

Review: Two Layers of Support: Creating the Conditions for Healing. Owl Productions and Castellino Trainings, 2014.

Ray Castellino and Elmer Postle have created a useful tool for pre and perinatal psychology professionals with the production of Two Layers of Support DVD. The one-and-one-half-hour film is an interview of Ray Castellino by Dr. Susan Lange, OMD, LAC who has taken Castellino's two-and-one-half-year training in pre and perinatal therapy. There are 12 sections, and each could stand alone to make a point or explain an important part of pre and perinatal work from Castellino's perspective. They include: 1) Working with people, 2) Babies showing their story in childbirth, 3) What is normal and natural, 4) Bridging the "worlds," 5) Slow down for attachment, 6) Diego, one baby's story, 7) To allow "settling," 8) Connection, 9) Giving what we didn't receive, 10) Layers of support, 11) Birth and craniosacral therapy, and 12) What is a sequence. Lange asks pertinent questions that help clarify the points that Castellino is making.

In the first part of the video, Castellino explains his history and his work, using his own life experience as an example of how important it is for practitioners and therapists to make sense of their own story when working in the pre and perinatal (PPN) realm. When they do this, he says, practitioners won't be as reactive to histories in others, or in themselves when it is evoked by working with babies and families. Our own unresolved history may get in the way of doing good therapeutic work. He next explores how babies show their stories as a way of telling, and how, as practitioners, we can help them tell their story, especially if we slow down. The way babies tell their stories is they "move their bodies, express emotion, make facial expressions, and put their bodies in different positions."

Several sections of the video explore how babies move through birth, what the mother experiences, and how the birth team members working together are all important aspects of supporting people during a very pivotal time. These sections stress the importance of finding the innate, natural rhythms that are in all living things that lie beneath overwhelmed or sped up tempos that are related to births with some interventions or a family that is overwhelmed with things they have to do. Castellino stresses how slowing down and sitting with families is necessary to come into a resonant rhythm with the baby and helps the story to be told at the baby's pace. This kind of attunement will allow a natural blue print to emerge.

Other sections detail supporting parenting, connection, and relationship, and how important it is to not have an agenda of "fixing the baby" or the parents, but to come into connection with them. An intention of "fixing" can create a tension field, or a sense of stress and compression in the relationship. Castellino explains how this way of being with birthing families is at the root of his work with midwife Mary Jackson and their joint project About Connections. He explains that if the birthing team can get out of the way and provide attuned support, the family discovers their own rhythm of birth. He narrates healthy birth and what he and Jackson term "supported attachment," or the way a baby and birth parents will go into a still place after birth, and then the baby will find his way to breast through the breast crawl. Midway through the video Castellino tells the story of a baby named Diego, and how he showed his birth story. Once he felt heard and seen, the breastfeeding relationship normalized and settled.

Castellino maintains that one of the main reasons that the babies and moms have nursing challenges is because babies need to tell or show their stories before they latch. The journey of moving to the breast in this way is not just about getting the baby to nurse, it is about the baby showing his or her story. In this way, "supported attachment" is different than "breast crawl." "Supported attachment" includes the baby telling/showing his/her story. Babies do not necessarily go to breast each time.

The video emphasizes the importance of "settling" for the birthing team and PPN practitioner, or when someone can slow down so that potency can grow and vitality increase. Settling helps provide space for professionals and their clients whether they are a birthing family or an adult with early trauma. Settling also allows for what Castellino calls "harmonic resonance" to emerge. This is a level of attunement and rhythm, and makes the birthing family and professionals a team. Castellino explains that it is hard to be with a crying baby, and the skills of settling allow people to be with themselves **and** the other without trying to fix or manipulate. Slower rhythms, presence, attunement, and settling all help people integrate the experience. For the baby, it could be the intensity of the birth experience, and for the adult, it could be receiving something they never received so they could parent their child in a new and more complete way.

Castellino explains the work of the small group process for adults he calls “womb surround workshops,” and how he utilizes settling, attunement, and rhythm to provide deep healing experiences. This type of connection can be learned and practiced outside the surround experience. Castellino defines connection as “a way of being together with the intention of mutual support and cooperation,” where there is support to deepen into the each other and the relationship. These small group processes help adults feel in their bodies what they never felt as children or as babies. Then, they are able to take that learned experience and give it to their families and relationships.

He further describes babies as “merged beings,” and just how early overwhelming experiences get programmed into the body as “imprints.” There is a particular sequence that babies go through that makes an imprint or creates a pattern that is structural, emotional, sequential, and energetic, and then is repeated throughout life. He defines “imprints” by making the analogy by showing how his shirt can get wrinkles, but explains that the shirt is not the wrinkles, it just remembers them. Castellino explains that our job is to become aware of this pattern so that we can choose how it expresses itself rather than let it run in our lives in an unconscious way.

The title is a section from the video where Castellino explains the need for everyone to have two layers of support. For the baby, it is the mom and dad or partner; for the parents, it is the birthing team; for the birthing team, it is their assistants and helping professionals. He stresses how it does “take a village” to raise a child, as Hillary Clinton said. Many women suffer postpartum depression in part because there is not enough support.

At the end of the video he explains the value of learning biodynamic craniosacral therapy and polarity therapy as a way to learn the slower, innate rhythms to be with people, especially babies. As a PPN practitioner, I could feel his descriptions in a visceral way, in my own body, and it was a good reminder of the model that he teaches. I highly recommend this video to PPN practitioners and birthing professionals as a tool to teach students, parents and the general public about our paradigm. For more information, see <http://www.castellinotraining.com>, or <http://www.wholebeingfilms.com>.

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