

Monthly Magic Moment Memo

August 2015

Happy end days of summer NJ-AIMH members and friends! We are adding a new feature to our website, known as a “Monthly Magic Moment Memo” where a NJ-AIMH Board member will share their thoughts about the “magic moments” in their work in infant mental health. Basically, it’s a chance for us to share why we love what we do, and hope that it inspires you to continually be restored and rejuvenated by reflecting about what brings you joy (or ‘magic’) in this work as well.

To kick off this initiative, I would like to share some thoughts about the magic moments that occur for me in teaching about our field of infant-family mental health. At this present moment, at the crossroads of the waning summer sun and the fresh, crispness of fall, I always find myself in excited anticipation for a new school year. I so enjoy those first moments of a new school year – new school supplies, the crack of the opening of a new textbook, and the promise of what learning might lie ahead. Although my heart is always in direct service clinical work with families of young children, a very close second love for me is in introducing the field of infant-family mental health to students, new trainees or seasoned professionals. I find such joy in watching people learn about the theoretical foundation of our field and see them light up with understanding and connection to the material. I still get inspired myself when a student, trainee or professional seems to become passionate about early intervention and starts to talk about the importance of supporting early families.

I was reminded of this joy during an interaction with one of our undergraduate interns this summer. He had come to us identifying an emerging interest in working in the criminal justice system. But very soon into his work with us, he began talking about how he might incorporate the learning about infant mental health into his ideas about this work. He said he might think about helping fathers who are leaving the prison system learn how to become reflective about their own histories so as to be more empathic to their children. He also thought about helping law enforcement understand early childhood development so they could be more helpful in child protection cases or family disputes. And he when thinking about this, he talked with such energy and excitement, and a feeling that

he had stumbled upon something that was both personal and important to him. It seemed that the content had opened up his possibilities for how he might make his way in the world. It totally jazzed me to keep going, to keep teaching, to keep professing the message of infant-family mental health to as many people as would listen. My mentor and friend, Dr. Gerry Costa, continually reminds us of a lesson from his mentor, Michael Trout, when Michael said, "Selma Fraiberg opened our eyes and we couldn't close them again." It's the birth of this awareness that is magic to me.

As we start a new school year, I look forward to more of these kinds of magic moments as infant mental health awareness is created in others. May you all also have your eyes open, and be rejuvenated in the freshness of fall, and continually inspired to spread the story of the importance of supporting our earliest families.

Kaitlin Mulcahy, M.A., LPC, IMH-E® IV-Clinical Mentor

President, NJ-AIMH