Integrating Special Education and Family Science: Using Bibliotherapy to Address Stress of Parenting a Child with a Disability

Erin Boyd-Soisson, Ph.D., CFLE
Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Science
And
Melinda Burchard, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Special Education
Coordinator of Special Education Internship

Messiah College
Course Description and Content:

This course will examine typical and atypical social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and linguistic development of infants and toddlers (birth through 3-years). This course will also examine the role of the family and other caregivers, such as childcare providers, preschool teachers, and foster care parents, in the development of infants and toddlers (birth through 3-years). Topics will include the development and maintenance of attachments to caregivers, the role of culture and gender in development, the role of socioeconomic status, infant and toddler mental health issues, and infants and toddlers with special needs. Early intervention and assessment techniques will be explored along with developmentally appropriate practices. For example, students will become familiar with the Individualize Family Service Plan (IFSP), the Denver Developmental Assessment, and other services that may be provided to infants and toddlers.

Students who take this course....
Classroom Activity Integrating Family Science and Special Education Concepts

- The objectives of this activity are to:
  - Have students identify the potential stresses of the transition to parenthood
  - Have students identify additional stresses parents of babies with disabilities or who are premature might experience
  - Have students understand the different types of stress
  - Have students understand the use of bibliotherapy as one way to empower parents and cope with stress
First students are asked:

- What do you suspect might be some typical stresses and feelings experienced by parents shortly after the birth of a healthy newborn?

Second, students are asked to identify additional stresses and feelings that might be experienced by parents of newborns who are premature or who are born with a disability.

In order to stimulate discussion, students do the following:

- Listen to: Welcome to Holland ~ Emily Perl Kingsley
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=raEwuQDHReUg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raEwuQDHReUg)
Students are asked to apply the stress & feelings identified in the reading and the video to Boss’s classification of stressor events (2002):

**Source:**
- Internal vs. External

**Type:**
- Normative vs. Nonnormative
- Ambiguous vs. Nonambiguous
- Volitional vs. Nonvolitional

**Duration:**
- Chronic vs. Acute

**Density:**
- Isolated vs. Cumulative

(In addition, students also use Family Systems Theory, Hill’s ABC-X Model and Family Strengths Perspective to understand stress)
The Use of Bibliotherapy to cope with stress

- Students discuss the use of bibliotherapy.
  - Bibliotherapy involves reading intentionally selected texts and then processing life issues depicted in those texts through expressive means such as journals, discussions, art or drama (Burchard et al, 2014).
  - Research indicates it is effective in improved problem-solving, emotional understanding, acceptance of differences, empowerment, reducing social anxiety and adjustment problems, and reducing panic attacks and fears
    - (these are often the issues students notice in doing the previous activities)
  - Finally, students discuss how bibliotherapy might help parents cope with different types of stressors (as identified by Boss)
  - (Students discuss other resources as well)
## Resources

### Selected Texts with Bibliotherapy Applications in Preschool

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Selected Literature</th>
<th>Potential topics</th>
<th>Bibliotherapy Applications</th>
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Resources

General Resource:

Fact sheets:
- Fragile X: [http://www.cdc.gov/features/fragilexawareness/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/fragilexawareness/)

Resources for Families:
References and Additional Resources