



BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

OCTOBER 2023: GATHERING INFORMATION: PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES VS STRENGTHS

Strengths

Defined as character traits or abilities that are considered positive. Strengths can include knowledge, attributes, skills, and talents. Strengths are unique to the individual and can be applied in a multitude of situations. **Example:** Being a good listener and having empathy.

Assessing for Strengths

Consider what someone is good at or has been complimented on because it stands out. Inventoried strengths are general in nature, like being kind or smart. When gathering information, the professional can dig deeper to find functional strengths, the next layer of strengths that are usable in one's life. **Example:** If a person has been complimented on being smart, the professional may discover this means they are very resourceful as to community resources or good at managing the household budget.

Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities

Defined in Standards as “areas of assessment related to personal and parenting behavior, cognitive and emotional characteristics that specifically and directly can be associated with being protective to one's children”.

Protective capacities are strengths that are safety driven. They are assessed to be enhanced and thus shield children from the impact of danger, or diminished in a way that contributes to the existence of danger in the household that the family cannot control on their own. **Example:** The mother is experiencing a high level of stress since she lost her job and has been drinking excessively. Before the mother begins drinking, she takes her children over to her sister's house for the night. The mother is protective in that she understands her drinking would have a negative impact on the children (cognitive protective capacity) so she consistently has a plan and makes arrangements for her children to be with a safe caregiver (behavioral protective capacity).



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Gathering Information Regarding Parental Protective Capacities

- Identify and discuss the danger(s) in the household with the parents/caregivers.
- Describe your hypothesis using your professional judgement. From your interviews, observations, and collateral information, what do you think is happening behaviorally, cognitively, and/or emotionally that is protective of the child or is diminished causing the danger?
- Assess deeper. Ask open-ended questions to test your hypothesis and theories.
- Some **examples** to examine protectiveness include:
 - What is your proudest parenting moment and why?
 - What was a challenge you overcame as a parent and what was required to do so?
 - Now that we've discussed the incident when you used significant discipline, tell me about a time you were very angry, but it didn't result in physical discipline. What was different about that incident?



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Reflection on Content

Think about the difference between conducting a strength-based assessment and an assessment of parent/caregiver protective capacities. What are some of the key differences you see in the two approaches?

Action Item

Think about a safety condition you are presently controlling/managing/providing intervention to support change to mitigate. What is the diminished protective capacity(ies) causing that danger to exist and consider if that has been made clear to the parents/caregivers. Or what is the enhanced protective capacity(ies) shielding the child from the impact of that danger that must continue and have that discussion with the parent.