

A Recent Resource from the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health

**Reflections from the Field: Celebrating 40 Years (2017)**

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201 pages, including beautiful, color illustrations of infants, toddlers, and families

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Joan Shirilla is a distinguished leader of the infant mental health community in Michigan where she has been the editor of *The Infant Crier* for over 10 years. She co-edited the landmark book, *Case Studies in Infant Mental Health: Risk, Resiliency & Relationships (2002)*, that has guided practitioners new and seasoned for many years. She has had extensive experience as an infant mental health home visiting therapist, supervisor, and reflective consultant to infant and early childhood programs across disciplines and in multiple service settings. She received the prestigious Selma Fraiberg Award for her years of service with and on behalf of vulnerable infants and their families.

*Reflections from the Field: Celebrating 40 Years* was compiled in recognition of the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health Association's (MI-AIMH) 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2017. Each article originally appeared in *The Infant Crier*, the association's quarterly publication. Written by those in the infant mental health community whose unique contributions have had a powerful impact on the development of the infant mental health field, each article reflects a practitioner's experiences with or on behalf of vulnerable infants, very young children, and their families. Each contribution was selected for clarity, voice, and the capacity to illuminate the power of relationship centered practice.

Betty Tableman introduces the volume with a brief historical reflection about MI-AIMH's presence and actions in expanding the infant mental health community. She

begins with Selma Fraiberg's translation of theory to practice with "mothers and infants who needed to find each other" through training opportunities at the University of Michigan, state funding for infant mental health programming through the Michigan Department of Community Health, an inaugural conference with T. Berry Brazelton, and the official founding of an association in 1977. Deborah Weatherston continues the story with "Reflections about Grass Roots Growth and Change."

Part I focuses on essential infant mental health principles that guide practice: working with the parent and infant together, keeping the baby in the center, working with dynamics that affect the baby, and giving the baby a voice. The principles are eloquently described by Barry Wright in "Evolution of a Model, Parts I and II," as well as by Michael Trout in "It's the Stories" and "Second Chances." Kathleen Baltman contributes "Being an Observer," and Carla Barron offers "Keeping the Baby in Mind." Sarah Shea discusses "Diversity-Informed Infant Mental Health Practice in our Current Context," and William Schafer reflects on maternal substance use and Betsy Hardy offers thoughts about perinatal substance use and the importance of relationship.

Part II introduces the reader to attachment, through Kate Rosenblum's chapters, "Ambivalent-Resistant Attachment: Dancing with Strong Emotions" and "Together, yet Alone: Avoidant Attachment and the Minimization of feeling." Case material brings the work of attachment into sharp focus as in "Disorganized Attachment: The Search for the Light Between the Cracks of Pain and Hope," by Danielle Davey. Doug Davies and Michael Trout offer opportunities to consider the impact of trauma on very young children, as well as the benevolent influences on the lives of babies. Julie Ribaud

challenges us to think in new ways in her reflections, "Beyond Mothers: Beyond Singular Relationships."

Part III zeros in on relationship-based work and includes sensitive writings by a number of practitioners, for example, Jan Ulrich, "Connecting through Love to Overcome Fear"; Patricia Jedrzejek, "Trauma and Immigration: A Clinical Example"; and Lisa Garcia, "Planting Seeds in the Garden of Infant Mental Health." Authors bring the theoretical underpinnings of infant mental health practice alive.

Part IV offers in-depth discussions of Reflective Supervision by those well-known for the art, including, among others, Sheryl Goldberg, "Reflective Supervision/Consultation: What is it and Why Does it Matter?"; Barry Wright; "Reflecting on Training; The Centrality of Relationships"; and Bonnie Daligga, "Joy in the Supervision Experience." The titles reflect each author's wisdom and passion for the field.

Part V centers on our capacity for reflection, creativity and contemplation. Selections include "My Grandfather's Chair" by Michael Trout; "Remembering and Never Forgetting Erna Furman" by Kathleen Baltman;" "Cubs are for Holding" by Greg Proulx; and "Waiting" by Deborah Weatherston.

Part VI presents the practice of saying good-bye in "Pieces of the Bye: The Importance of Preparing to Say Goodbye to Children and their Families," by Janice Fialka.

In sum, if you are looking for a book that captures the art and heart of infant mental health principles and practice, this is it. The language is clear and elegant, appropriate for an individual who wants to learn a little bit more - read and re-read as

time permits - as well as for a university or non-degree training program for infant and early childhood mental health practitioners.