

Paint Chips Tool

Overview

People react psychologically and intuitively to colors. Because color has an instant effect on us, it makes a perfect conduit to conversations about feelings.

The Paint Chips Tool is simply blocks of colors. You can create your own Paint Chip Tool by cutting colored construction paper into 5X 5 inch (or larger) squares or picking up paint chips (sample color swatches) at your local hardware store. You will need a range of colors to evoke emotions, so be sure to create at least 25 color squares. More is better.

The Paint Chips are a projective technique. This means that there is no correct or logical connection between nutrition and activity colors and a client's color choice. For example, there is no correct answer to this question: Which color best says how you feel about Rachel's activity level? Therefore, clients have to project or create their own connection between a selected color and how they feel it relates to a WIC topic. That connection reveals much about the client's feelings, challenges and perceptions on that topic and provides a springboard to an amazing core conversation.

Objectives

Use the Paint Chips Tool to identify parental feelings related to any WIC topic. Recognize and accept all feelings equally without judgment or comment. If positive feelings are shared, recognize parental actions that allowed parents to feel positively about the topic. If parents share negative feelings, probe to understand the situation and ask what they are willing to change to feel better about the behavior or topic.

Activities

1. After greeting the mom warmly, present the Paint Chips to the parent. Ask the parent to select a color that says something about a WIC topic or behavior. Examples: "Pick a color that says something about your child's growth" or "pick a color that says something about how much activity your toddler gets each day." Encourage the parent to pick out a color and then probe using words like these: "What about that color says how you are feeling about Rachel's growth?" or "Help me understand. How does that color relate to how you feel about Chad's activity now?"
2. Continue probing to get deeper insights, using words like these: "Tell me more" or "Help me understand." Allow silent pauses so the client can reflect and share.
3. Accept all responses without correction, dismissal or judgment. Don't say things like "you shouldn't feel that way" or "you'll get over that" or "it's really not that big of deal."
4. Ask the parent to identify specific behaviors or concerns that relate to their expressed feelings.
5. Discuss possible behavior changes. Framing suggested behavior change tips and ideas as parent-generated will allow you to be more influential.

Adaptions

The Paint Chips Tool can be used with individuals or in a group. Establish a safe environment for sharing before asking mothers to share their responses. Affirm all responses equally without judgment and thank mothers for sharing their heart-felt responses. Once all group members have shared, encourage parents to share practical tips that will resolve shared challenges.

"The Paint Chip Tool works for any topic but is especially helpful when talking about sensitive topics like weight."

Gail, Holyoke/Chicopee