Module Six

Engaging Families

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent, so just be a real one.”

— Sue Atkins



Key Concepts

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“

Families often feel a strong pressure from the school system around numeracy and literacy. I believe what's really important is for early childhood educators to be able to articulate the importance of dispositions for learning rather than this building of skills and knowledge in early childhood. Dispositions like curiosity, optimism, problem solving, critical thinking. An ability to know how to build a relationship with another human being. That's the work of early childhood.

— Lorrie McGee

Deconstructing Big Ideas

- What comes to mind for you when you think about the idea that “we want families to have that feeling of belonging, that they get to bring their true selves to the program and that the program sees them and that they feel seen.
- What role do you play in creating that feeling for families? What intentional practices do you take up in your program or classroom?
- How do you know when your families have a true sense of belonging?

Close Read

Refer to the quote on the right

- What do you think Lorrie is speaking on when she says “What are we giving our attention to?”
- Consider your engagements with families, what are the stories that you share at the end of the day?
- How does your documentation bring visibility to what you want to grow?

Personal Writing

- Consider the relationships you have with families. How do you celebrate the uniqueness of families?
- How do you learn about the child in the content of family and community and make connections to care?

“

I think one of the most important things that we can do is we can think about what are the stories that we share with families about what happens in our programs every day? In our early on programs when we’re watching children alongside families we can pay attention to what we are noticing. What are we giving our attention to? Are we giving our attention to how children are showing empathy for one another, being kind to one another? Are we watching as children learn how to enter play with one another? And are we bringing visibility to that in alongside families? And if not side by side, in our documentation in the stories that we share with families. Families don’t really want to hear about the pincer grasp and about eye-hand coordination. They want to know who their child is. And they want to know that you know who their child is. And it’s those stories that are the most powerful.

— Lorrie McGee



🔍 Thinking Lens

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- What do you notice about the relationships within the image?
- What perspectives are present in this moment?
- How does this image connect to your own values?

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Facilitator Final Thoughts and Reflections

- What practices have you been taking up that are impacting conversations differently than the first video?
- What have these experiences taught you about yourself?
- What do you take with you in your everyday practice?

References

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Acknowledgment

“Big Ideas for the Care of Tiny Humans” Reflective Guide is a component in a series of resources developed in 2023-2024 through the Infant and Early Years Mental Health Resources for ECE project. This project was born of the collaboration by Early Years Systems Managers in the City of Hamilton, Municipality of Chatham-Kent and Region of Waterloo. This group was later joined by a number of Early Years Systems Managers across Ontario, and as a result, further resource development has been possible.

Infant and Early Years Mental Health Resources for ECE, Project Team

Dr. Jean Clinton,
Lorrie McGee, RECE
Lois Saunders, RECE,
Simona Johnston
Compass Early Learning and Care, administrative lead
agency

Collectively we are committed to our vision and goal....

“In communities across Ontario, early years and child care programs will create and nurture conditions where all experience foundational conditions for healthy social emotional development and recognize when there are challenges to that healthy development.”

