

Building Relationships with Families and Students: How to Begin?

Ann Gordon, PhD, BCET, and Risa Graff, MA, BCET, FAET

Association of Educational Therapists Webinar

April 16, 2021

After decades in the field of educational therapy, it has become clear to us that the **relationship** we build with families and students is more important for fostering growth than any intervention we come up with, or tool that we use, no matter how brilliant or well-conceived. And it is in our first contact with any family or student that sets the relational tone for that relationship going forward.

Today's discussion is intended to share how to think about these first contacts. We began preparing for today's webinar by sending each other a series of questions designed to reveal how each of us gets ready for our first sessions. Those questions form the basis for today's conversation, and we hope they will also help you as you think about this process for yourself.

Risa's questions for Ann

1. Do you ever decide not to take on a family that has sought your services?
2. What information do you like to collect before your first meeting?
3. What are your goals for the first session with a new family? What do you want them to take away from the experience?
4. How do you think about, and manage, parental expectations?
5. When do you have your first meeting with the student? Do you ever meet with a student before you meet with their family?
6. What kinds of issues prompt you to recommend ongoing support for the family?
7. How has virtual work changed all this?

Ann's Questions for Risa:

1. How do you think about preparing for your first session with a new student?
2. What is the first thing you do with a new student as they enter your space, and what ways have you developed to do this in the virtual world?
3. How do you think about and choose the activities for that first session?
4. What are you thinking about overall during this meeting?
5. How do you wrap up the session, and set the stage for the next meeting?
6. What feelings do you want the student to have at the end of the first session?
7. How is your planning for future sessions the same as or different than for the first session?