

## Grieving the Loss of Drive Times

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June 2020

### NMAIMH competencies addressed:

Reflection:

- Self-awareness
- Curiosity
- Emotional response

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Who knew the power that drive times serve in our practice? The days of jamming out in our cars between visits, or simply relishing in the silence between visits seems to be a distant memory. The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged many aspects of life, including the routines, and rituals we practiced to help us stay regulated through the work day. Working from home with our personal lives constantly playing out in the background have required us to adapt and explore our strategies that assist us in staying grounded and present for the families we work with. As a Fussy Baby father wisely stated, “remember that to bring calm, we need to possess calm” (Erikson Institute, 2020).

The mindfulness needed to balance our professional and personal roles is a critical piece of virtual home visiting. The FAN (Facilitated Attuned Interactions) (Gilkerson, 2015) values and supports the strategies practitioners need to be a calm and grounding force to attune to our family’s needs. By reflecting on how we enter our work days, how we are transitioning between visits/interactions and end our days, we can intentionally hold ourselves, while holding those we serve.

Our own regulation is the top priority, starting with how we structure our days working from home. Designating a beginning, middle and end to our days helps us create consistency and predictability, necessary in supporting our calm. By exploring and creating new morning rituals, we are setting the tone for the day. Some thoughts from the field have been to create concrete start times, taking a walking meditation, intentional connection with family members, yoga, or savoring a cup of coffee. Similarly, finding ways to formally end the day are critical in transitioning *out* and into new roles. Home visitors are being mindful by “clocking out”, taking their glasses off to signify the end of the day, intentionally closing the computer, or smudging their work areas with sage, etc. A huge piece of this is that you feel a sense of ownership and authenticity in your routines, and periodically check in with yourself to explore its effectiveness.

“Pre-contact rituals” (Erikson Institute, 2020) are what we do to regulate ourselves before making contact, entering a visit or engaging in a new interaction. We all have personal lives that we are trying to navigate behind the scenes; at times shifting from a tantrum in the living room to entering a virtual home visit. Pre-contact rituals prompts the reflective question, “What do I need to do to be fully present?” Some ideas from the field



have been, taking three deep breathes, drinking water, scheduling time between visits to walk, putting your glasses on, self-talk, and feeling the earth under your feet. Routinely using these strategies will eventually develop into practices that will parallel and assist your presence in many interactions.

Getting into our car and driving to the next visit served as an integral “post-contact ritual” for many of us. Our uninterrupted drive times allowed us to switch gears, nurture and recharge ourselves before we entered the next situation. The FAN model highlights the importance of “post-contact rituals” (Erikson Institute, 2020) and asks the question, “What do I need to do to repair and/or replenish?” Taking time after a virtual home visit to ask yourself “How am I now?” gives information on what you need to do to feel grounded again. Nowadays, our work and professional lives can feel so intermingled, it may be helpful to look at our strategies that help us to intentionally transition in and out of these roles. Some ideas from the field have been; taking deep cleansing breathes, doing 20 jumping jacks, or finding someone to debrief with. Practicing a “post-contact” ritual can allow you to release and reflect, while preserving and caring for our own selves.

As a parallel to the current state of the world and the families we serve, it is most important that we give ourselves permission and grace to “not know” and be “good enough” (Cooper, Hoffman, & Powell, 2016). These ideas are invitations to try on, and an added tool to your arsenal. Home visitors are holding and juggling a lot and remembering to nurture and care for yourselves is the number one priority to be able to hold those around us.

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### Questions to encourage discussion and reflection...

- How are you designing your days? (Beginning, middle and end)
- Explore your pre-contact strategies, what do you need to be fully present?
- Explore your post-contact strategies, what do you do to repair/replenish?

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### References/Additional Resources

Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Powell, B. (2016). *Handouts | Circle of Security*. Retrieved from <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/handouts>

FAN as a Grounding Tool in Uncertain Times; Resource #1: Arc of Engagement. March 19, 2020. Erikson Institute, Fussy Baby Network

Gilkerson, L., (2015). *Fussy Baby Network, FAN Training: Level I. Taos, NM New Mexico*