The following tips and considerations are helpful to reflect on when building relationships with families.

1. **Remember that one child may have the diagnosis of autism, but the whole family is affected.**

What happens to one family member has an impact on the other - other family members may need attention as well as the child with ASD.

Family plays a central role in the development of a child - children learn and grow as they participate in their homes and neighborhoods around them.

In recognizing the role of the family as the prime force behind the child’s development, providers can begin to build mutually respectful, collaborative relationships with the families they serve.

2. **Recognize the importance of an information and intervention balance for the family.**

EI providers need to be sensitive to the amount and complexity of information, ideas, and even inspiration a family can consume at any given time. Information and encouragement are very important, but balance is also important.

Healthy parents, happy siblings, supportive extended family & friends also contribute to the child’s development and success. Providers need to balance child focused interventions with the family’s outcomes.

The team can help the family by including the child in the everyday activities WITH the family.

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**Books to Read and Share with Parents as Informational Supports**


3. **Provide access to additional resources as needed to support the families’ intervention efforts.**

Many families also need access to additional resources, e.g. respite, referrals, family-to-family support, insurance, organizations.

Listening to their words and hearing where they are rather than assuming an emotion (e.g. denial) helps you to respond with the most appropriate resources and supports.

Have your resources ready and available but offer them to families based on their individual needs and priorities. More isn’t always better—finding just the right amount at the right time is the goal.

4. **Support the family as the child’s first and most fundamental relationship.**

Building the child-parent relationship increases the parent’s capacity to be a responsive communication partner for their child.

Encourage the family to have time to be a family doing what is important to them as a family.

The caregiver and child relationship should be the ultimate intervention goal.

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**References**


