DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF **HOW YOU FEEL** WHEN CHALLENGED BY WORKING WITH PARENTS

WILL HELP YOU BUILD AND MAINTAIN YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THEM.

When we can’t endure the frustration of failing to receive the expected response from parents, we sometimes label them difficult and place fault or blame on them. They can make us feel angry, incompetent, frustrated and defeated, or sad. With these feelings, we sometimes reject the parents and we don’t work with them as we do with the children who don’t give us desired or expected responses.

Just as with Children, adults’ behavior has meaning also. When parents behave with hostility, abruptness, defensiveness, or in other alienating ways, it is because they are feeling something. Their behavior serves as a protection against certain behaviors (e.g. helplessness, fear, guilt, incompetence, inadequacy, anger, stress, depression, etc.). Sometimes what we feel when we are with them is a reflection of what they are feeling inside. Sometimes what we feel is a reflection of our own histories and experiences. We need to differentiate our own feelings from what might be their feelings.

“Joining” with parents is a process of letting the parents know that we understand what they feel, their frustrations, worries and their love for their children. If we approach parents and families with sensitivity, messages of acceptance, availability (in our roles), and regularity, we will foster their growth in a partnership with us. As with their children, some parents lead us in a dance we must follow, slowly toward a working relationship. Building and maintaining trust in the partnership takes respect, humor, interest, patience, and PERSERVERENCE.