

Narratives and Nuance: Enhancing Child Welfare Practice Through Intentional Listening



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SLIDO-TEXT

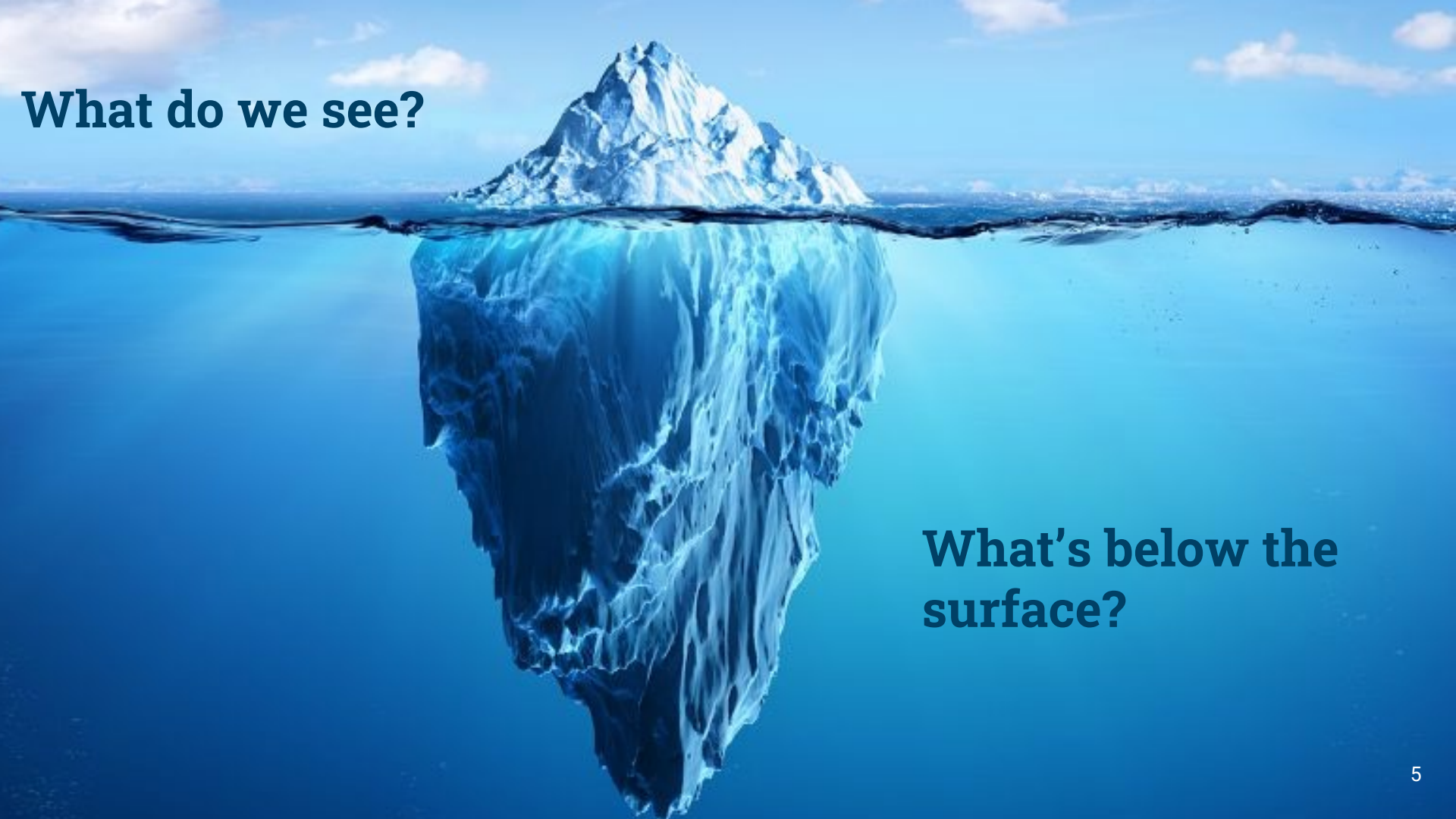
What was your take away from the most recent presentation?

Slido: What are the things we are listening to and for when we talk to families in the child welfare system?

Challenges in Listening

“Most people don’t listen to understand, they listen to respond”

Steven Covey



What do we see?

What's below the surface?

Types of Listening:

Relational

Contextual

Task Focused

Compassionate & Deep Listening



Relational Listening

Includes attending to, clarifying, and validating

- values, concerns, beliefs, and emotions
- communicating trust and respect
- inviting back and-forth dialogue
- expressing empathy and compassion
- confirming shared understanding.

Contextual Listening

Takes a wide-angle view of the person's life

Recognizing that the meaning of, and response to, challenges in a person's life are conditioned by the person's family, social supports, finances, education, literacy, and power

Task-focused listening

Clarifying the person's concerns and thoughts to arrive at an accurate understanding of a problem

Requires pattern recognition, judgment, and categorization

What happens if you combine all three?

Compassionate listening

You learn what matters most to people

People feel understood, validated, connected, safe, supported, and known



“The experience of being abandoned by humanity and then not being heard occurs when a person in power’s own assumptions about safety and risk take precedence over individual and family tales of society’s inhumanity.”

Dr. Robert Ortega

The Problem of How We Listen

When people are prematurely categorized, and when questions only invite yes/no answering, listening suffers.

People may not disclose stigmatizing or embarrassing information

Respond with anger

Reluctant to express hesitancy or disagreement openly

Selective sharing

Sensemaking

A process of formulation

Involves movement between conscious and nonconscious process

Can be developed through experience and learning through reflection

Inseparable from the environment in which it takes place

Dialogic process

Sensemaking is an emotionally-informed as well as cognitive process.

*Cook, L. & Gregory, M. (2020) Making sense of sensemaking: Conceptualising how child and family social workers process assessment information

DEEP LISTENING

Attentiveness and presence that people value

Habits of mind that invite curiosity and openness, especially when strong emotions are present.

What am I assuming that might not be true?

What am I not hearing?

Engage in the “Beginner's mind” – see the novelty in the familiar, see a situation from multiple perspectives.

Epistemic Reciprocity

A sincere belief that what another person says is valuable

Nonjudgemental, accepting, and respective listening, characterized by

- Attentiveness
- Curiosity
- Beginner's mind
- Presence

Helps both parties to reduce defensiveness and promote flexibility and shared mind

Tips for good listening

Speak in shorter sentences, rather than paragraphs

Active listening—Open ended questions repeating back, summarizing

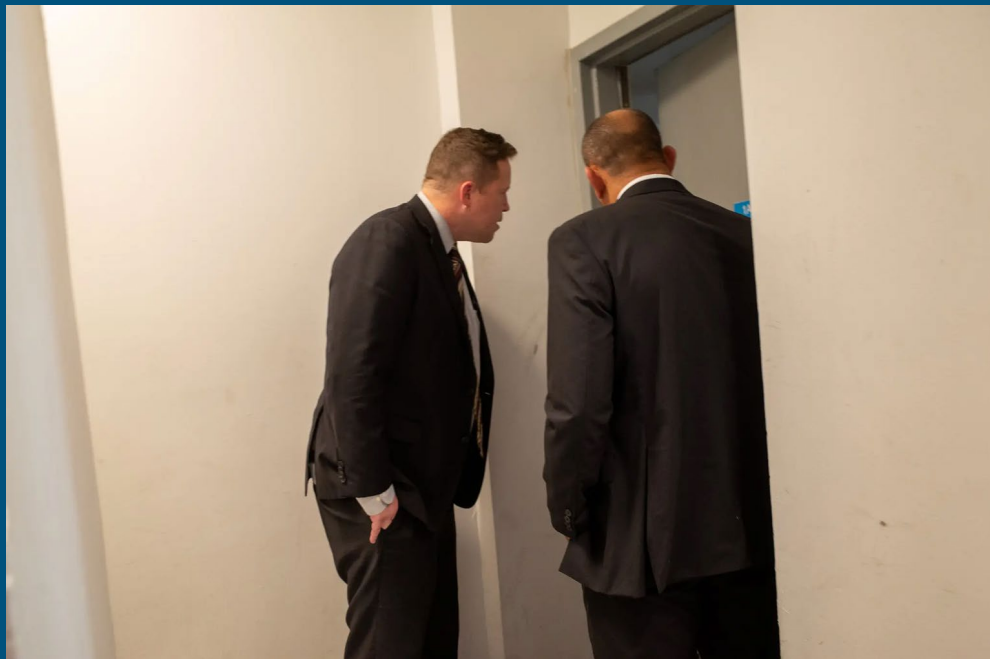
Micro skills—leaning forward, tone of voice, eye contact

Ronald M. Epstein, Mary Catherine Beach, **“I don’t need your pills, I need your attention:”** Steps toward deep listening in medical encounters, Current Opinion in Psychology, Volume 53, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2023.101685>.
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352250X23001306>)

PRACTICE

Judge Let Abusive Parents Keep Daughter. Days Later, She Was Dead.

A Brooklyn judge ordered Jane Doe, 1, who died of blunt force trauma, to stay with her parents, after the child welfare agency argued she should be removed.



Detectives outside of the Crown Heights home of a 1-year-old child who was killed last month. She was living with her parents at the time.

Credit John Taggart for The New York Times

SLIDO: TEXT

Please share a line or two from the letter you wrote:

Reflection

Now imagine you worked on this case – how would you feel after this happened?

Would be as kind to yourself as you were to Eric in the letter?

If you saw this happening to someone you knew would you send a letter of compassion?

Take Aways—SLIDO-TEXT

One thing you learned

One thing that impacted you

One thing that was missing

One thing that you can incorporate into your practice