How to Empower Bereaved Parents to Engage with Their Baby and Memory Making

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These are the memories of my son Rowan that the midwife made for me
In what way are these two sets of memories different?
Levels of expertise

Having an in-depth understanding of...

- **Midwives**: The health and well-being needs of baby, mother and family
- **Bereavement Specialists**: The impact and process of trauma, bereavement and grief
- **Occupational Therapists**: Empowerment and engagement in meaningful activity
Spheres of Influence: Factors that can Affect Parental Engagement and Memory Making

History
- Type of pregnancy
- Circumstances of death
- Condition of baby

Personal Traits
- Motivation
- Culture & Beliefs
- Roles, Habits, Identity
- Performance skills

Task Demands
- Performance skills
- Sequencing & Timing
- Social Environment
- Physical Environment
- Equipment
“An optimal state of well-being in one’s life or river can be metaphorically portrayed by an image of strong, deep, unimpeded flow. Aspects of the environment and phenomenal circumstances, like certain structures found in a river, can influence and effect that flow.”
The opportunity for parents to participate in meaningful engagement with their baby and collect special memories, is represented by the flowing river.

Health professionals can support parents by identifying how task demands and personal traits might impact on flow and can assist parents in ‘decluttering the river’ so that their desires and actions can flow freely.

### Personal Traits
- Motivation
- Culture & Beliefs
- Roles, Habits & Identity
- Performance Skills

### Task Demands
- Performance Skills
- Sequencing and Timing
- Social Environment
- Physical Environment

Task demands are represented by the river bed – their requirements can impede flow.
Clearing the riverbed – Adapting the physical and social environment related to the task of parental engagement

Creating a safe environment
- Time privacy and space
- Regular and clear communication

Normalising parental engagement
- Education/Information
- Role modelling

Encouraging environmental choices and control
- Bringing items from home
- Inviting family and siblings
What are the challenges that might be blocking the flow of engagement? Can a way around be found or can any rocks be removed?

**Motivation**
- Help parents believe that they do have and CAN make choices
- That exploring their baby and collecting memories CAN be worthwhile
- That engaging in this way CAN be satisfying and CAN bring comfort

**Culture and Beliefs**
- Education/Information
- Role modelling
- Giving 'permission' and reassurance - repeatedly reminding them that this is 'ok'

**Performance Skills**
- When the stress response leaves families in shock, fear or anger and they are struggling to engage, give them time, permission to change their minds and always let them know how they can come back.
- If parents are overwhelmed by the task before them, retrace your steps, focus on what they CAN do and move forward very slowly – one step at a time
The components of this model are taught on the Gifts of Remembrance Workshops and feedback from healthcare professionals has been consistently positive.

Part of the workshops strength is that it is rooted in parent experience – there are many examples of how providing support in this way empowers parents and enriches their experience.

The Spheres of Influence framework and Kawa River Model are now included in workshops for 2017.

The author is keen to research this area further and collaborate with any interested healthcare professionals.

The next independent training workshop will be held on 31st March (currently discounted by SiMBA today) other in-service training continues around the country. For more info see us on our stand where you can sign up for our monthly news letter or go to our website.
The Greatest Gift you can give to someone whose baby has died is the Gift of Remembrance

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