

# **At Least the Cock Roach Waved Hello: Finding Strengths in Challenging Families**

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## **REFLECTION:**

*Why do we use a strengths-based approach?*

*What gets in our way of doing so?*

## **Get me OUT of here!**

**GROSSED OUT**

**STRESSED or FRUSTRATED OUT of our minds**

**BURNED OUT**

## **SUPPORTING OURSELVES:**

### **Gross Factor:**

- Smell: Vicks or scented lotion inside & under nostrils; damp Qtip swab nostrils after visit  
Febreze spray, change of clothes, fresh air (car windows, visit outdoors)
- Sights: View pictures similar to issue to desensitize yourself, occasionally focus your  
view out the window, do your visit outside
- Touch: Consider pros-cons of a play mat to sit on, carry wipes and use them out of sight  
to wash hands & bottoms of shoes, use washable materials

### **Stress & Frustration Factors:**

- Set realistic goals for yourself when working with families
- You are NOT that important... they will survive without you
- Use reflective supervision time to pour out what you are holding (pitcher not a basket!)
- Family first: yours, then theirs!
- TAKE TIME FOR YOU! TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

### **Burnout Factor:**

- Seek support (supervisor, co-workers, family, friends)
- Take a break
- Lighten your load or change your role
- Retrain & refresh

# REFRAMING

**A KEY STRATEGY FOR BOTH:  
WORKING WITH CHALLENGING FAMILIES  
SUPPORTING OURSELVES**

→ Look at family through a positive lens

*WHY:* The way we THINK about things impacts how we FEEL about them.  
Positive thoughts tend to lead to positive feelings.

Positive thoughts & feelings lead to:

- ✓ greater sense of accomplishment & satisfaction in our work
- ✓ improved perception of the families with whom we work
- ✓ better relationships with the family members with whom we work
- ✓ more positive thoughts & feelings among family members about themselves

→ Use language that reinforces family strengths & views things positively

Family is dysfunctional.	>>>>	Family is dealing with many issues.
Family is secretive.	>>>>	Family is very private

→ Teach families to SEE their strengths

- ✓ promotes a sense of hope
- ✓ improves mental health
- ✓ increases self-esteem and positive self-concepts
- ✓ fosters belief “we can change”
- ✓ energizes motivation

✓ Teach families to USE their strengths

- ✓ encourage families to use skills/strengths to reach goals
- ✓ co-maintain focus on what they CAN do
- ✓ be their hope-holder

To contact the presenter for staff professional development training, classroom consultation, behavioral analysis & positive behavioral support plans, reflective supervision of parent educators, program design or workshops for families:  
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