



**AIMHiTN**



**Working with families:**  
A strength-based  
approach to build a family's  
capacity



I believe that if work with the families of infants  
and young children to embed strategies in their  
daily routines, we can have a lasting impact that  
changes lives in big ways.



# **AIMHiTN**

## **Mission and Vision**

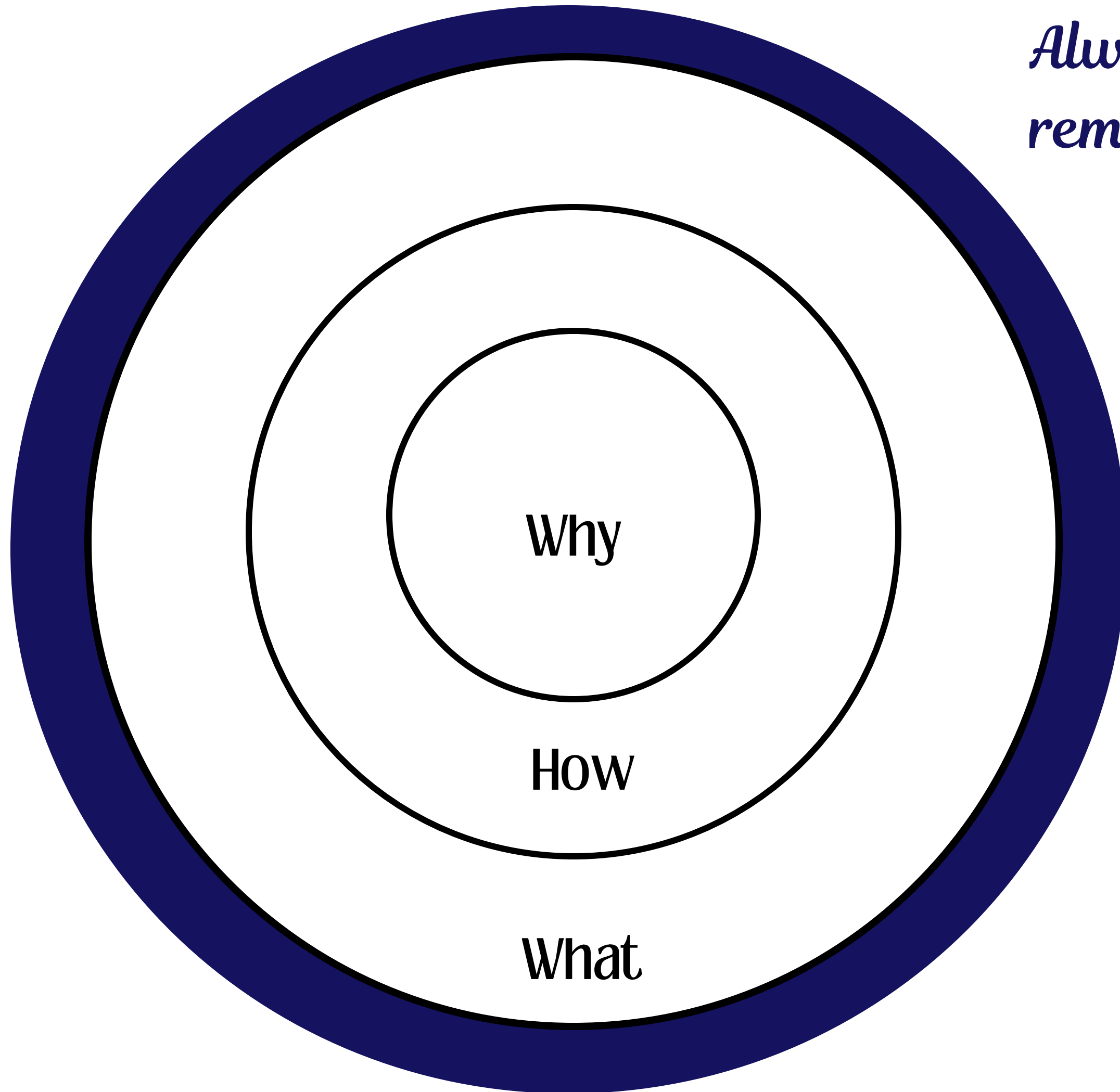
**AIMHiTN supports professionals through training, resources, and advocacy to foster the early relational health of infants, young children, and families.**

**AIMHiTN envisions a healthy, thriving Tennessee that prioritizes the social developmental needs of every infant and young child within the context of their relationships with family and community.**

# Our plans for today:

- Develop an understanding of what it means to build capacity
- Share ways to engage caregivers
- Identify strategies that promote self-reliance and create lasting impact

*Always  
remember your why....*



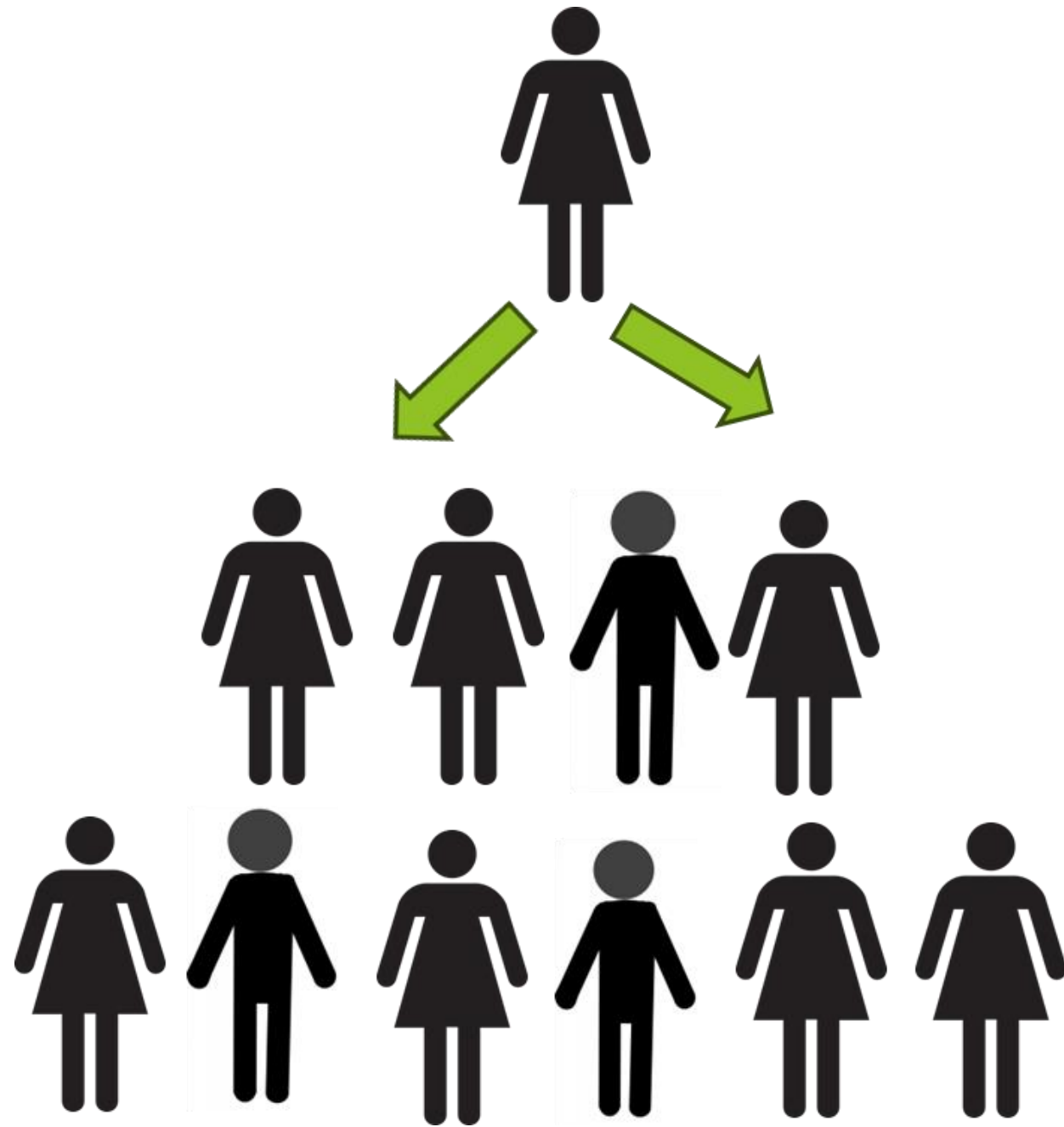
Research shows us that young children grow and learn best in natural environments with their primary caregivers.



But how do you build a caregiver's capacity  
to know how to help their child grow and learn in the  
natural environment?

And what does it even mean to build  
capacity?

# Impact



Caregiver with child  
99 hours

Professional with child  
1 hour





**Start with  
building a  
relationship**



# Check in with the family, not just....

How are  
you?



Hi, how  
are  
things?

How was  
your  
weekend?

# Instead....

- **Be thoughtful**
  - “I remember you telling me you had a visit with your doctor about your migraines. How did that go?”
- **Be reflective**
  - “I bet you were so excited when Sally was able to eat most of her lunch yesterday at the park. What do you think made the difference?”
- **Be engaging**
  - “So glad to hear you all had a great time on your visit to grandma’s. Tell me more about that.”

# Set the Stage

What is your  
purpose for  
being with the  
caregiver?

What do you  
need to  
accomplish?

What does the  
caregiver  
want/need  
from you?

# Lay out the expectations

Standards

Quality of Care

Attendance Policy

Results Driven  
Accountability

# Defining Roles

Describe what your role is

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Clearly describe what the parent's  
role is (separate from yours)

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Revisit this information periodically  
or as needed



## Engaging Caregiver scenarios

You have been working with Jordana and her daughter Vial for about 4 weeks now. She is a young mom and was not expecting to have a child with developmental issues. You have noticed that Jordana does not say much and spends part of your sessions on her cell phone. You have more paperwork to complete, and you really want to engage with her on some of the goals she has for her child and family.

What can you say to Jordana  
that helps her understand her  
role?



# 6 Early Intervention Adult Learning Principles

Supporting the learning needs of caregivers is a fundamental part of early intervention practice. These 6 principles can guide your work with caregivers to ensure strong and productive relationships.

- 1 Caregivers learn best when **what is being learned** is **immediately relevant** and **useful**.
- 2 Caregivers learn best when **new knowledge** is **built on prior knowledge and experience**.
- 3 Caregivers need to understand **what they are learning**, **why it's important**, and **how to use it with their children**.
- 4 Caregivers learn best through **active participation** and **practice**.
- 5 Caregivers learn and remember best when what they are learning is **practiced in context** and **in real time**.
- 6 Caregivers benefit from **opportunities to reflect** and **receive feedback** on their **learning** and their **performance**.

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Understanding how  
adult caregivers  
learn best



So what does this look like in practice?



# Meet the caregiver where they are

(New knowledge is built on prior knowledge and experience, ALP 2)

## Gather information

- What's important to them?
- what have they tried?
- Why?
- What do they want it to look like?



# Make it functional

(What is being learned is immediately relevant and useful, ALP 1)

- Age appropriate
- Make sense for the routine
- Involve others
- Observe







# Embed Learning

(Need to understand what they are learning, why its important, and how to use it with their children, ALP 3)

- What activity to engage in more
- Create learning opportunities
  - Playful moments
- No special “therapy time” at home

# Solution Finding (also know as Problem Solving)



## **Issue:**

Rebekah really wants Josh to eat different foods so she does not have to make 2 separate meals at dinner

## **Ideas**

 Let him go hungry for a few days, he will eat when he is hungry

Expand his food choices a little at a time

Have siblings model eating new foods

Use First/Then with preferred and non-preferred foods

 Wait until he is older to worry about it

## **Evaluate:**

- How do you feel about the options we brainstormed?
- What option best suits your family's needs?

## **Plan**

- Rebekah will introduce 1 new food to Josh at lunch and dinner each day and praise him for small steps (touch/smell/taste- 1 or 2 bites at a time)
- Lauren and Matt will show Josh how they eat different foods, and encourage him to try his as well
- Rebekah will create a First/Then board to use at dinner and start with basic foods



# Observation

- Natural spaces and routines
- Practice the pause
- Family in context





# Coaching

- Work as partners
- Coach the parent
- Think of a sports coach
  - give them the information
  - show them the information
  - let them practice the information



And when possible, try coaching from the outside



V  
S



# Practice in context

(learn best through active participation and practice, and when practiced in context and in real time, ALP 4 and 5)

- Practice with support
- Feel more competent, allows for immediate problem-solving
- Child skill: “Let’s try this out and see how he does when we offer him the choice of cleaning up the blocks or the crayons”
- Life skill: “Wy don’t we talk through what you could say when you call the Disability Board about your benefits? Would that help?”

# Feedback (ALP #6)

Be specific and intentional

Use strength- based statements

Offer suggestions in reflective  
manner

## AIM

A= Acknowledge what caregiver  
did well in that interaction

I= Identify the Impact the action  
had on progress

M= Modify with suggestions for  
improvement



## Example:

“I really like how you were able to direct his attention from the I-pad to putting on his shoes. **(Acknowledgement)** Did you notice your excitement with going outside made him excited too, and avoided a tantrum?

**(Impact)** Well done! I wonder how it would work if next time you had some sort of timer for him that goes off in increments when you are wanting I-pad time to be over so it becomes more of a routine transition?” **(Modification)**





“That was a nice job of letting the doctor’s office know exactly what you needed from them and when you needed it. (Acknowledgement)

Did you notice how the receptionist was quick to get it all together? (Impact) I wouldn’t have changed a thing!” (Modification)

## Scenario 1:

Rachel shared in the update that Liam is starting to hold his own bottle and she wants to help him with this. When you asked to see what she is doing with him now, Rachel propped Liam on the couch with a bottle and sat back, occasionally saying “you can do it!” and mimicking holding a bottle. Liam placed his hands on the bottle and patted it but let it fall.

What can you acknowledge that Rachel did well?

What impact did this have?

What modification would you suggest?



## Scenario 2:

Monika has been struggling to attend all of her sessions with you and is often late for the sessions she does make it to.

Today she is there and on time, and you accomplish a lot in your session with her. At the end of the session, she shares she has been using a calendar on her phone to help organize herself.

What can you acknowledge that Monika did well?

What impact did this have?

What modification would you suggest?



# Review, Reflect

(opportunity to reflect and receive feedback on their learning and performance, ALP 6)

- Let parent share their experience
- Reflect on overall feelings
- Identify next steps

“We do not learn from our experience, we learn from reflecting on our experience”  
John Dewey

We should always be thinking of ways to build up skills in the caregiver.

Where will you have the most impact?

And always....  
keep the baby in mind



# Resources

Childress, D.C., (2021), *Pause and Reflect*, Brooks Publishing.

[Family Guided Routines Intervention](https://fgribi.com), <https://fgribi.com>

Kent, B., PhD, RN. (June 2019), *Implementing research findings into practice frameworks and guidance*, International Journal of Evidence-Based Healthcare 17():p S18-S21.

Rush, D., and Sheldon, M., (2011), *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*, Brooks Publishing.

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