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# REDUCING JUDICIAL STRESS WITH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

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Jennie Cole-Mossman LIMHP

# Introductions



NEBRASKA RESOURCE PROJECT  
FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG CHILDREN



NEBRASKA  
**DOUGLAS COUNTY**  
Juvenile Court

< Back

## How comfortable are you discussing feelings about your work?

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# *In the Interest of ....*



# Stress and judging

- Loneliness
- Not being able to get support from home
- Not feeling safe to say they need help
- Difficulty opening up about personal issues
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness
- Depression about cases
- Large caseloads
- Nonjudgmental role

- Osofsky (NCTSN 2007 NCJFJ panel)

# Emotional labor

- Balancing emotional content of the cases with the judge's own emotions
- Pressure to regulate emotion, provide procedural fairness, and be aware of bias

-Anleu, Rottman, Mack 2016



# Vicarious Trauma

- Distress associated with working directly with traumatized people
- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Numbing
- Persistent arousal
- 2008 NCTSN Brief found judges feel overwhelmed by trauma in the courtroom
- Needs of the children and families, system issues, task of balancing needs of a child with the law
- Making life altering decisions while putting aside personal beliefs

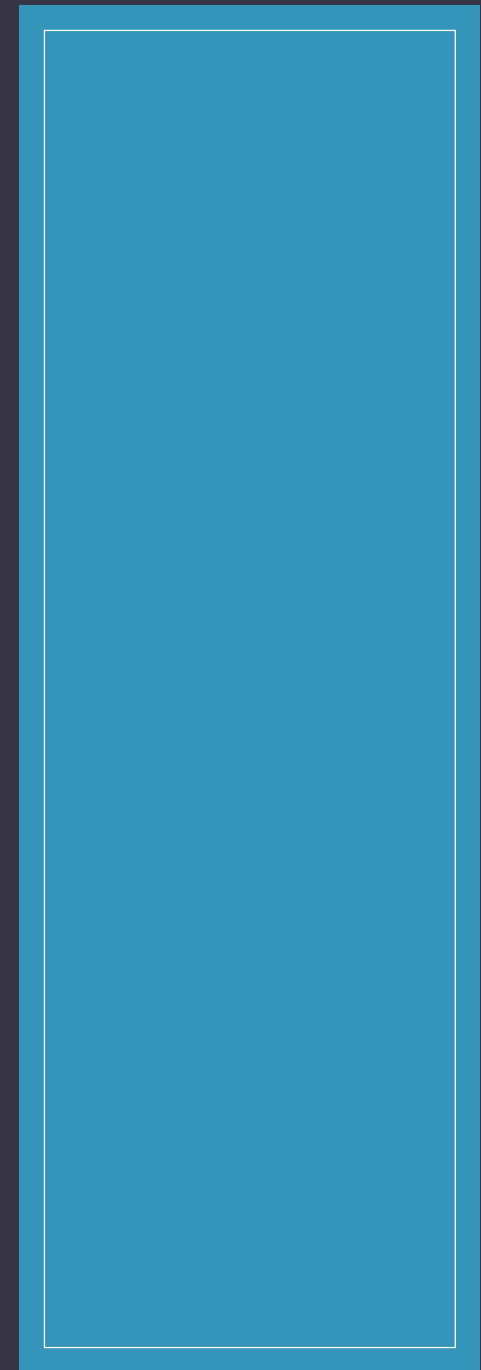




- “I gave a young man ten years today. Younger than you. He stole a TV. Ten years for stealing a TV. It wasn’t even a good TV. I didn’t want to do it, just like I didn’t want to give five years to a different fella yesterday, fifteen years to another guy the day before that. I’m a judge, and the strange thing is I don’t make the rules. So round and round it goes. I know the ending to each one of those stories. And they haven’t even been written yet. I’m here, Mr. Hill, because you said something yesterday, and it stuck with me. You said you were the most disappointed man in the world. And I am here to tell you, I fear I am a close second Mr. Hill.

THIS IS US

- Because I'm the man who writes terrible stories day after day, and I can't change the endings. And that, sir, is a horrible disappointment. So, I want to see if we can find you a different ending here. I'm gonna take a chance on you, get you out, get you help. I don't expect you to be perfect. I know you'll make mistakes, just like the rest of us. But I will ask one thing of you.
- Mr Hill: Yes, sir.
- Judge: I want you to look at this too tired, too old and too fat face. Lock it in your brain. And if you ever start heading toward the ending I don't want to write, I want you to picture this ugly old mug. You can picture this face, and you can make a different choice. Can you do that? Can you find me a different ending to your story?





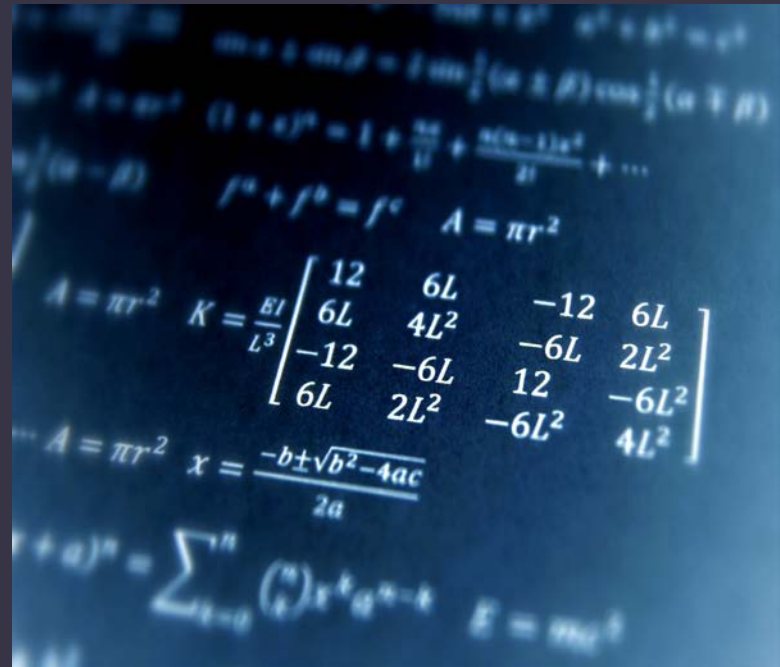
# Reflective Practice

- A framework for looking at our work
- Allows for examination of thoughts, feelings, and actions related to our work
- Relationship based practice
- Examines our own experiences to assist us in finding resiliency in the face of stress at work
- Strive to enhance critical thinking and reflective capacity

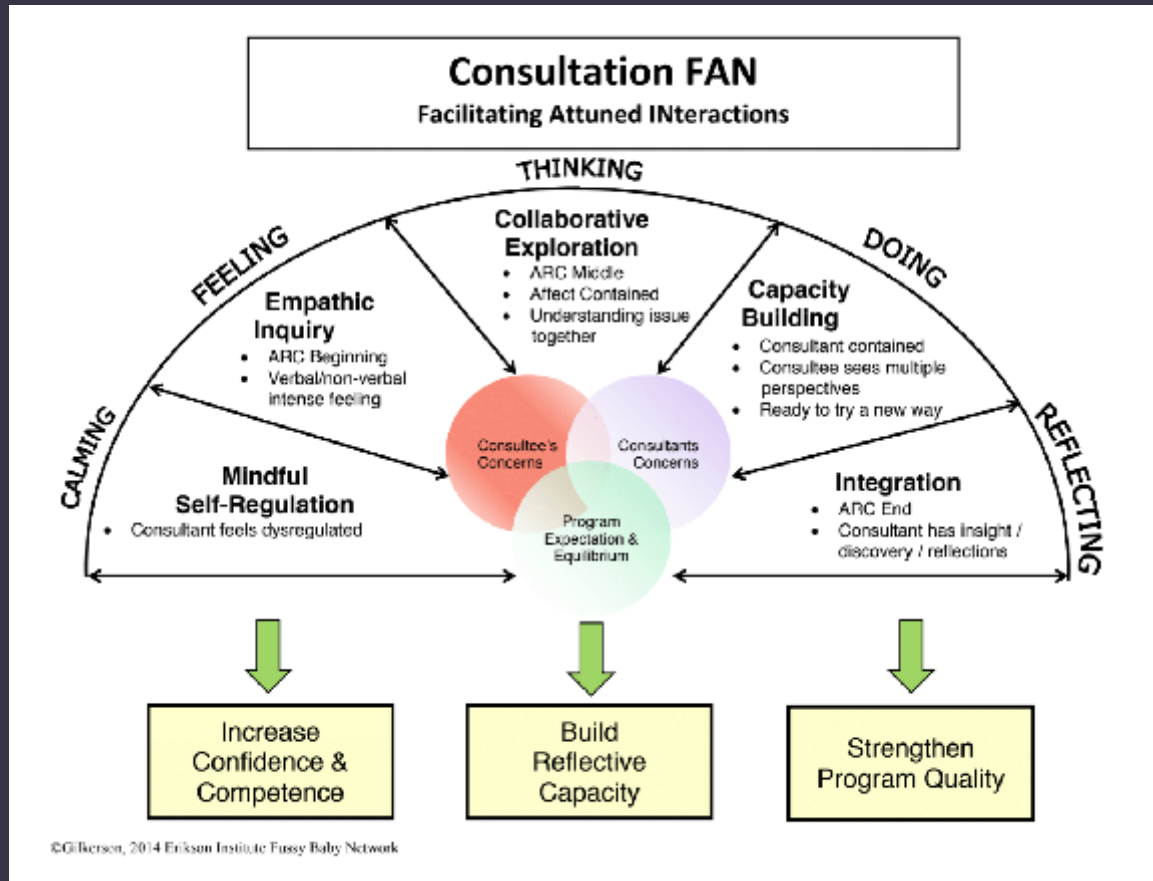
# An Algorithm

- “The goals of reflective practice are to provide a professional with a self-improvement algorithm, and to increase the capacity of the individual to exercise judgment in the professional context.”

-Casey, 2014, 321



# Facilitating Attuned Interactions





# What does it look like?

- Can be done in groups or individually
- Supervision or Consultation
- Blended or completely reflective
- Regularity
- Consistency and structure
- Reflective



# How Did we Get here

- Judge Crnkovich previously presided over juvenile drug court and dependency drug court.
- Training and education leading to a new way of thinking about interacting with court participants
- Experiences in drug courts that we wanted to replicate in all cases
- NRPVYC Needs Assessment done for Judge Crnkovich's court

# Needs Assessment

## Major Findings

- Poor trust and respect among the parties, judge, and parents.
- Parents and parties want more regular, ongoing contact with the court

## Recommendations

- Hold monthly court team meetings
- Conduct random assignment of cases to the track
- Appoint/include case managers and attorneys supportive of the track
- Sponsor education and specialized training for all
- Hold quarterly stakeholders meetings



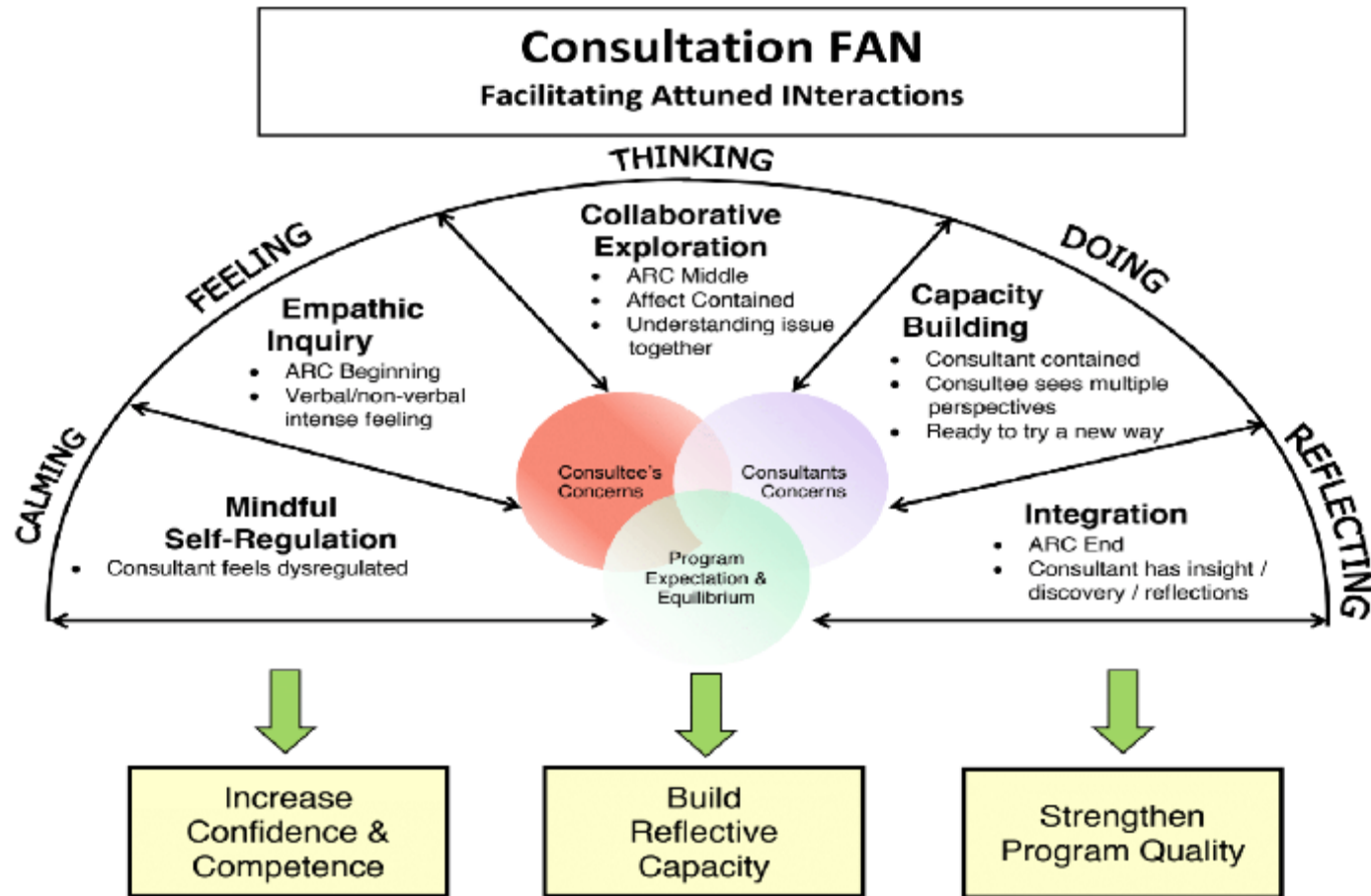
# First Court

- The name FIRST Court (Family Involved Rehabilitation & Services Track) was chosen to emphasize that the goal of this process is not only to put families first but to make known the belief by all those involved that families have to be at the forefront of the work being done. Families need to drive any effort toward change in order for it to be sustainable. The system should only be a tool to assist them in identifying and prioritizing their needs, and in providing them the services to make desired changes. The logo depicting family member holding on to one another signifies the interconnectedness and interdependence of each member to the others. Only through healthy interconnectedness can the goal of safety, well-being and permanence for children be achieved.

# Reflective Practice in First Court

- Reflective Practice was provided to supervisors and caseworkers
- Attorneys receive reflective consultation
- Judge receives reflective consultation
- Judge and supervisors are trained in reflective consultation
- FAN is incorporated into team meetings with families

# Simulation



# Integration

[← Back](#)



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# Questions?

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