THE BURKE FOUNDATION

Early Relational Health: Principles and Applications

The vision of Early Relational Health recognizes both the ***universal needs*** of children and families and the ***unique practices and partnerships*** essential in each community. Through conversations with families and professionals, we identified principles that are universally applicable while not prescribing one-size-fits-all solutions for families and communities. Here is a summary:

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE
Embedding Equity within Early Relational Health

Equity of participation, resources, supports, and opportunities is both a goal and process for Early Relational Health initiatives.

Applications to Practice and Program:

- Engage, recognize, and compensate families for their knowledge, participation, and leadership in developing initiatives, improving programs, and deciding investments.
- Balance evidence-based interventions with community-based strategies to adapt to and meet the diverse needs of families and communities.

PRINCIPLE 1
Trust Parents

Effective Early Relational Health interventions trust that all parents want to, are capable of, and strive to provide the care their children need.

Applications to Practice and Program:

- Reframe communication and messages away from family and community deficits to strengths and assets.
- Focus professional practice and programming on identifying, affirming, and strengthening the knowledge, skills, and capacities families already have.

PRINCIPLE 2
Focus on Simple, Everyday Interactions

Simple, everyday human interactions are the essential building blocks of Early Relational Health.

Applications to Practice and Program:

- Help parents recognize the impact of simple, ordinary moments with children.
- Create opportunities for trusted professionals to observe and affirm families' everyday, routine interactions.

PRINCIPLE 3
It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

All families and children need and benefit from familial, community, and professional supports and resources.

Applications to Practice and Program:

- Develop messaging and communication approaches to normalize all families' need for social and relational supports.
- Cultivate and invest in formal and informal networks of support among parents and community members.
- Recognize and support parent and community leaders who serve as important connectors and hubs for families.

Download the full report at https://burkefoundation.org.

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PRINCIPLE 4

Meet Families Where They Are

A robust system to promote Early Relational Health must identify and meet families across a range of geographical, logistical, and developmental touchpoints.

Applications to Practice and Program:

- Locate and integrate services in places where families already visit and trust.
- Adapt flexibly to families' evolving needs rather than imposing one-size-fits-all interventions.

PRINCIPLE 5

Build Parallel Relationships

A child needs trusted, reciprocal, and responsive relationships to grow in a healthy way, as do the parent and caregiver and the professionals who support them.

Applications to Practice and Program:

- Develop and integrate relational principles into professional practice – whether in direct service, professional development and supervision, program management, or grantmaking – that are congruent with the broad vision of relational health.
- Build communities of practice with professionals across service sectors, roles, and credentials.

Braiding Together Principles of Early Relational Health Practice

Embed Equity WITHIN EARLY RELATIONAL HEALTH

TRUST PARENTS

FOCUS ON SIMPLE, EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD

MEET FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE

BUILD PARALLEL RELATIONSHIPS

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