

Live & Learn!

What Makes a Training Work?

Pam Balmer
PCANY Training & Staff Development

Core Training? Remember? Day One you're curious, Day Two, excited, mid-afternoon Day Three you are so overwhelmed you feel like your brain will explode! You think, "How will I ever remember all this; how will I learn to talk about all these things with families?" On Day Four you're more philosophical, and with certificate in hand and some encouraging words from your trainer, you're ready to go home.

So, what makes a training work? What can get in the way?

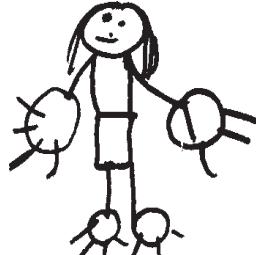
What gets in the way?

Let's start by looking at what we've noticed *doesn't* work. An expert lecturing to a room of bright faces might work in grade school, and maybe even into early college years, but with adult learners it just doesn't cut it. Bright faces can turn to yawns if the trainer lectures for too long. And adult learners have very full lives with plenty of responsibility outside the classroom. Real life distractions, whether personal issues or job-related issues, can be significant challenges for training participants.

And relationships matter. Every training occurs in a context of relationships—between trainer and participants and between the participants themselves. When any of these relationships isn't going well, the learning experience can suffer.

What makes a difference?

Trainers who use empathy, clear communication, and respect to build trust will be more effective in getting their message across. In adult learning, it is essential that the learners' experiences are valued.



Research shows that learning for adults is more likely to happen when learners:

- ✓ Know why they are there and that what they learn will be practical and relevant to their work.
- ✓ Are reasonably free from other demands on their time.
- ✓ Have plenty of opportunities to experience what is being taught through small group discussions, role plays, and networking with others who do the same work.
- ✓ Can bring their own life experiences into the training.

Learning is also maximized when trainers:

- ✓ Know what they are talking about and have expertise.
- ✓ Can balance meeting the needs of each group with meeting the goals of the training.
- ✓ Can share important information efficiently.
- ✓ Review and summarize periodically.
- ✓ Are respectful and recognize that most adult learners do not want to risk embarrassment.
- ✓ Remember that different people have different learning styles and provide opportunities to explore by seeing, hearing, or with hands-on practice.
- ✓ Have high expectations for the group.
- ✓ Provide chocolate (or some other treat).

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HFNY Goals

- ♦ **To systematically identify overburdened families in need of support**
- ♦ **To promote positive parent-child interaction**
- ♦ **To ensure optimal prenatal care and promote healthy childhood growth and development**
- ♦ **To enhance family functioning by building trusting relationships, problem-solving skills and support systems**

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Tenth Anniversary at Best Beginnings



Anthony (center) and his Great Aunt, Dona Ines (left), his legal guardian, receiving a certificate from Sobeira Guillen (right), Program Director of Best Beginnings. Anthony's family was the first to participate in this program, one of our first Healthy Families New York (HFNY) sites, over 10 years ago.

Ana Dias, former FSW, now Coordinator of Health and Education for Alianza Dominicana, the sponsoring agency of Best Beginnings, tells the story:

At intake, Anthony's mother was 16 years old and had delivered her first child four days previously. She had been born in Venezuela and was living in Washington Heights with an aunt, who was her legal guardian and became PC2. The family was interviewed in December 1994 and became the first one in the program.

Due to some serious issues in her life, Anthony's Mom granted full custody to her aunt. The family was well engaged in the program and received many appropriate referrals and support through the years, including Early Intervention services. Later, Anthony attended Herbert Birch Center in our community where he continued to receive educational services. His aunt also made sure that Anthony got medical care. Today, he still has the same pediatrician.

Above all, Anthony developed a secure attachment to his aunt. She was attentive to his development and needs, attended program activities and made sure developmental assessments were completed every six months. Today he still resides with her, her husband and their son. This family graduated from Best Beginnings on September 23, 1999. Today, Anthony is a healthy 10-year-old who attends PS 115 where the movie "Mad Hot Ballroom" was filmed. Anthony and his biological mother maintain sporadic contact. The family also has a relationship with Best Beginnings' parent agency, Alianza Dominicana, and seeks services as needed. Ines attended Arts and Crafts classes and was also a participant in the Family Ties Program, which provides case management services to families raising children other than their own biological children. Anthony also attends one of Alianza's After School Programs. We were very excited to have Anthony and his aunt join us for our Completion Ceremony this past November and for our 10th Anniversary Celebration.

We have accomplished so much since Anthony's family started receiving Healthy Families services! Since 1995, almost 15,000 families like Anthony's have received critical support through HFNY at a time when they needed it most, the birth of a child. More than 400,000 visits have been made in this time. Thanks to all of you! You have made HFNY what it is today—a wonderful support for new parents.

—Joy Griffith, Program Coordinator, NYS Office of Children & Family Services

Birth of a Workshop: Two Supervisors Present at the Annual Prevention Conference

**Tina Tison, Home Visiting Coordinator
Ulster County Healthy Start**

When we first received the call for proposals for workshops at the annual PCANY conference in Albany, we had very recently hired Lori Rotolo as FSW supervisor. Lori came to us with vast experience in the field of play therapy, and had expressed interest in doing educational trainings wherever possible, something she may yet come to regret!! I agreed to be a co-presenter, and there you go—we had a team.

The workshop we presented was "The Unspoken Language of Play." We decided we wanted a topic that was relevant to the work FSWs do and incorporated our own experiences. We wanted to offer a different way of considering children's play that went beyond using it as a vehicle for encouraging cognitive development and took into account the children's emotions and feelings about their world.

Since we wanted this to be interactive, we spent a lot of time considering different experiential activities to use. We gathered written materials we felt would be useful to include as hand-outs, and we practiced (perhaps obsessively) role plays to demonstrate different scenarios. When we thought we had it down, we felt prepared and excited. Then we got confirmation regarding how many



Drawing by Pearlanna, photo by Paul Deyss Photography

people were signed up, which turned out to be twice as many as we'd expected. Now it was time to panic!! We locked ourselves in an office, practiced some more, gathered toys and dress-up materials, and off we went to Albany, still rehearsing in the car.

Once we got started, after a wonderful introduction from Maria Rosado, the time seemed to fly. Our audience was wonderful, participating actively, asking great questions and volunteering for their own role plays at the end. Throughout the day several people told us how much they'd enjoyed and valued our workshop, which made us feel really good.

Back in Ulster County, all of our staff members who hadn't gone to the workshop were asking us to do it for them also. We also got a call from someone in Dutchess County DSS's Foster Care Unit who'd attended the workshop and wanted us to present it for their workers. We were very excited about this and did the workshop for them on June 24. The feedback we got from both Albany and

Dutchess was very helpful, as we try to tailor our presentation as much as possible to our audience.

So in conclusion, it's been great to know you all, but our agent's got us booked in Chicago next week, California after that—we're taking it on the road!!

2005 Prevention Conference

**Jenn Matrazzo
PCANY Communications & Public Education Coordinator**

The 10th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference, *Children Need Everyday Heroes*, held April 11-13 in Albany, brought together hundreds of professionals working in family support services, social services, early childhood education, mental health, health care, and more for three days of skills-building and rejuvenation.

As usual, the conference was very successful, with 98 percent of the participants who completed evaluations rating it as excellent to very good. "The workshops were very helpful," said one conference participant. "I plan to take everything I learned and the literature back to my agency."

Participants strongly agreed that the conference was relevant to their professional lives and offered them tools and ideas to take back to their jobs. Trish Peterson's *Talking with Babies*, a sign language workshop, for example, received high praise. "I do home visiting and use the *Parents as Teachers* curriculum," said a professional who attended the workshop. "*Talking with Babies* was very informative and fun. The families my agency serves will enjoy what we've learned."

The plenary speakers also enjoyed glowing remarks. The audience found Sonia Manzano's insights about the power and resilience of

children exceptionally moving. As one participant remarked, "Sonia is interesting, humorous, real, and inspiring."

Information about the 2006 Child Abuse Prevention Conference, April 24-26, will be available in early autumn. Be sure to check www.preventchildabuseny.org for details.



Program managers receive gifts and plaques at the Tenth Anniversary Celebration. Photo by George de Piro

About Clinton County



Cumberland Bay, Lake Champlain
postcard courtesy of Devvie Lebarre

Ann Pitkin PCANY Training & Staff Development

So where is Clinton County anyhow?

Way the heck up there! We're talking Adirondacks and Canada, and yes, it's cold in the winter. Very cold. Plattsburgh, where the Early Advantages Program has its offices, is located on gorgeous Lake Champlain, which separates northeastern New York from Vermont. There are more than 60 species of fish in the lake and looking across it, you can see the Green Mountains. On the North, Clinton County borders on Quebec.

More than 90% of the total county population of about 80,000 is white. Household and per capita income for the county are considerably below both New York and national averages.

About 320,000 acres of Clinton County land lies inside the Adirondack Park. The Park is the largest publicly owned park outside of Alaska, with a total area of nearly 6 million acres in twelve New York counties.

Plattsburgh, the county's largest town, was home to Plattsburgh Air Base from 1953 to 1994. Since the base closing, the Plattsburgh Air Force Redevelopment Corporation has been able to attract international corporations and manufacturing concerns to the former site, replacing some of the many local jobs that were lost at the time. Former military housing has also been converted into private housing that has proved attractive to many new homeowners.



Spotlight on Early Advantages

Judy Russell
Program Manager
Early Advantages

Clinton County is the northernmost county in New York, covering over 60 square miles, and is the home of Healthy Families New York's 11th Home visiting program, Early Advantages. Early Advantages is just one of the many programs of Behavioral Health Services North, Inc. (BHSN), a locally operated not-for-profit.

Early Advantages began in November 1997 with the help of a William B. Hoyt Children and Family Trust Fund grant through the Office of Children and Family Services. The program started very small with just two full-time and two part-time staff and grew steadily over the years. The original Program Manager, Judy Russell, and Program Supervisor, Sandy Peryer, still continue in their positions today. The program initially served 22 first time parents and their newborns in one zip code. In July 2001, Early Advantages was awarded TANF dollars, which allowed expansion of services throughout the county.

The first year was one of success and many challenges. While the program reached out to the community and awareness about Healthy Families grew, the area suffered a severe ice storm that halted movement and presented additional obstacles for residents of an already isolated area. In the year that followed, the county rebounded and the program slowly built its base in the community. The first participant was enrolled in January of 1998.

Today, Early Advantages has one part-time and eight full-time staff. Two staff share their time and attention in two new initiatives: a fatherhood program, Fathers 4 Families, and a Volunteer Parent Aide program, both of which began in 2004 with additional funding through the Children and Family Trust Fund. Many staff members have been on board for four or more years. Early Advantages has served nearly 400 predominantly first-time families through either Kempe assessment or home visiting services. Low staff turnover is the reason the program is so successful in engaging families and providing excellent outreach. Those individuals who pound the pavement and drive through wind, sleet, and snow truly reflect the commitment to excellence that Early Advantages is known for throughout the community.

The program provides many opportunities to families. Monthly round table support

groups, yearly picnics, educationally based activities and seasonal field trips and parties help to break up isolation and encourage relationships among participants.

With the new fatherhood initiative, Fathers 4 Families, a part-time Fatherhood Specialist conducts weekly small group meetings of Early Advantages dads to plan and identify issues for the large monthly groups. The monthly groups are also open to fathers from Even Start and Head Start and are activity based. Other fathers are also welcome on a referral basis.

The Parent Aide Program, for families who do not qualify for Early Advantages (because their child is over three months old, the baby is not the first child or there is no room in the program) utilizes volunteers who visit individual families. This initiative allows ten families to receive some modified services based on the Early Advantages model.

The program will be celebrating its third graduation this year. To date, eleven families have completed the program, and eight more will graduate this fall. Over the years there have been many incredible survival and success stories. Self-sufficiency and perseverance are a common thread among the families.

Strong community collaboration has been one of the keys to success in Early Advantages. The program has a 13 member Advisory Board that meets quarterly to review progress and invite community comments and suggestions. Memorandums of Understanding with the local OB-GYN and Pediatric providers help to ensure that pregnant and parenting families in Clinton County are aware of the services.

The program collaborates closely with the local Family Resource Center, Family Connections. Round Table and Fathers 4 Families support groups are offered regularly and raise awareness about activities and services available.

BHSN has a long history of success in home visitation beginning in 1978 with the original Parent Aide Program. That program focused on intervention with families who had a history of child abuse and neglect. Early Advantages continues that tradition by offering preventive services to first-time parents, prenatally and at birth, in an effort to promote healthy outcomes for overburdened families.

A Set of Twins!

Lynn entered Early Advantages with a high Kempe score. She had mental health issues, including self-mutilation and a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Lynn had been in and out of many foster homes in the South until she met her husband, who brought her to live in rural northern New York. She knew no one in the area except her husband's family, with whom they resided. Soon after Lynn found out she was pregnant with twins, Early Advantages contacted her. After the Family Assessment Worker met Lynn, she knew that this prenatal mom needed immediate support, and within a week Lynn had received a visit from her Family Support Worker. For the past two years she has been enrolled in the program and has completed many of her goals, including attending mental health counseling twice a week, getting back on medication, and breastfeeding her twins. Lynn and her husband are currently purchasing a trailer to put on land they own, and are looking forward to moving in. The twins are developing wonderfully due to phenomenal parent-child interaction. Through their relationship with their Family Support Worker, Lynn and her husband have become increasingly more self-sufficient and have built a support network in their family and in the community.



Jervon, an EA participant



Early Advantages staff and families picnicking

What Makes a Training Work? continued from Page 1

The physical environment also has an effect. For learning to take place, the room should be:

- ✓ Not too hot, not too cold, but as close to 'just right' as possible (Thank you to Goldilocks!).
- ✓ Spacious enough for people to sit and move around comfortably.
- ✓ Well-lit and well-ventilated.
- ✓ Supplied with water and other drinks to keep people hydrated.

Greg Kearsley (1996) summarized andragogy (adult learning): "Andragogy means that instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught. Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful. Instructors adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader." Other scholars in adult education point out that training is most effective when it is problem-centered, rather than content-oriented.

Venus and Mars in the classroom: Do women and men learn differently?

Many have made the observation that men and women parent differently. Do they also learn differently? In 1982, Carol Gilligan fanned the flames of gender studies with her book, *In a Different Voice*. Her research led her to the conclusion that female development and male development take different paths, an idea which thrilled some and horrified others. Gilligan said that men have a "justice orientation," and are inclined to establish pecking orders of ideas and things. Women, on the other hand, have a "responsibility orientation," and are inclined to learn through relationships and connecting with others. Some have described it as women learning from the outside in, or through their relationships with others and then relating it to themselves and their personal experience, and men learning from the inside out, or looking at their personal experience, then relating it to outside relationships. You could say the two approaches represent the yin and yang of learning.

Gilligan's ideas seem to be borne out by Lim Yuen Lie and Emil Cheong. In 2004, they published research showing that male college students tend to approach learning with a preference for logical thinking and evaluation (Gilligan's "justice orientation"), and female students seem to learn by relating new information to personal experiences (Gilligan's "responsibility orientation"). Lie and Cheong suggested that optimal learning conditions could be met by providing a mixed-gender learning environment and helping students connect personally to the material. As HFNY is predominantly staffed by women, we don't often have the luxury of mixed gender training groups, but when we do, we often hear positive comments from training participants about getting a broader perspective and keeping the group honest. We recognize the vital role that men play in children's lives. It may make sense to think about the differences between men and women when we think about strategies for engaging fathers and other men in our programs.

Reaching Out to Dads!

Fatima Abdullahi
PCANY Training & Staff Development

Some kids have fathers in their lives and some don't. Can single mothers provide great parenting and loving homes? Yes, they can. Overall, however, evidence indicates that fathers provide significant benefits to children.

Since the late 90's much research has been published about the positive impact of father involvement. In light of this information, HFNY programs have made various efforts to involve fathers. Some began to take a closer look at their practices, staff perceptions and the messages they were sending to the community.

I spoke with Peggy Sheehan, Healthy Schenectady Families; Corine Pitts, Westchester County Healthy Families; Sandra Lloyd, Successful Start in Brooklyn; and Donnamarie Blanchard, Healthy Kids in Rensselaer County about the steps they've taken to increase father involvement.



Drawing by Lauren
Photo by Paul Deyss Photography

Healthy Schenectady Families

The program works closely with Northside Family Center, a drop-in center in a Schenectady housing project that offers parent activities three times a week. Peggy says they've noticed what may be a new trend in Schenectady—an increase in the number of

stay-at-home dads participating in parent activities at the center. One possible explanation is that dads work late night shifts while moms work during the day. Healthy Schenectady Families(HSF) FSWs have been a presence at the center too. The program uses the expertise of a social worker with Family and Child Services of Schenectady who is in tune with the stressors experienced by the program's male population and regularly conducts support groups at the center. The center is seeing some HSF program dads. The goal is to attract dads from the community. Some have enrolled in HSF after attending the groups at the center.



Devon Cooper , Data Manager
from Successful Start

Westchester County Healthy Families

The program initiated a Father Involvement Committee, composed of program staff, to work on projects to increase father involvement. The committee assesses how the program is doing with regard to father involvement then develops and implements changes. One recent project was the formation of a mailing list for dads not living with the mothers of program target children. And the ideas keep coming. The program is currently considering revising home visit scheduling to accommodate dads who are day laborers and arrive home late, and offering one late-night visit each month. Westchester Healthy Families recently

added Osvaldo Franklin, a male FSW. He is the only bi-lingual worker on the team at the Mt. Vernon site, and he often challenges his co-workers to consider encouraging father participation in home visits.

Successful Start

Although he is not yet a father, Data Manager Devon Cooper has made himself available for parent support groups in an effort to encourage men to participate more actively in the program. Realizing that many program dads struggle with self-esteem issues and concerns about being good providers, he offered a workshop on Job Readiness and Father Involvement. He also offers ideas for incentives that might appeal to men, and has added to the program's collection of photos of fathers with their children to show that dads are welcome at Successful Start.

Healthy Kids

Dennis Linehan and John Gorman, FSWs, challenge their co-workers to think outside the box. They've been involved in doing research to uncover the key to getting dads involved. John's a dad himself and can offer a good spin on including fathers. Donnamarie, the Program Manager, advocates hiring more male FAWs and FSWs and suggests that we question beliefs about men not being able to teach women about breastfeeding and other sensitive female issues. She further stated that we shouldn't be hiring males just because we think that women can't engage dads, because they can. Rather, a home visiting team should reflect the population we serve, and so should include men as well as women.

Next Issue: Learn what Broome and Clinton Countys are doing to involve fathers!

Puntos Para Desarrollar el Cerebro de su Bebé

Check out the HFNY Website! Filled with usable information to help you do your job...for instance, Dr. Karpowicz's Tips for Growing Your Baby's Brain, in English and Spanish Just download and print!!

<http://healthyfamiliesnewyork.org>

Is Core Training Overwhelming?



Ellen Butowsky & Ann Pitkin
PCANY Training & Staff Development

Does the sun come up in the morning? Does water run downhill? Core training can be really overwhelming, especially for a new employee who might also be new to the field of family support or home visiting.

The training team was aware that the four straight days contained more information than most people could absorb. We talked about how to improve the situation. One obvious move would be to break up FSW Core Training into two segments of two days each, separated by a week or so of observations and orientation time back at program sites. (We still think this is a good idea!) But practical realities of program travel budgets would not really permit us to use this option on an ongoing basis.

Trainers met many times to discuss ways to help people stay more engaged in FSW Core, ways to increase learning, ways to make it as interactive as possible, and how to stay focused on the most important skills and concepts people really need to feel confident as FSWs.

Then, three years ago we began to work with Mick Polowy, a consultant from the Child Welfare League of America, who helped us look at ways the Supervisors and Managers could support learning. We looked at research and information on adult learning with him, and as a result shifted our view of the role of training in general. For example, we learned that 80% of learning occurs on the job and *not* in training, and that training itself only rarely enables a person to learn and apply new skills. Practice and observation on the job are needed for people to be able to use a new skill such as starting a conversation with a parent about the IFSP.

The result has been that the training team, with Pam Balmer as primary author, developed the Transfer of Learning workbook for FSW Core Training. This workbook is available at all sites for Supervisors and Managers to use during the training and orientation

period when a new FSW is hired. The workbook is full of structured activities that can be used before and after attendance at the Core Training. Supervisors pick and choose which activities suit them and the person they have hired.

Reactions to the Workbook

Susan Kimball, FSW Supervisor, Healthy Families Oneida: "By doing the pre-Core activities, new workers have a better understanding of what to expect, and also it gives them a better expectation of what will be asked of them when they return to the office after training." Susan also likes the post-Core activities. She has used them right up until a worker's six-month performance review. Using the adult learning principles reflected in the TOL manual, she bases her selection of activities on staff's previous work experiences and interests. She hands them the activities and when appropriate, gives them choices about what they will put into practice.

Wendy Bender, Trainer from PCANY, said of a recent training, "One of the attendees pulled out a binder of TOL activities she had been working on. She asked the other members of the group if they had this material, creating a wonderful discussion about all of the pre-CORE activities they had each done. This group came into CORE with more knowledge and was able to get into greater depth in discussions of topics during the week."

FSW Supervisor Sharon Gee from Healthy Families Niagara adds: "I love the way the forms are set up for easy documentation. After an activity is completed, the form is given to data entry so that our new staff gets credit for each training activity that they complete. We all know how important credit for trainings is!"

PCANY is pleased to announce two future TOL endeavors: the upcoming release of an FAW TOL workbook and a national marketing of FSW and FAW TOL workbooks to HFA programs.

*Back Row: Rosa Morel, Best Beginnings, Carol Peeling and Kathy Cerney, Building Brighter Futures for Broome County, Rosemary Miller, CAMBA, Maria McCormick, Ulster County Healthy Start, Pam Balmer, PCANY Trainer, Lori Rotolo and Pam Denney from Ulster.
Front Row: Pat Bennett, Healthy Families of Sullivan County, Tina Tison, Ulster, Ellen Butowsky, PCANY staff, Sara Colon, Ulster.*



Some people just can't get enough! At the Supervisor and Manager training in February in Poughkeepsie the enrollment was an interesting mix of folks new and old. One program, Ulster County Healthy Start, chose to send their entire supervisory team to the training. This is a great refresher when there's room in a training.

Coming November 29-December 1!

HFNY Advanced Training Institute “One Star At A Time”

The theme for the HFNY Advanced Training Institute to be held at the Prime Hotel in Saratoga from November 29-December 1, 2005, will be, “One Star at a Time.” It is based on the beloved story of a little girl who inspires a crowd to help her do the impossible job of saving thousands of starfish washed up on a beach (see www.campstarfish.org/starfishstory.html). This Institute will be the third for HFNY. It will provide opportunities to learn new skills, share resources, meet peers from other sites and have fun!

We hope you all had the opportunity to complete a survey of your training needs and interests. (Thanks to Jeff Luks at the Center for Human Services Research for collating all of the surveys.) The information helped us identify topics you are most interested in. That information became the focus of the request for workshops which was recently emailed to all of the program managers. We hope that you will consider submitting a proposal if you have some special expertise to share. We have also confirmed three wonderful keynote speakers. Dr. Terrie Rose, Associate Director of the Irving B. Harris Training Center for Infant and Toddler Development, has expertise in the complex issues surrounding women who are parents and are challenged by mental illness, substance abuse, and issues related to poverty. Dr. Monica Sweeney is the Medical Director of the Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center and is on President Bush's AIDS Council. Dr. Harvey Karp is a nationally known pediatrician who wrote a book called, *The Happiest Baby on the Block*, and is also an expert on toddler communication. As we get closer to the time of the Institute, we will have more news about workshops and schedules. In the meantime, please contact Rona White-Allen (OCFS) or Wendy Bender (PCANY) with suggestions or recommendations.



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