

Webinar 21

Making children visible in work with parents

7:15 pm to 8:30 pm AEST
Thursday, 19th August 2021

**Emerging
Minds.**

**National Workforce
Centre for Child
Mental Health**



Emerging Minds and MHPN wish to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Australia upon which our webinar presenters and participants are located.

We wish to pay respect to the Elders past, present and future for the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Indigenous Australia.

Welcome to series four

This is the first webinar in the fourth series on infant and child mental health, presented by Emerging Minds and the Mental Health Professionals' Network.

Series 4 webinars:

- Using an intergenerational lens when working with children and parents – 23 September
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Working with parents of infants and toddlers
- Strategies for case formulation with children
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

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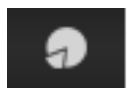
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Learning outcomes

At the webinar's completion, participants will be able to:

- Outline the importance of practices which respectfully ask parents to consider the effects of their adversity on children.
- Demonstrate how understanding the domains of a child's life can help make children visible in all practice with parents.
- Describe the development of the PERCS Conversation Guide and how this can support practitioners to have conversations with parents about their children's wellbeing.
- Outline the questions that can support parents to consider their children's wellbeing, in non-judgmental and collaborative ways.

Tonight's panel



Rachael Dean
Child & Family Partner, SA



Dr Dan Moss
Emerging Minds
Workforce Development
Manager, SA



Clare Klapdor
Social Worker, SA



Facilitator:
Jacquie Lee
Emerging Minds
Communications Officer, SA

Child & Family Partner's perspective



Rachael

What NOT to do: Invisible Children in Practice (AOD & DV) – An anecdote



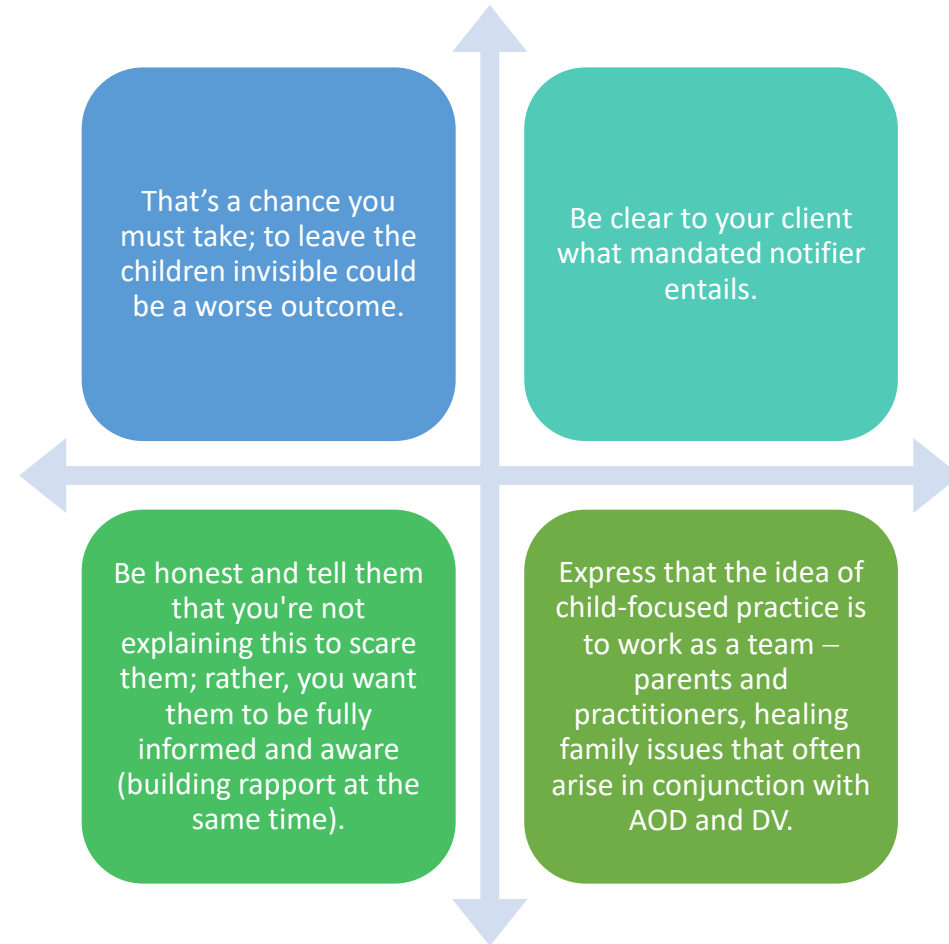
- Just to be clear, this is not about blaming the practitioner.
- An opportunity was missed by not including our child as a part of our family's need to heal.
- As voluntary clients, we were both receptive to learning new ways to live.
- We wanted to change, that's why we started counselling.
- Unfortunately, the focus was on us as adults and no conversation ever brought our child into the picture.
- Not learning the implications of our problems on our child eventually led us down the path to the Child Protection system.
- I can not help but wonder ... what if I learnt about the affects on my child way back then?

Child & Family Partner's perspective



Rachael

First Things First: fearing the Mandated Notifier – will my client run for it?



Child & Family Partner's perspective



Rachael

Starting open & honest conversations – The scenario

- Clare is worried about the negative impacts of the DV and her alcohol consumption on her children.
- Perfect, she has some awareness, which is made obvious by her expressed guilty feelings.
- These can be used as ‘conversation openers’.
- Starting with, “Why do you feel that way?”
- “How do you think it affects your children?”
- “Would you like to explore the affects of DV and AOD on children in general and learn what may be going on with your own children?”

Child & Family Partner's perspective



Rachael

Strengths-based practice can open conversations about what needs work



- It is good as a client to hear that not everything you are doing is completely wrong; it leads to feelings of worthlessness and may cause some clients to give up on themselves.



- Everyone has strengths; recognising these and encouraging the client to build upon them, may increase their confidence. Talking about strengths can also help start difficult conversations about weaknesses. All parents have them.



- It's the same when parents show insights – even if they are not fully fleshed out, you can help them expand on these. Encourage parents to listen to their own gut instincts, and to encourage their child to listen to their gut too. Healing families need to know that they have the answers sometimes too!

Child & Family Partner's perspective



Rachael

Visuals in the office – being innovative

- There are many ways to use your environment to say things that are often hard to say. For instance:
 - Posters (it's easy to print out your own). A poster on the wall that reads, “Ask me about how children are affected by AOD abuse, domestic violence” ... and so on.
 - The client will read these over and over again while in that office; but be prepared, one day they probably will ask you what that is all about!
 - Make cards and pamphlets about other services available in your office. As one practitioner told me, she never saw the cards get taken (they were about gambling problems) but every week she had to refill that card holder again.
 - Using your environment in such a way has endless possibilities. What you choose to put up will say much about you and the things you are happy to discuss.



Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

The need for early intervention and prevention strategies with adult clients



**The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents: Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2015)*



Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

What do adult-focused practitioners tell us (Emerging Minds' Needs Assessment, 2018)

Overwhelmingly they tell us that enquiring about children is one of the most important elements of practice and often the key to parental motivation for change, BUT...

- Time restraints.
- Confusion around role definition.
- Lack of confidence in asking parents about their relationships with children.
- Fear of 'opening a can of worms' without knowing how to respond to concerns about children.
- Absence of assessment questions about parenting.

Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan



Parent-child relationship



Emotions and behaviours



Routines



Communication and meaning-making



Support networks

Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

Practitioner's role: To understand more about Clare's hopes for her relationships with her children, and how she has/can overcome adversity to strengthen these relationships.

P



Parent-child relationship

A safe, secure, responsive and nurturing relationship between a child and their parent/caregiver is key to building resilience.

Possible questions:

- “Clare, what helped you to stop drinking when you saw that Ethan was awake?”
- “What does it say about the kind of mother you want to be that you stopped drinking?”
- “Are there other times when you put your relationships with Ethan and Harry before drinking?”



Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

Practitioner's role: To help bring into focus the ways that children are experiencing what is happening with their parents.

Possible questions:

- “Clare, you mentioned that you had a conversation with Harry the night of Jeremy’s violence. How do you think Harry made sense of what he saw?”
- “Have you noticed anything different about the boys’ behaviours since that night with Jeremy? Have you had a chance to talk to them?”

E



Emotions and behaviours

Children need to feel loved, safe and confident their emotions will be listened to and responded to in a nurturing way.

Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

Practitioner's role: Help parents to consider their children's routines, and their role in providing safety and predictability.

R



Routines

Routines and rituals provide children with a stable base, especially in times of stress.

Possible questions:

- “How is it for you having full-time care of Harry and Ethan?”
- “What are some of the things that you have been able to do now that the household is safer?”
- “What do you think it is like for Harry and Ethan when you join them in those activities?” (Ethan – scouts).



Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

Practitioner's role: Much has happened in the lives of Harry and Ethan over the last year, particularly given Jeremy's use of violence. The practitioner can help Clare to understand what the children may be feeling, while ensuring that she isn't made to feel responsible for the past violence.

Possible questions:

- “Do you talk with Harry and Ethan about what happened with Jeremy?”
- “What do you think has helped about having those conversations?”
- “How do you think the boys are making meaning of Jeremy's use of violence?”

C



Communication and meaning-making

Respectful and effective communication can help children to express emotions and make meaning from experiences of adversity. This helps develop their resilience.



Workforce Development Manager's perspective



Dan

Practitioner's role: To help the parent consider their children's support needs and how other relationships or community services can be used to increase support.

Possible questions:

- “Why has it been important for you to make sure that Ethan stays connected to scouts and Harry to footy during this tough time?”
- “Who are the other people in the boys' lives that offer them support? How are you able to stay connected to them during this time?”



S



Support networks

Safe and supportive networks outside the family can be key to a child's social and emotional wellbeing.

Social worker's perspective

Ecomaps



Clare

- A genogram plus non-related significant people, organisations, spiritual, and even pets that maps the nature of the relationship between members.
- Create the ecomap collaboratively with Clare. It is a great engagement tool and a way to ease into curious questioning about Harry and Ethan.
- A tool to directly enquire about Clare's children and broader network that is external to the presenting problem.
- It visualises Clare's strengths and resources.

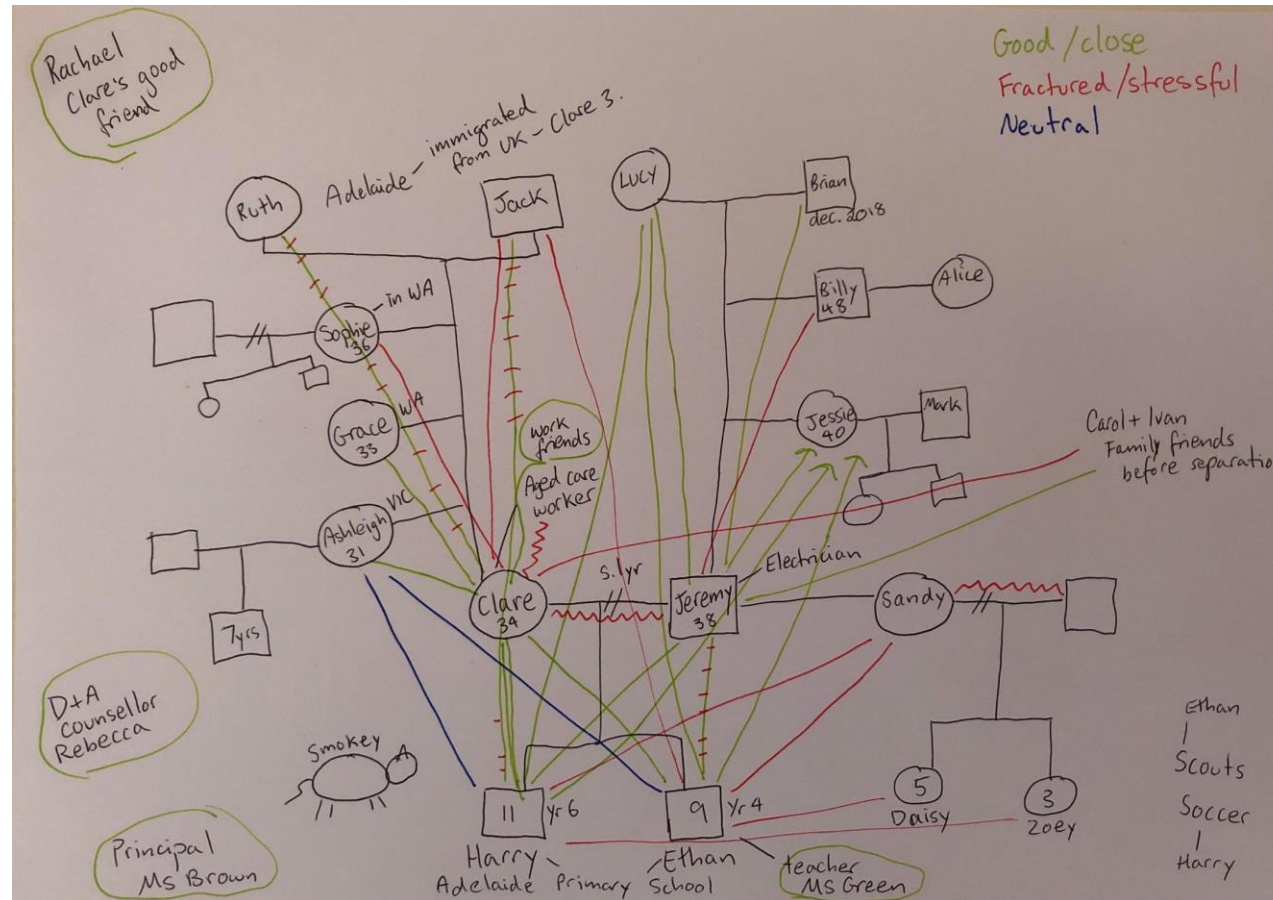


Social Worker's perspective

An ecomap example – Clare



Clare

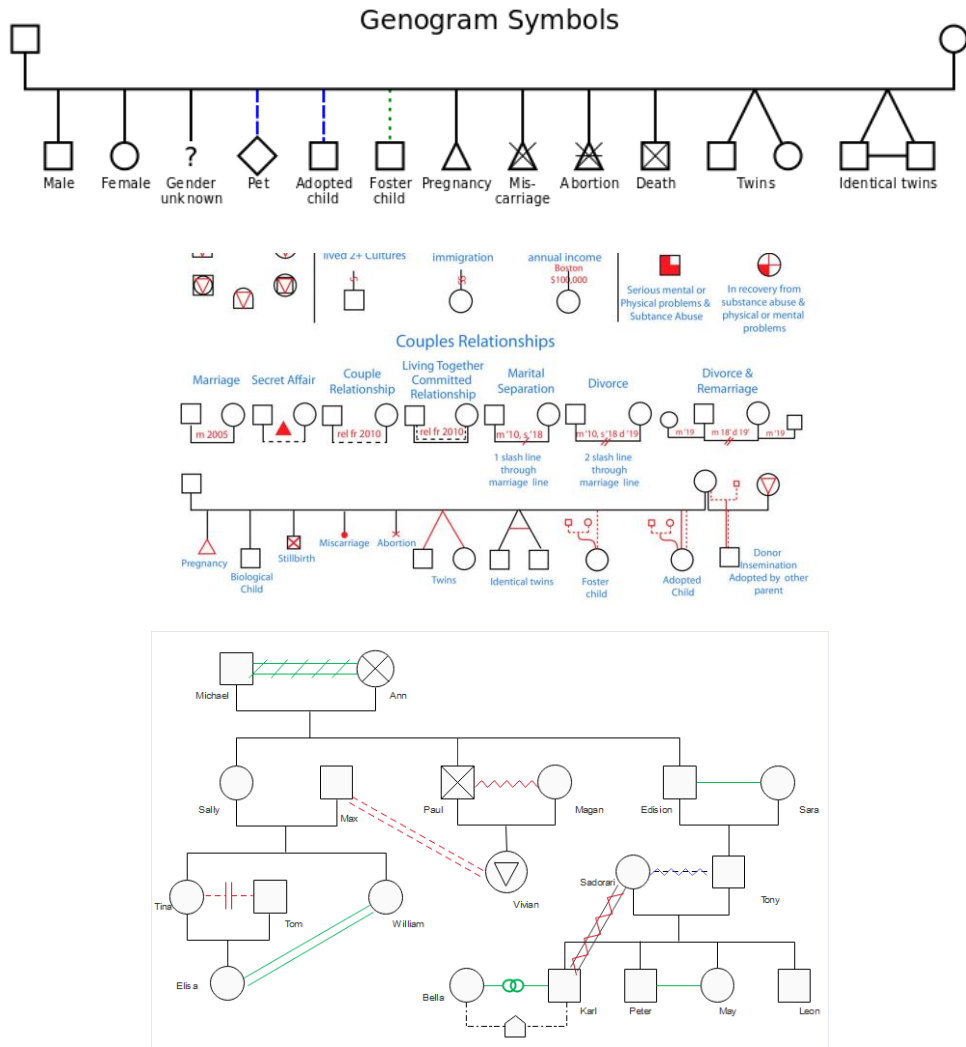


Social Worker's perspective



Clare

Other ecomap tips



- It will get messy! Ask the client before you start if they have a big family. You might need more paper.
- Symbol use is flexible, just be sure to make a key if using 'non-traditional' symbols if you want others to understand it.
- For LGBTQI+ clients, consider using a cloud shape for everyone and identifying gender as a note if needed.
- For non-counselling professions, use a simpler genogram (e.g. only who is in the household).

Social Worker's perspective



Clare

Curiosity through circular/relational questioning

- Strengths-based questions that assist the client to see through the eyes of their children and how they experience their world, and encourage positive change.
- For example
 - “Do you think Ethan feels closer to you when you are not drinking, or stop drinking?”
 - “What does Ethan do or say to make you think he feels closer to you?”
 - “If we asked Harry how Ethan has changed since you separated from Jeremy, what would he say?”
 - “What would Harry say if we asked him how you have changed since the separation?”
 - “Who would Harry say he is closest to in the family?”
 - “Who would Ethan say you are closest to in your family?”
 - “How does Ethan know when you are putting him first? What looks different?”

Q&A Session



Rachael Dean
Child & Family Partner, SA



Dr Dan Moss
Emerging Minds
Workforce Development
Manager, SA



Clare Klapdor
Social Worker, SA



**Facilitator:
Jacquie Lee**
Emerging Minds
Communications Officer, SA

Resources and further reading

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For more information about Emerging Minds, visit www.emergingminds.com.au

Upcoming webinars in 2021:

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This webinar was co-produced by MHPN and Emerging Minds for the Emerging Minds: National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (NWCCMH) project.

The NWCCMH is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program.

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Or perhaps start discussing issues of local relevance? MHPN Project Officers are available to help you establish and/or join interdisciplinary mental health networks across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia, either face-to-face or online.

We have 373 networks around the country as well as online networks.

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Thank You

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