



ENGAGE:

Translating language into feelings

Our culture is infused with violence and our work with parents should be trauma-informed. Many parents with behavioral health challenges have been victims of or witnessed violence in their lives, with traumatic consequences. Without even thinking, people may use language that is potentially triggering for clients who are parents. Parents may use these words and phrases themselves. For example, there are many expressions that come from or may convey a vivid, abusive or even violent impression. Some of these are provided below. Take a few minutes to make a list of common phrases that actually suggest violent or abusive meanings, and then identify alternatives. You may want to suggest these alternatives to the parents you work with, especially to use in conversations with their children.

Examples:

“I could kill you.”

This could mean, “I am really angry with you.”

“I felt like strangling him.”

This could mean, “I was really frustrated by his behavior.”
