

Observing in the Virtual Environment Tip Sheet



Listening and Observing in the Virtual Environment

- Virtual view: Viewing and hearing another environment through a screen or audio device while managing your own environment for the purpose of gaining perspective, much like looking through a window
- Dual-perspective: The ability to absorb what one sees and hears, while simultaneously absorbing another's description of what he or she sees and hears
- Smizing: Hearing a smile in someone's voice

Aspects of Observing in the Virtual Environment

Observe by:

- Asking open-ended questions and observe while listening
 - What is it like for you, when?
 - What make this change difficult?
 - What have you tried?
 - What might be ...?
- Prompting parent to move the device so you can see the environment and parent-child interaction
- Commenting on and giving cues to parents to enhance and increase the interactions and conversation
- Reflecting to the parent on what they just said
- Summarizing statements made by parent

Aspects of Listening in the Virtual Environment

- Listen for parent's tone of voice when they share about how they are doing and when they are speaking with their children.
- Listen for their speech pacing and pauses to inform our understanding of their mood, energy, and comfort level in the conversation.
- Listen for the background noises to inform who else may be in the home, to help understanding of what distractions and barriers may exist that could influence a parent-child interaction.
- Listen for children's chatter and conversation
- Listen for those non-verbal smiles—"smizing"—from parent and child that we can hear through a phone call that indicate happiness, contentment, and joy in a conversation or interaction.

Prepare the Parent for the Visit

- How might you check in briefly via text or phone call to remind them of the home visit?
- Discuss and determine a space where the visit might occur in their home.
- Prepare the parent for what you have planned for the visit, such as, “We will be completing the ASQ today.”
- Confirm video/internet access with families, or provide it when needed and when possible.
- Allow the parent to drive the session.
- If technology is not connecting, agree on a backup plan and strategies.
- Support tech setup with video for families, set clear expectations, and communicate thoroughly and frequently.

Self-Awareness

In the virtual environment, our pace of listening and sharing is different.

- Be aware of our own breathing and our tone.
- Pay attention to our body language, and monitor our facial expressions, state of mind and physical energy.
- Tone is everything here: We want to ask parents questions that are not leading to an answer and that don't include an assumption.
- Use pauses to allow your verbal message to be delivered.
- At the end of the visit, generally summarize the conversation, schedule the next visit, and set a follow-up plan.

Interpreting Observations

Intentionally allow yourself to replay the visit that just happened, to organize your thoughts and feelings, and think about your next visit.

1. What did you see or hear in the home and how do you interpret it? Is this unusual for the specific family?
2. How did the parent respond?
 - a. What was their mood?
 - b. Did they share any new concern related to family well-being or child development?
 - c. What has been going well or better than expected for the family during this time?
3. What might be contributing to the stress levels at home?
 - a. Older siblings needs
 - b. Their own learning needs?
 - c. Unemployment: Is rent coming up soon?
4. How did you respond? Or, how would you like to have responded?

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