

# ENGAGEMENT

## Guide

### MiTEAM Specialist Led Application Exercises



June 2016

# MiTEAM Specialist Application Exercise 1: Empathy

**Purpose:** To practice accurately perceiving other’s thoughts, feelings or experiences and communicating this understanding to the other in an empathic way.

<b>Planning</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	1. Large paper and markers
<b>Preparation</b>	<p><b>Logistics:</b> You may have up to 30 participants in each application exercise. You are encouraged to ensure participants are from mixed programs.</p> <p><b>Approximate length:</b> 45 minutes</p> <p>Write the two parts of empathy (perceive and communicate) on a board or large piece of paper that everyone can see. Treats individual(s) with empathy; demonstrated by two or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asks about and communicates understanding of individual(s)’s concerns.</li> <li>• Uses clear common language.</li> <li>• Asks about and communicates understanding of individual(s)’s trauma history.</li> <li>• Acknowledges and addresses an individual(s)’s experience, feelings and/or nonverbal communication.</li> </ul>

<b>Outline</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> To welcome participants and provide a quick overview of empathy.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b> Welcome. Today are application exercise is around empathy. As you reviewed in the tutorial, empathy has two parts. We are going to practice 1) accurately perceiving other’s thoughts, feelings or experience and 2) communicating this understanding in an empathic way.</p> <p><b>Script:</b> As a quick reminder, empathy is conveyed by making statements rather than asking questions. Being empathic is not offering solutions or giving “silver lining” statements. Empathy statements should begin similar to, “Sounds like...” or “So what I hear you saying is...” Refrain from saying things like, “I understand...” and “Well, at least...”</p> <p><b>Note:</b> As an alternative to the script above, you may show Brene Brown’s video on empathy <a href="http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Power+of+Empathy+Video&amp;view=detail&amp;mid=40548622B1834D85D1D440548622B1834D85D1D4&amp;FORM=VIRE">http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Power+of+Empathy+Video&amp;view=detail&amp;mid=40548622B1834D85D1D440548622B1834D85D1D4&amp;FORM=VIRE</a>.</p> <p><b>Script:</b> We will begin today by doing a small group activity.</p>
<b>Practice</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> To practice being empathic.</p> <p><b>Small group activity:</b> Take 5 minutes to think about a family that you currently work with. For those of you that don’t have a current caseload, think of a family you’ve worked with in the past. Individually, create a 2-5 sentence story from the family’s perspective on something (e.g. an experience with their child that day, how their day has gone thus far, their experience with a service provider, etc.) You may want to jot a few notes as you are going to share your</p>

	<p>story with a couple of your peers (give them 5 minutes and then call time).  Now, find a partner and situate yourself somewhere in the room where you are comfortable. You are going to take 10 minutes for this activity. One person will go first by sharing their story. Tell the story as if you are the family member. After you share, your partner will practice making an empathic statement based on the story you shared. The person who shared the story will either give a thumbs up, meaning they experienced the statement as empathic, a thumbs down meaning they did NOT experience the statement as empathic or a thumbs in the middle, meaning that the statement could use a little work. Then, together review Fidelity Indicator #2 (written in the front of the room) and determine if the empathic statement met the indicator. Once you've done this, switch roles. What questions do you have for me (answer questions)? (give 10 minutes for the activity and call time).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> As participants practice, listen and support the use of statements. Recognize the challenge of not asking questions.</p> <p><b>Large group discussion:</b> What was easy, what was hard?</p> <p><b>Small Group Activity:</b> Now find another partner and repeat the process. Take 10 minutes to each share the story, give an empathic statement, rate with a thumbs up/down/middle and then review if the statement met the fidelity indicator (give them 10 minutes).</p> <p><b>Debrief:</b> (ask the following questions to elicit discussion around the use of empathic statements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was easy, what was hard?</li> <li>• Was it difficult to not use questions?</li> <li>• What statements did you experience as empathic, please share a specific example?</li> </ul>
<b>Closure</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Provide closure and motivation for using empathy in our everyday work.</p> <p><b>Final Thoughts:</b> At the core of each of us is a desire to connect with others. Brene Brown says that connection is the essence of the human experience. Empathy fuels this connection, this human desire, and it brings meaning to our lives. By using empathy, by connecting with others, we can set the stage for healing to occur, and through healing we support children, youth and families to reach their full potential.</p>

## MiTEAM Specialist Application Exercise 2: Power Differential

**Purpose:** To increase awareness about how statements can create or reinforce an imbalance of power and to practice using language that lessens the power differential.

<b>Planning</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Copies of Worksheet 1 for 2 volunteers.</li> <li>2. Copies of worksheet 2 and 3 for each table.</li> <li>3. Large paper and markers</li> </ol>
<b>Preparation</b>	<p><b>Logistics:</b> You may have up to 30 participants in each application exercise. You are encouraged to ensure participants are from mixed programs.</p> <p><b>Approximate length:</b> 45 minutes</p> <p>Print out worksheets.</p> <p>Write the selected fidelity indicator on a large piece of paper and post in front of the room. Acknowledges his/her authority and the disproportionate amount of power in the relationship; demonstrated by 2 or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions in a non-confrontational posture</li> <li>• Empowers individual(s) to share own story</li> <li>• Uses statements that lessen power differential</li> <li>• Conducts meeting in an environment chosen by individual(s)</li> <li>• Empowers individual(s) to take ownership of their role in the case planning process</li> </ul>

<b>Outline</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Welcome participants, share the purpose of the application exercise and provide a reminder about the definition of power differential.</p> <p><b>Script:</b> Welcome. The purpose of today’s application exercise is to increase awareness about how statements can create or reinforce an imbalance of power and to practice using language that lessens the power differential. As a quick reminder you learned in the tutorial that power differential is, “the role difference between two people that results in vulnerability on the part of the less empowered.” The imbalance of power in a caseworker-parent relationship is inherent as the caseworker takes on a role of perceived, implied, and real authority.</p> <p>We are going to do an activity to illustrate this concept.</p>
<b>Practice</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> To practice making statements that can lessen a perceived, implied or actual power differential.</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> Worksheet 2 and 3</p> <p><b>Small Group Activity:</b> At your tables review Worksheet 2 together. Some of you may have seen this is the resource section of the tutorial. Next, as a group read the vignette on Worksheet 3. We’ll take 15 minutes for you to work with your table partners to create 2</p>

	<p>different statements that could be used to lessen the power differential. Make sure that your statements meet the selected fidelity indicator (posted on the wall). Please pick one person to share with the larger group (provide them 15 minutes).</p> <p><b>Debrief:</b> (ask each group what their experience was with the activity and ask them to share their statement).</p> <p><b>Handout:</b> Worksheet 1 for two volunteers</p> <p><b>Large Group Activity:</b> Now we'll do a large group activity that builds off of the tutorial. For this activity I need two volunteers to read a short script I have prepared. One volunteer will be the parent (Lisa/Larry Jones) and the other is going to be a CPS caseworker. (Solicit two volunteers and provide them with Worksheet 1. Have them look over the script while you explain the scenario to the group). Lisa/Larry Jones is a 30 year old mother/father of two. Our volunteers will read a dialogue that occurred between Lisa/Larry and her/his CPS caseworker during a home visit for an initial CPS complaint. The complaint received was regarding home conditions, suspected drug use, and failure to ensure that her/his 10 year old child is taking his prescribed medication. Lisa/Larry has had one prior CPS referral for allegations of improper supervision due to substance abuse that was closed after successfully completing services (Ask the two volunteers if they are ready and ask that they read their script).</p> <p>Lisa's/Larry's, please visually depict the size difference between you and your caseworker.</p> <p>Now, as the rest of the group we are going to practice making statements to lessen power differential. "Lisa/Larry," as people share their statements, please depict the change visually by moving or asking the caseworker to change visibly. Let me provide an example to get us started. (Provide example and show them what it connects to in the fidelity indicator). Now, I will open it up to the group to share ideas by calling them out (do this for 5-10 minutes).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Facilitate the discussion and help the volunteers determine how they should move as statements are shared. When or if there are messages that are not helpful, e.g. "I know how you feel," correct these statements. Lessening the power differential takes time, so if the parent barley moves, normalize this and share with the group the reality of building relationships where there is a lengthy history of trauma.</p> <p><b>Debrief:</b> "Lisa/Larry" what was your experience with this activity? What were other's impressions? What were some of the messages that were particularly helpful?</p>
Closure	<p><b>Objective:</b> Provide closure.</p> <p><b>Final Thoughts:</b> The reality is Children's Services doesn't have a great reputation with the public. We are seen in a position of authority. We have the power to threaten the homeostasis of the families we serve. At some level, we represent failure. We can't let the story stop here. Lessening the power differential is essential to engaging individual families and creating a community that protects children. Using statements to lessen the perceived or actual power differential allows us to build a bridge to the family, to the community, so that we can all work together towards a common goal.</p>

# ENGAGEMENT

Worksheets  
MiTEAM Specialist Led Application Exercises



## Worksheet 1: Power Differential Script

**CPS caseworker:** I am from CPS and we need to discuss a complaint I received. It was reported that your home was unkempt, your 10 year old son is not taking his ADHD medication, and that you are using illegal drugs. I can already see that your house needs to be cleaned up, and I need you to submit to a drug test while I am here today.

**Lisa/Larry:** I have been sick and haven't felt up to cleaning my house this week, and my son isn't on his medication because I don't have anyone to take me to get his prescription filled at the moment because my ride canceled on me, and I don't use drugs!

**CPS caseworker:** It sure looks as if it's been far longer than a week since you last cleaned your house, and it's been reported that this isn't the first time you failed to keep your son on medication that he needs to keep his behavior under control. Now I need you to take this drug test or I can get the court involved and they will see to it that you take the test.

**Lisa/Larry:** I feel like you are just giving me orders and this is not the kind of help that I need. You are not listening to what I am saying. I already told you that I couldn't get a ride to the pharmacy.

**CPS caseworker:** I need you to cooperate with me so we can avoid getting the courts involved. Did you or did not you get your son's prescription filled? I can clearly see that your home is a mess, and I pulled your history and you DO have a history of using illegal substances.

**Lisa/Larry:** I have been through all of this before, and did what you people wanted.

**CPS caseworker:** Apparently those services didn't benefit you, because I have had to come back here. Were you going to submit to the drug test, or do I need to notify the court that you are not cooperating with me?

## Worksheet 2: Strategies to Address Power Differential

Power differential is the role difference between two people that results in vulnerability on the part of the less empowered.

### Partner with Youth and Families

- Acknowledge your role is to ensure the safety of the child.
- Appreciate and respect self-protection that parents use in response to the differential of power; avoid viewing it as non-compliance.
- Acknowledge the parents' love for their children and their fear of helplessness in maintaining custody (getting custody returned) because of the threat of DHHS, which has to be seen in the context of trauma history that many parents have experienced
- Communicate the limitation of workers to the youth and family.
- Join the family's perception of their world; enter and partner with them where they are.

### Maximize Physical and Psychological Safety for Children and Families

- Support the parents being able to care for their child.
- Involve team members who care for the child and family's safety (physical and psychological).
- Provide services and give resources necessary to parent the child safely.
- Educate the child and family on trauma.

### Enhance Child Well-Being and Resilience

- Acknowledge that ultimately, if there is a conflict between supporting the parent and what the agency/the court perceives as a risk to the child, our priority is to protect the child.
- Build on the child's educational, emotional, and physical well-being.

### Enhance Family Well-Being and Resilience

- Access the family's strengths, assets, informal, and formal team members.
- Access and honor families' past successes and areas of resiliency.
- Recognize and respect the family's history of trauma.



## Worksheet 3: Vignette

My name is Jonathan. I am a hard working construction worker. My job is very physically demanding, and I often relax with a beer or two when I get home. My wife, Joanie, was recently laid off from her job as a home attendant. We have four young children and were barely making ends meet before Joanie lost her job. The financial stress is mounting. Lately it is beginning to create a strain on the family. Joanie says I drink too much. I don't drink any more than I did before. She's just more aware because she has nothing else to do. So, we've been arguing more than normal.

Last week was the worst argument we've had. Our oldest son got scared and ran to the neighbors. They called the police. Now we have some barely twenty-something-year-old telling us how to run our lives. She came in accusing us of domestic violence in the presence of the children. And since I had a few beers before the incident, I have been branded an alcoholic. She is telling me that I have to complete an alcohol assessment, and any recommended treatment.

Now I know what an alcoholic looks like; I also know what real domestic violence is. My father drank excessively, and beat my mom when he was drunk. I could never be like him. But this worker can't or won't hear me. Just because I drink a beer almost every day after work, she is certain I have a problem. So, do people who drink a glass of wine daily have a problem too, I asked. She just glared at me. I am at least 30 years her senior, but she has a way that makes me feel powerless. I have never felt that my family was in a situation that I could not work to get us out of before now. I feel guilty, irresponsible, and less than the man of my house. I want to work towards a solution, but with her there is no compromise. It's the agency's way. Period.