

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair and a young girl with curly hair, both smiling and hugging each other outdoors. The woman is wearing a light blue striped shirt, and the girl is wearing a white t-shirt. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a park or garden setting.

# Mutual Commitment to Serving Families

## Listening with Intention

Instructor: Christine Mattos, MSOD, PCC

**UC DAVIS  
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CENTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES

RESOURCE CENTER FOR  
FAMILY-FOCUSED PRACTICE

# Learning Objectives



## Participants will:

- Recognize barriers to effective communication and signs of bias
- Understand the impact of bias, assumptions and prejudice on creating and maintaining trust
- Apply techniques to listen for understanding and to ask insightful questions
- Practice and be able to describe differences between listening at three distinct and specific levels of listening
- Identify specific intentions for working with family members, county staff and community partners while serving in the role of the parent partner
- Appreciate how important it is to the achievement of positive family outcomes for parent partners to genuinely listen and ask questions in service to the desired outcomes for the family

# Agenda

- How We Communicate?
- Bias, Assumptions, Prejudice and Impact on Trust
- Being Present with Families
- Barriers to Listening with Intention
- Listening for Talents and Strengths
- Intentions in Service as Parent Partners
- Conclusions
- Levels of Listening—Experience and Practice
- Practice of Asking Insightful Questions
- Standards of Integrity
- Conclusion—Share Highlights of the Experience





# SHARED AGREEMENTS

**Be present, maintain confidentiality, be respectful, be curious,  
participate actively, listen with open interest, take excellent care of  
ourselves, support each other, enjoy our experience—and what else?**





# What Occurs in Conversations for You?

## When I:

- Tell People What to Do
- Explore Ideas with People
- Ask Questions and Listen?



# Turn to a Partner and Share Your Responses:

1. In your work with families, county staff and community partners, how do you communicate?
2. How do people tend to receive your communication (when you are telling, exploring, asking and/or listening)?
3. What is working well?
4. What communication-related challenges, if any, do you wish to overcome?



# How Do You Communicate With Family Members and Others in Your Role?

- When you originally meet?
- When you connect over time?
- When the relationship feels easy?
- When the relationship is experiencing challenges?

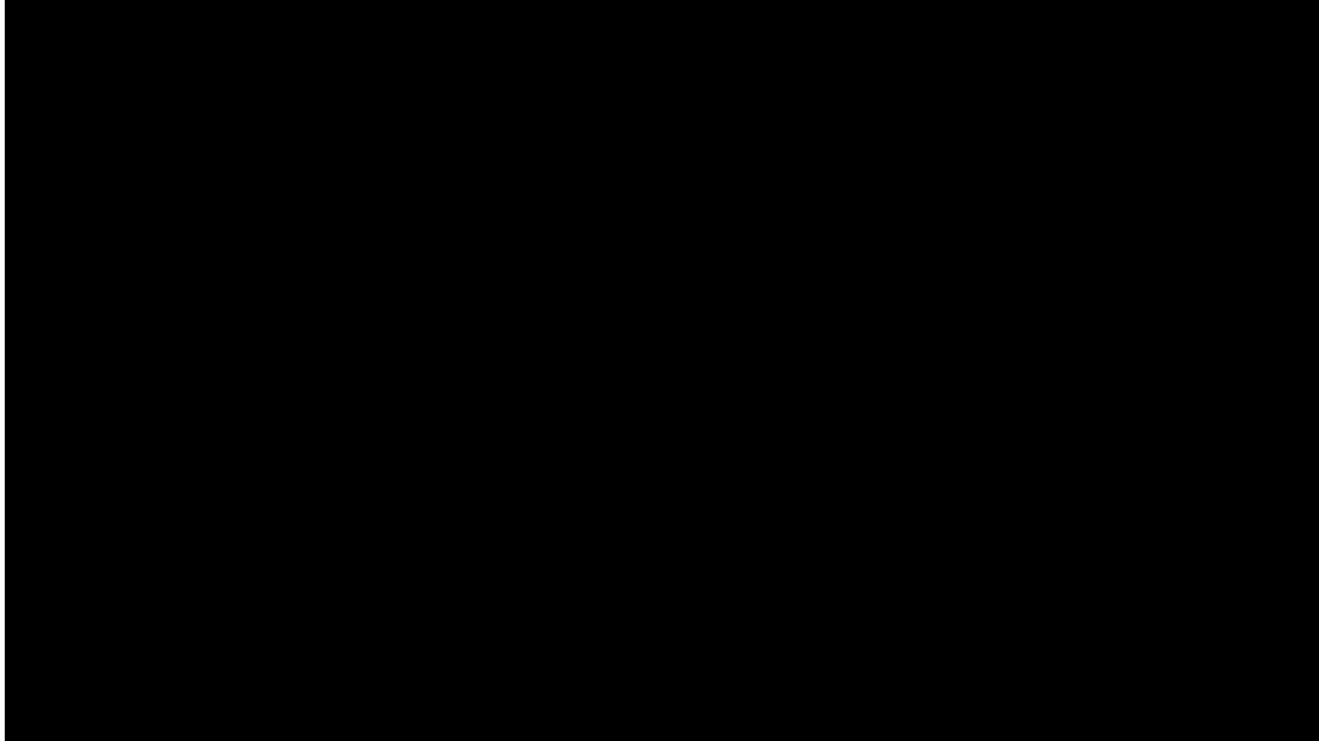




# Bias, Assumptions and Prejudice— When Do These Experiences Happen?



# Quick to Judge...



# Any Surprises Here?



# Bias Defined

An inclination of temperament or outlook; *especially*: a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment



© Merriam-Webster Dictionary, since 1928, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias>

# Assumption Defined

A fact or statement taken for granted.



<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assumptions>

# Prejudice Defined

A preconceived judgment or opinion; an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge; an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race or their supposed characteristics.



<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prejudice>



## Partner Talk:

When have you  
felt judged?  
What bias,  
assumptions or  
prejudice, if any,  
was present?



# How Do You Know When Bias is Occurring?

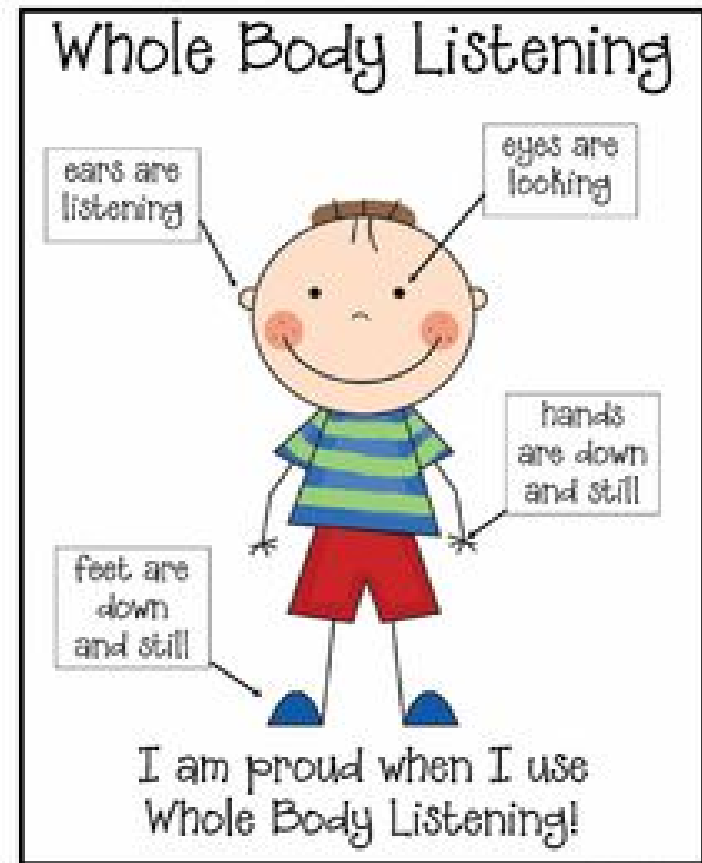
What is the impact of bias, assumptions and/or  
prejudice on trust?





# How Do We Demonstrate “Being Present” with Families?

- Use open-ended questions
- Ask clarifying questions
- Reflect
- Demonstrate interest
- Observe non-verbal communication
- Provide encouragement
- Summarize understanding



Most people  
do not listen with the  
intent to understand;  
they listen with the  
intent to reply.

Stephen R. Covey



# Barriers to Listening with Intention

- **Presuming:** to consider proven until contrary evidence is presented.
- **Assuming:** to suppose to be the case; presumed truth without proof.
- **Concluding:** to arrive at a judgment or opinion by reasoning.
- **Judging:** to form an opinion or conclusion about something.



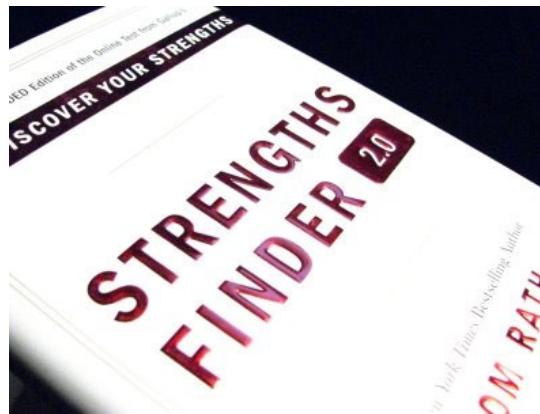
# As Parent Partners, How Do We Move Beyond the Barriers in Our Communication?



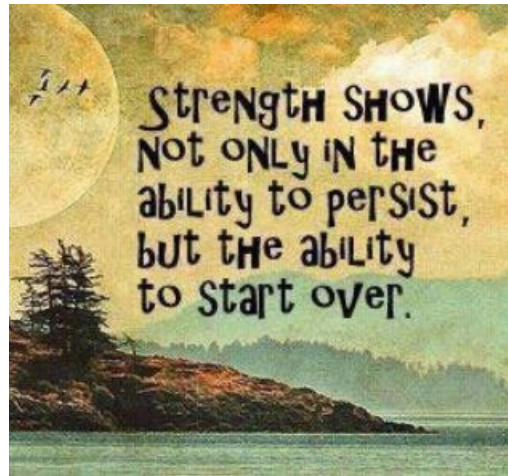
## Large Group Discussion

# Gallup, Inc. Strengths Coaching Training Defines Talent as:

A naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied.



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# Defining Strength

The ability to consistently produce a positive outcome through near-perfect performance in a specific task.

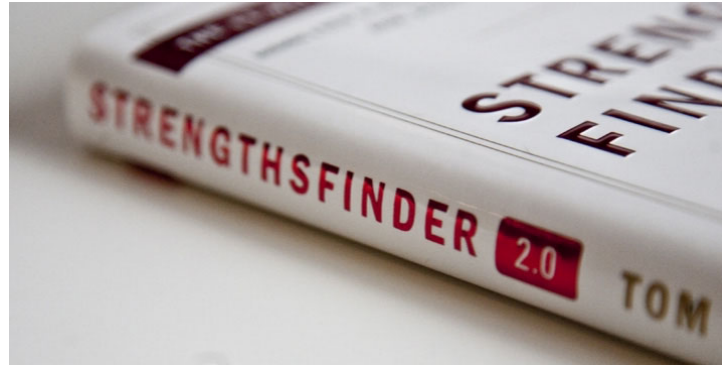
To finish with strength, start with talent!

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# Go Put Your Strengths to Work







# Exploration of Gallup, Inc. CliftonStrengths® Themes

In your handout, review the  
34 Signature Themes silently.

Prepare to note the top five themes that resonate most  
with you.

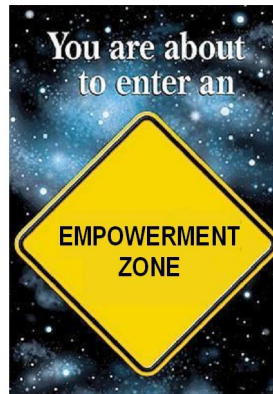
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<http://news.gallup.com/poll/166991/clifton-strengthsfinder-theme-descriptions-pdf.aspx>

# Testimonials

- Experience sharing (anyone who has completed the online assessment, as relevant)
- Sample of participants sharing their top five presumed themes and rationale...





# What are Your Intentions When Serving as a Parent Partner?

Journal and  
Share with a New Partner

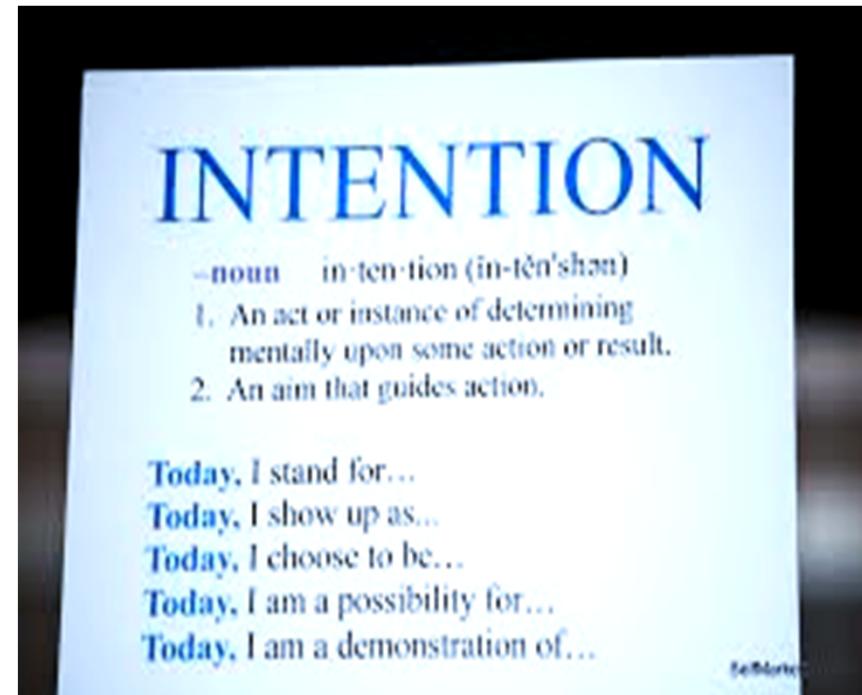
# Specifically, What Are Intentions?

in·ten·tion:

in'ten(t)SH(ə)n/

(noun)

- a thing intended; an aim or plan.
- synonyms: intent, intentionality, deliberateness, design, calculation, meaning.
- a person's designs.



# What are My Intentions for Working with Family Members, County Staff and Community Partners?

- To be the best \_\_\_\_\_ that I can be.
- To be a contributor to \_\_\_\_\_.
- To live a \_\_\_\_\_ life.

“Our **intention**  
creates  
our **reality**.”

Wayne Dyer

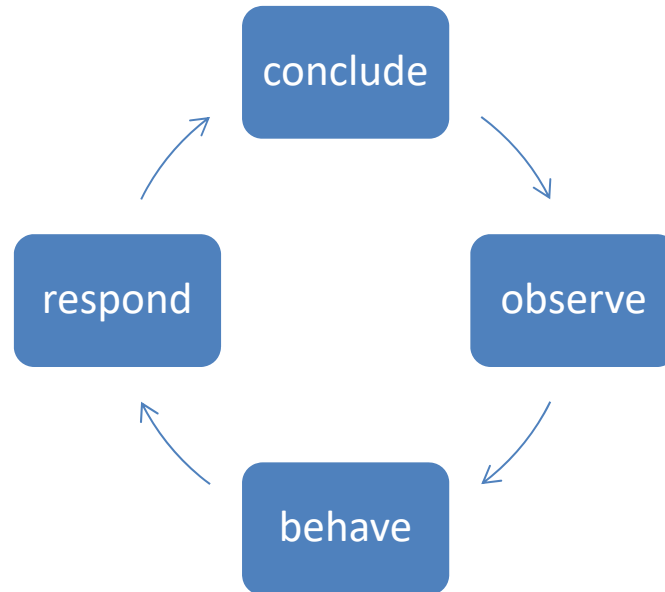


# What Complicates Communication?



- We bring our own experiences and values with us wherever we go.
- People often do not say (or claim to not know) what they really want.
- Many people are not comfortable with holding a quiet space for others to think and prepare what they would say if they had time to think. And, we are often not used to people really wanting to be with us while we figure out what is next for us to say.
- Some of us assume that we need to have the answer or to be right.
- People imagine that what worked for them will work for others.

# How Do We Arrive at Conclusions in Our Own Thinking?





We don't  
learn from  
talking; we  
learn from  
listening.

©QuotesEmpire.com

# Why Listen?



- The other person can experience being recognized as an expert on her/his life and can remember wisdom and past successes to draw upon.
- Listening is a way our society expresses value we have for others.
- Genuine listening may demonstrate appreciation for what they can and do contribute.
- Society recognizes listening as a sign of respect.
- To understand.
- Listening may provide comfort for both people involved in the communication.
- The other person may express what is wanted or needed with clarity.

# Levels of Listening

Every good conversation starts with good listening.

- Level 1. Internal: listening to the sound of our inner voices
- Level 2. Focused: there is a hard focus, like a laser, from person to person
- Level 3. Global: there is a softer focus and listening takes in everything between you and others

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# Coach as Listener...

## Hearing

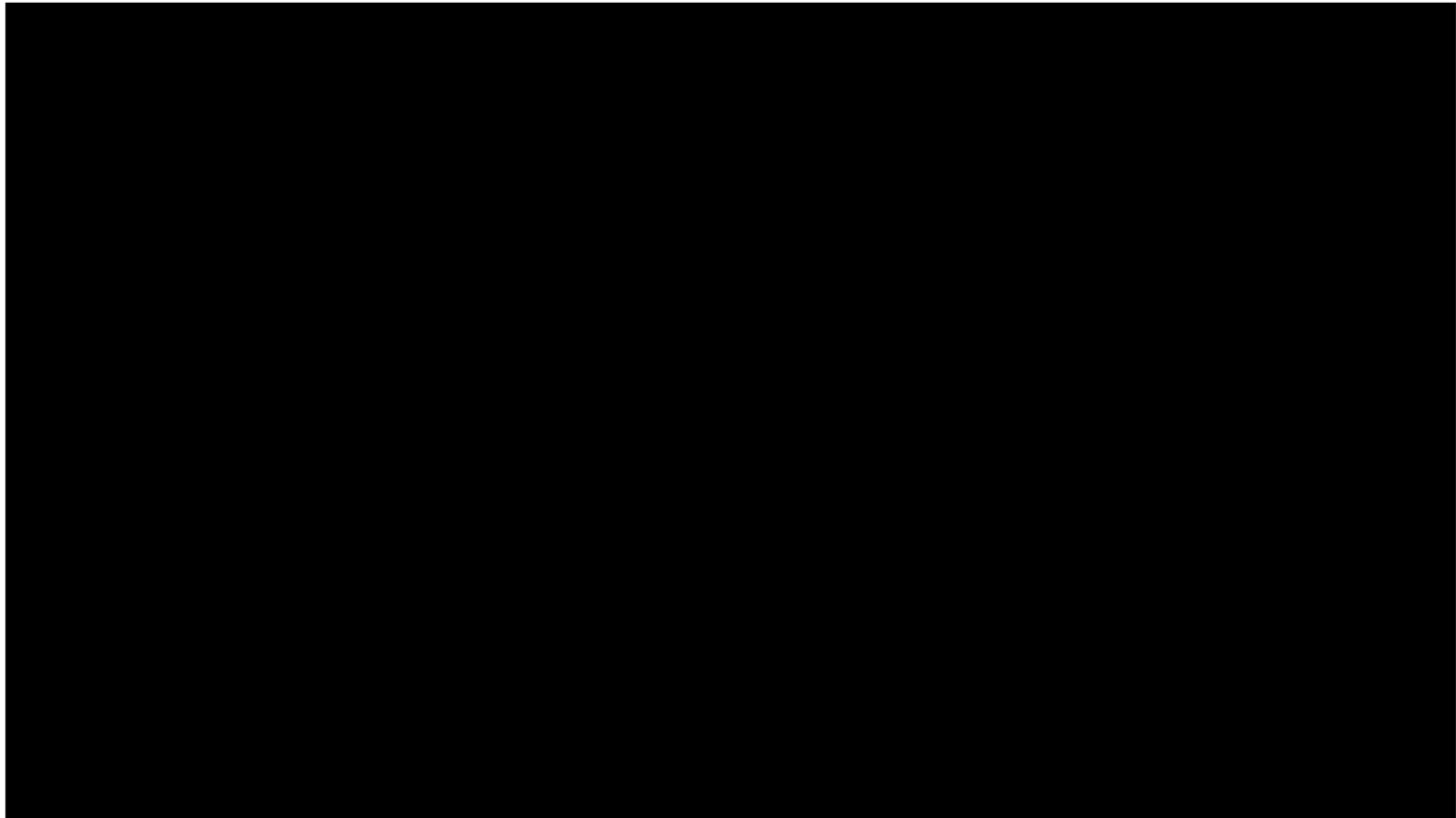
- Accidental
- Involuntary
- Effortless

## Listening

- Focused
- Voluntary
- Intentional

Coach, please ask your partner:

1. What is the very best aspect of your job these days?
2. What would you improve about your job this week if you could?
3. What do you plan to accomplish this month at work that will be meaningful to you?





“Stop it!”

Which Level of Listening  
is He Demonstrating?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ow0lr63y4Mw>







# Role Modeling and Practice

What are the Distinctions  
in Listening at Each Level?

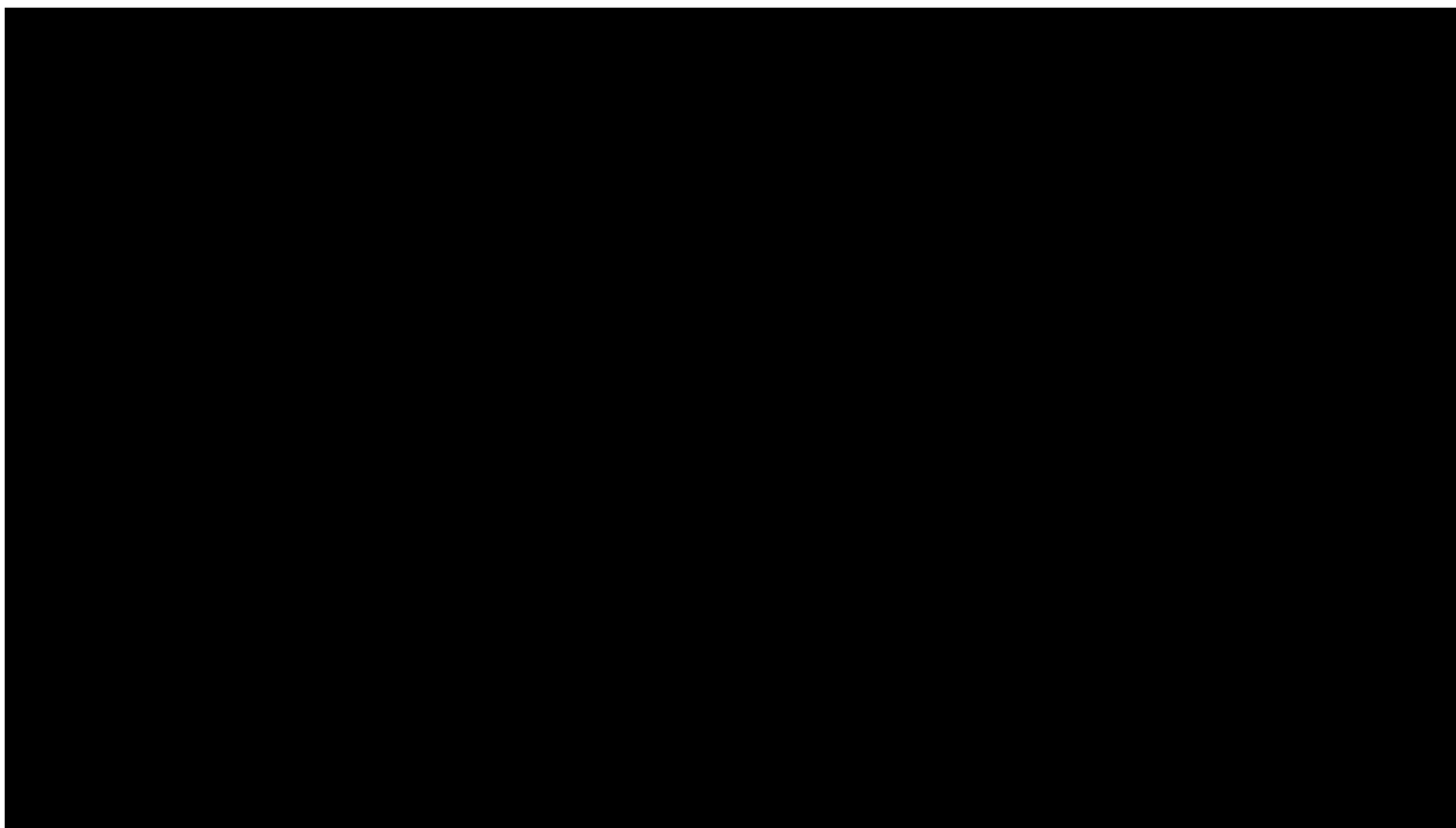
# Video: Listen for This...

# How Did This Parent Partner Listen with Intention?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boAa0LuEUvw>

## What Worked in This Video?



# When Seeking to Gain Understanding Effectively

- Listen
- Ask Insightful Questions

*Seek first to  
understand and then  
to be understood.*

*- Stephen Covey*

# Insightful Questioning Techniques:

- Show people that we believe they have all of the information they need within themselves
- Create buy-in and ownership of ideas
- Empower ourselves to do our jobs well and others to live their best lives
- Develops leadership capacity, inspiration and strategies that will be successful for the right reasons
- Creates authenticity and a genuine and respectful nature to our relationships
- In order to ask insightful questions, you must listen



*Coaching Questions: A Coach's Guide to Powerful Asking Skills, Tony Stoltzfus*

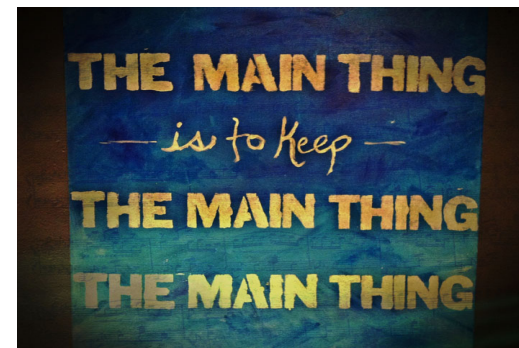
# Examples of Insightful Questions

- What do you want to accomplish today?
- Tell me more about that.
- What comes up for you when you imagine that happening?
- What are your options?
- When did that work for you?
- Is it reasonable?
- How are you hopeful about this?
- Where will that occur?
- Who can help you **or** what can you do to find out?
- Tell me about a time you were successful in a similar experience



# Let's Practice!

- Select a new partner.
- Determine who will practice coaching first.
- Choose a topic relevant to a family you support for which you could benefit from support in determining next steps.
- After the coach initially listens to the situation, the coach should ask only insightful questions; please do not provide advice or guidance in these conversations.
- When notified, change roles and repeat the process.





# Standards of Integrity

## Journal and Partner Sharing Activity:

- What are your values?
- What is important to you?
- How does integrity fit into who you are and how you do your work?



©1997-present, *Mastering Life's Energies* by Maria Nemeth, Ph.D.,  
<https://acecoachtraining.com/mastering-lifes-energies-book>

# What is Integrity?



“...telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.”

Integrity affiliates with the experience of being whole and complete.

<https://alexandracoulter.wordpress.com/tag/standards-of-integrity/>

(and Debrief)





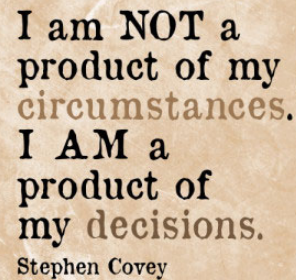
Beyond the Challenges,  
How Do We Promote and Accept People in Our  
Important Work?

How Must We Listen?  
(Large Group Discussion)

# Parent Partners are Known for Listening with the Most Positive of Intentions!

Engaging parents and families successfully in teaming strategies requires professional parent partners to possess an unbiased position—strategically listening without an agenda and remaining neutral and supportive.

Doing so, facilitates the development of trust and understanding that families need to let parent partner professionals journey alongside with them and provide meaningful support.



I am NOT a  
product of my  
circumstances.  
I AM a  
product of  
my decisions.  
Stephen Covey

[WWW.VERYBESTQUOTES.COM](http://WWW.VERYBESTQUOTES.COM)

# As a Result of Today's Experience, How Will You Prepare Next Steps for Working with Families?

- Journal about your initial thoughts to this question.
- When notified, identify a new partner with whom to share your ideas.
- Prepare to return for a large group debrief on your discoveries.



# Listening with Intention

One of the most **sincere**  
forms of **respect** is  
*actually listening* to  
what **another** has to say.

Bryant H. McGill

## Large Group Share: Highlights From the Day



# Mutual Commitment to Serving Families

Thank You For Your  
Participation in  
Listening with  
Intention!

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