

DIGGING DEEPER

SYSTEMS THINKING



Using Resources to Deepen Your Understanding Supporting Family Systems

DIGGING IN



Resource: [Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/pgor/), Office of Head Start: The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

(Follow the link below to access this resource or pull it off your bookshelf.)

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/pgor/>

ACTIVITY

Click on *3. Reflective Strategies: Sustaining Effective Practice* then click the *Self-Reflection* tab at top of page. Read the second and third bullets.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What mental model do you hold about a family you work with?
- What inquiry skills could you use to learn more about this family's perspective and their dynamics?
- Draw a feedback loop that shows the possible pattern of influences in this system. What small change could you make to influence this feedback loop?

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- When difficult situations arise with families, how do you reflect on your own thoughts and feelings? How do you find out about the thoughts and feelings of family members?

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Resource: NAEYC Beyond the Journal - [Understanding Families: Applying Family Systems Theory to Early Childhood Practice](http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200601/ChristianBTJ.pdf)

(Follow the link below to access this resource.)

<http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200601/ChristianBTJ.pdf>

ACTIVITY

This article by Linda Garris Christian outlines six characteristics of the family system relevant to early childhood professionals: boundaries, roles, rules, hierarchy, climate, and equilibrium. Read the “Rules” section on pages 5–6. Consider the story of Sam and Imelda as you answer the following questions.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What unspoken rules may be developing in this newly formed family?
- How might this change in family composition influence the toddlers in the family?
- How might Jason (the teacher) respond to Sam and Imelda in this moment?

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- How do changes in family relationships (marriage, divorce, separation) influence your work with families?