

The Relational-Invitational Approach

The Science and Art of Engaging Adults for Positive Behaviour Change

Parents/ caregivers/ educators play the most important role in shaping the development and well-being of children. Contemporary evidence-based approaches to intervention now emphasise Family-Centred Practice and strategies for enhancing the natural environments in which children live and develop (i.e., home, education settings).

Often, adopting family-centred practices begins with self-awareness and self-reflection. Moving towards a family-centred programme can be challenging, and requires changes in attitude, behaviour and state of mind. An open disposition, respecting differences and being aware of one's own values are important elements of Family-Centred Practice. Practitioners may not be used to considering families as equal partners in young children's learning and development and so need to change how they view their own roles and responsibilities with regard to children and their families (Trivette, Dunst, Boyd & Hamby, 1995).

The Relational-Invitational Approach (RIA) is a practice framework originally developed by the Parenting Research Centre (Australia). It is intended to guide practitioners in their work with families. RIA draws on theories and principles of adult capacity building, family-centredness, a strengths-based approach, and the role of the practitioner as coach. At its foundation is a relationship between the practitioner and caregiver that is collaborative and egalitarian, based on trust and respect. (Figure 1)

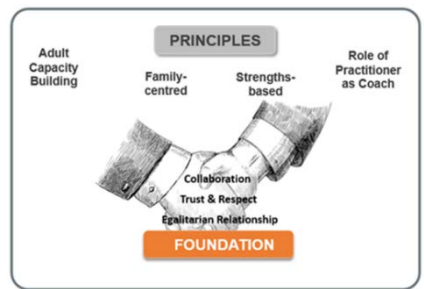
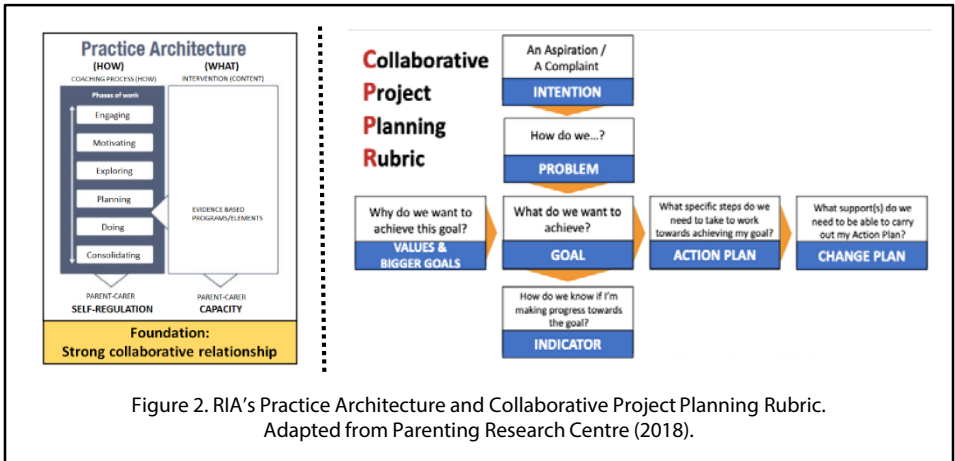


Figure 1. Foundational Principles of RIA.
Adapted from Parenting Research Centre
(2018).

As shown in Figure 2, RIA provides a structured and systematic roadmap to navigate the helping relationship by making how we work explicit. Comprising six major phases, this practice framework integrates a wide range of step-by-step tools, strategies and best practices to facilitate the **process** of working with adults to effect and maintain the behaviour changes necessary for optimal child outcomes.



Through RIA, instead of prescribing solutions, the practitioner builds the caregivers' underlying capacity to solve problems for themselves, by coaching and supporting them to generate solutions that work for their family. This approach empowers families, instead of engendering dependence. The RIA defines collaboration as "working together to produce an outcome". Because of the inherent power imbalance in a helping relationship, the RIA framework emphasises that on an ongoing basis, the practitioner needs to:

- intentionally and deliberately invite caregivers to collaborate in the intervention process,
- take responsibility for monitoring and nurturing the health of the relationship, and
- cultivate the motivation for change.

The RIA practice framework incorporates both the Science and Art of engaging adults for positive behaviour change, which are crucial for optimal child outcomes.

For more information on RIA and our training workshops,
please email RIA@kkh.com.sg.