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Translating Theory to Practice: New Resource

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Tackling the Tough Stuff: A Home Visitor's guide to Supporting Families At Risk

Angela M. Tomlin & Stephan A. Viehweg (2016) Brookes Publishing Co.: Baltimore.

Relationships are at the center of this very illuminating and practical book that integrates developmental and clinical theories with many examples for home visitors to support effective service with families and, most important, healthy outcomes leading to growth and change. Connections between parents and child, parents and providers, and providers and supervisors provide the central theme throughout the book, with continuous reminders that relationships offer the cornerstone for effective service provision and the instrument for optimal growth and change.

Reflective practice goes hand in hand with relationship-centered service. The authors recognize the tremendous stressors that families face. Stress often affects parental capacity to care sensitively and effectively for their very young children. Stressors may include a diagnosis of significant mental illness, parental depression, a motor or sensory impairment, an intellectual disability, substance use or addiction, or domestic violence. Past and present experiences of trauma and loss, as well as economic struggles and severe poverty, exacerbate these risks.

After describing barriers, challenges, and risks, the authors offer practical tips and strategies for home visitors to use when entering into relationships with very vulnerable young children and families. Among the most creative strategy is a problem-solving framework, PAUSE, that blends relationship and reflective skills. The acronym for PAUSE is Perceive, Ask, Understand, Strategize, and Evaluate. The authors offer illustrations for each component, exploring ways to think deeply and reflectively in partnership with families.