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What matters most to parents?

| Opportunities to engage parents in their children's early learning

Derek McCormack

Dr Naomi Hackworth

ECA Conference, Sept 2018

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Parenting Research Centre
raising children well

murdoch children's research institute

The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne

Overview

- What matters to parents: the first 5 years
- Help seeking behaviours
- What helps with parent engagement?
- Opportunities for engaging around children's early learning
- What this means for your practice

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Australian families

- 305,000 births/year
- 18,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births
- Children 0-14 years = 19% of population
- 16% families - single parent families

6 million families*
Up from 5 million in 2011 ▲

BIRTH
EVERY
1 minute and 45 seconds

* ABS 2016
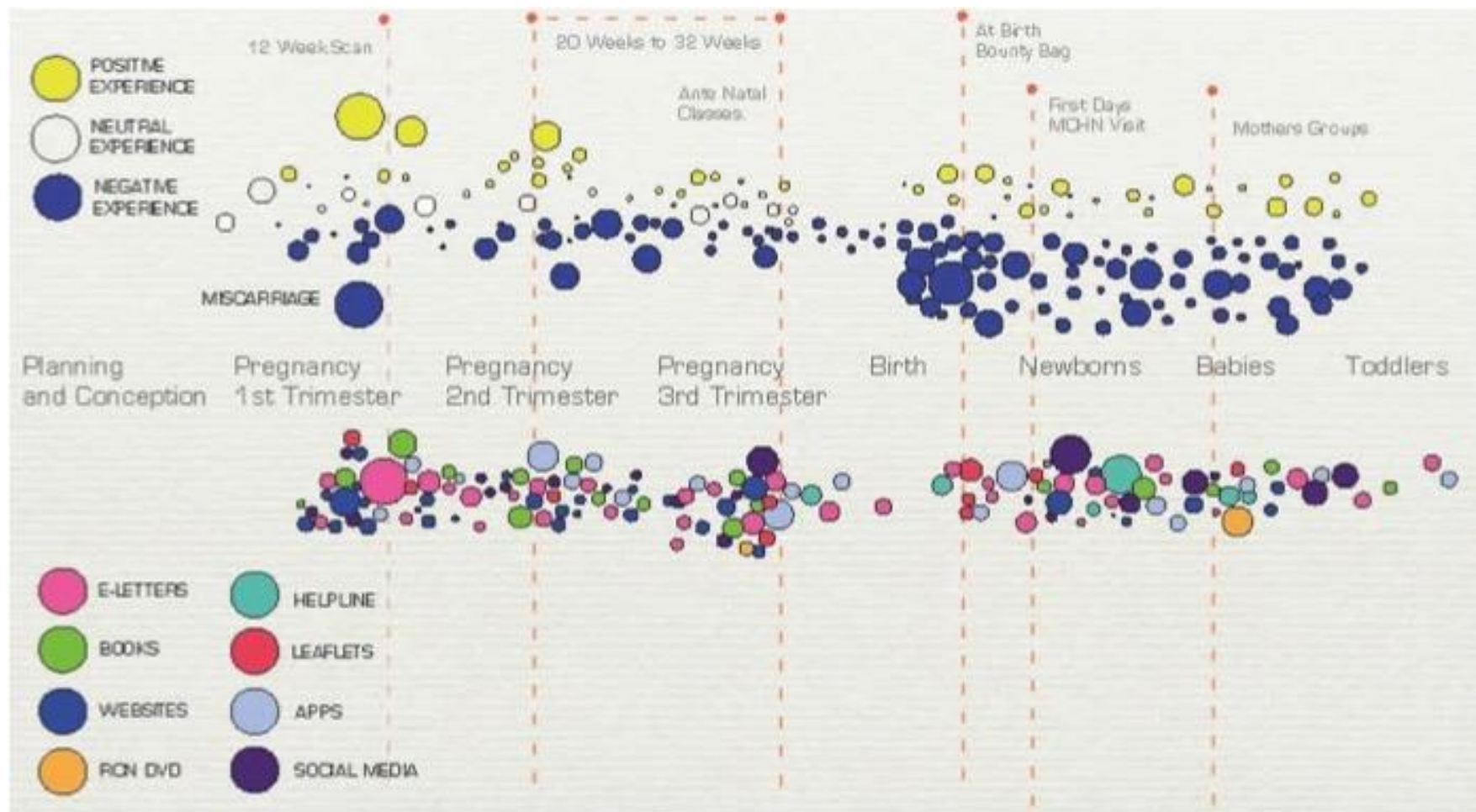
Parents no longer 'going online' but 'living online'

What matters to parents: the first 5 years

What our data tells us

When? Information-seeking experiences

Information seeking experience pre-birth and early parenting
Raising Children Network Research, 2011

When? Information-seeking experiences

Information seeking experience pre-birth and early parenting
Raising Children Network Research, 2011

When? Information-seeking patterns

Information seeking peaks at certain points in the parenting journey.

- Pregnancy, particularly first pregnancies

- Newborns and babies

- Transition phases

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What? Parent information needs

- To solve a specific issue or concern they have

- To get practical tips and ideas

- To get reassurance that they are doing OK as parents and their children are doing OK

- To feel more confident, not alone

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Help seeking behaviours

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How? Online seeking and information behaviours

- People are usually more task focused when consuming information online

- People are often more time-pressured when searching online

- People are more likely to be multi-tasking
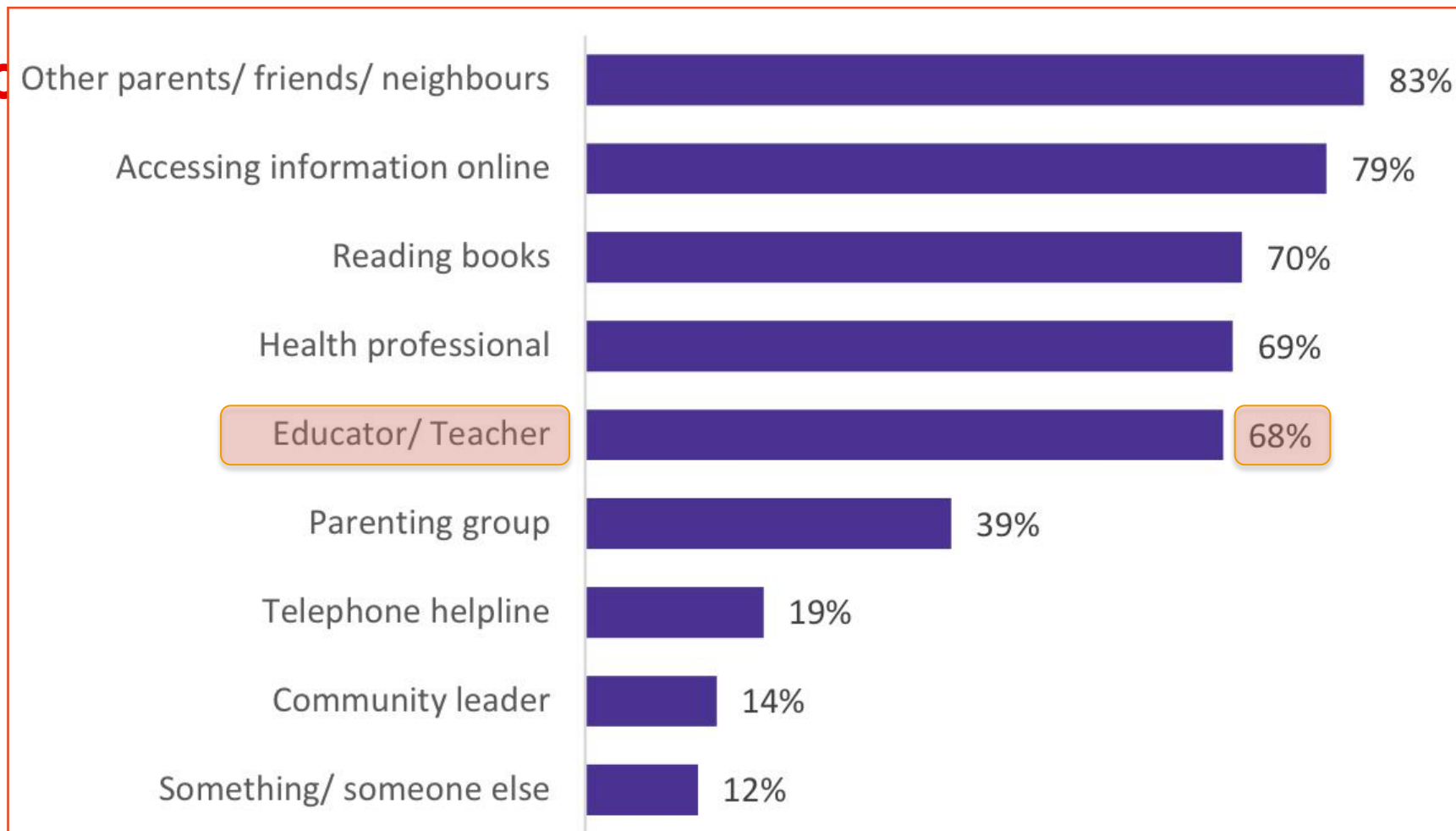
- People are less likely to be loyal to only one brand

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How? Online seeking and information behaviours

- Read less

- Scan more

- Jump between pages within websites

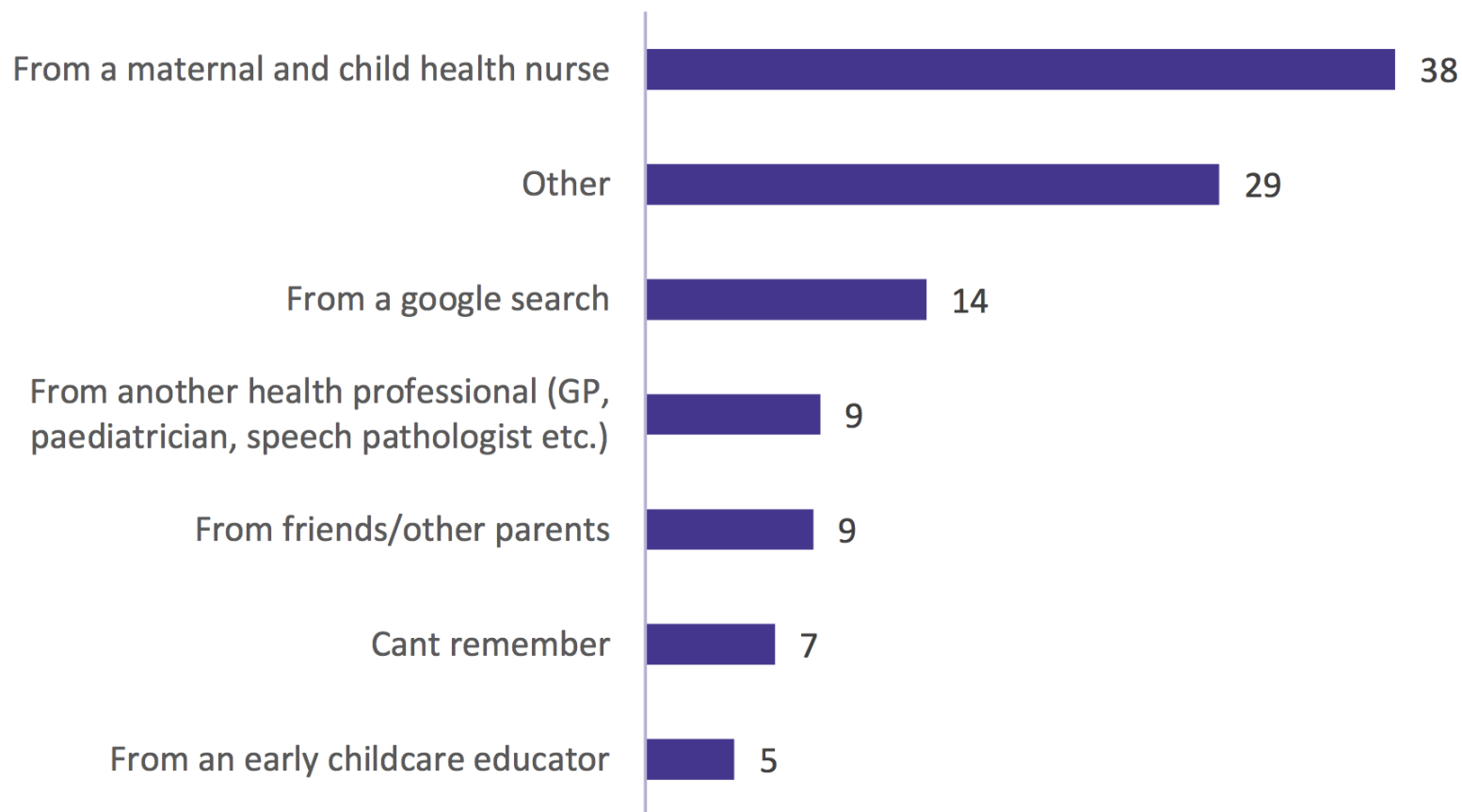- Jump between websites

- Have multiple tabs open

(Norman Nielson Group)

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Where? Sources of parenting info

Source	Percentage
Other parents/ friends/ neighbours	83%
Accessing information online	79%
Reading books	70%
Health professional	69%
Educator/ Teacher	68%
Parenting group	39%
Telephone helpline	19%
Community leader	14%
Something/ someone else	12%

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Parenting Today in Victoria, 2016

Where? Referrals to a digital resource

Category	Value
From a maternal and child health nurse	38
Other	29
From a google search	14
From another health professional (GP, paediatrician, speech pathologist etc.)	9
From friends/other parents	9
Cant remember	7
From an early childcare educator	5

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Parenting Today in Victoria, 2016
Population weighted data

What does this mean for me?

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What does this mean for me?

Presenting information for parents:

- Easy to find, understand and use.

- Reliable.

- Online context is different.

- Anywhere, any time.

- Tune in to parents' contexts.

- Staying contemporary.

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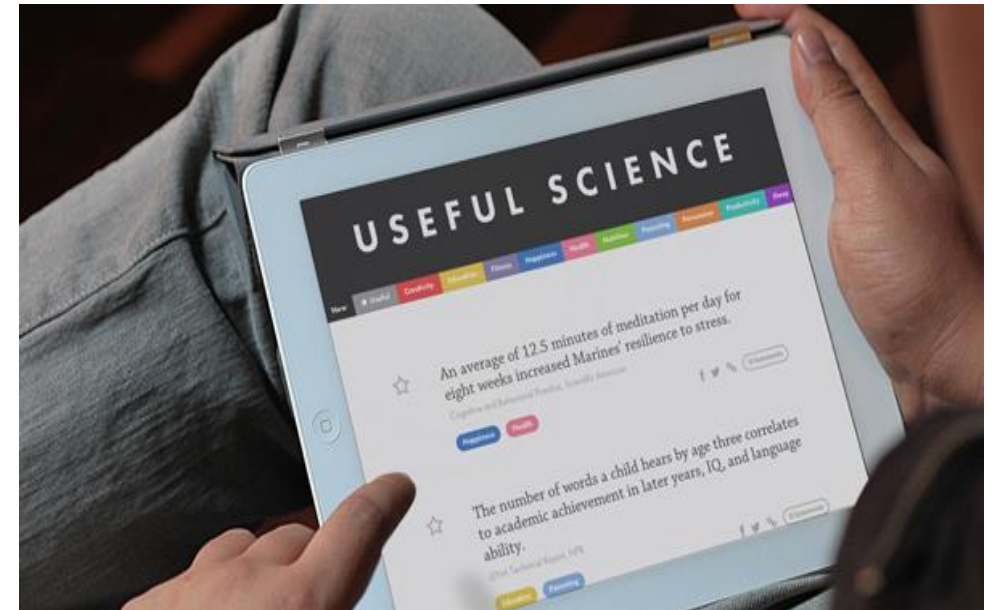
Why Framing?

Because sustained social change requires **Culture Change**

Recent framing research

- Building on five years of child development research.
- Partnership between the Parenting Research Centre and the FrameWorks Institute.
- Helped identify some models of parenting.

Individualism

Choice and Decisions
Information is Everything
Good Parenting= Caring
Good Parenting=Natural
One-Way Parenting
Infinite and Absolute Variation

Collectivism

Importance of Integration
and Appropriateness

Determinism

Parenting Determines Parenting
Natural State = Trouble
Threat of Modernity
Communities in decline
Technology out of control
Too much coddling
Too many rules and laws
Too much science

Cultural Models of...
Parenting

Government

Government as outside director (–)
Government as partner/resource (+)
Government as incapable (--)

Context

What Surrounds Us, Shapes Us
Protection Wall (context as potential danger)
Experience Filter (context as mixed-bag)

Gender

Men=Important
Women=Responsible (bad parenting/challenges)

Recent framing parenting research

- 7600 Australians.
- Efforts to communicate about effective parentin. counterproductive.
- Most people seeing parenting as an innate and individual pursuit.
- Not as the responsibility of society more broadly.
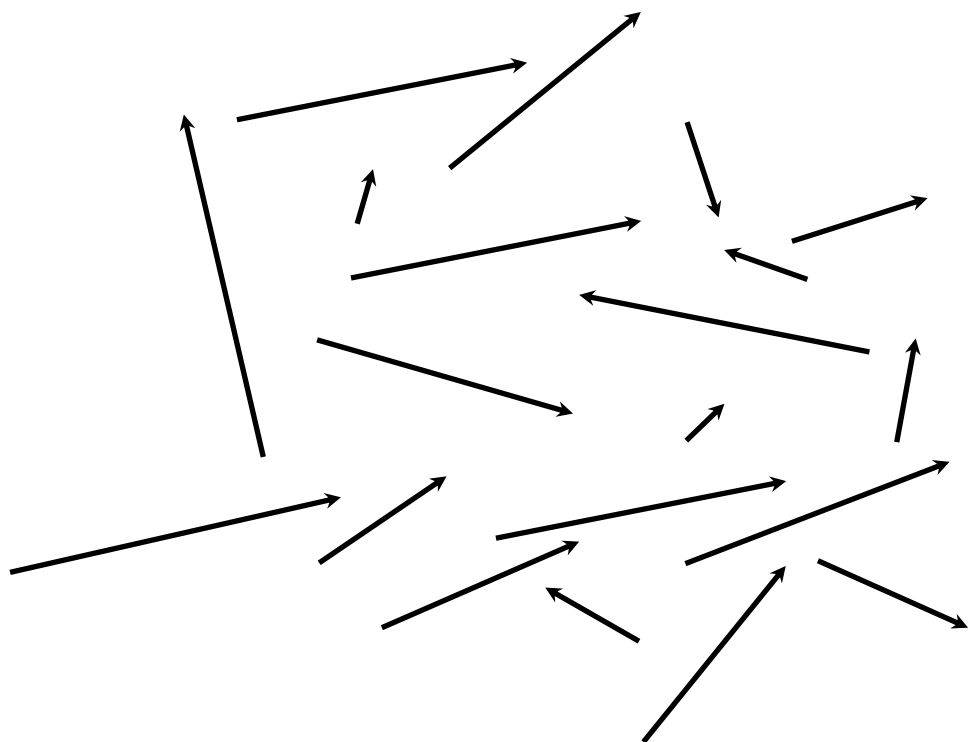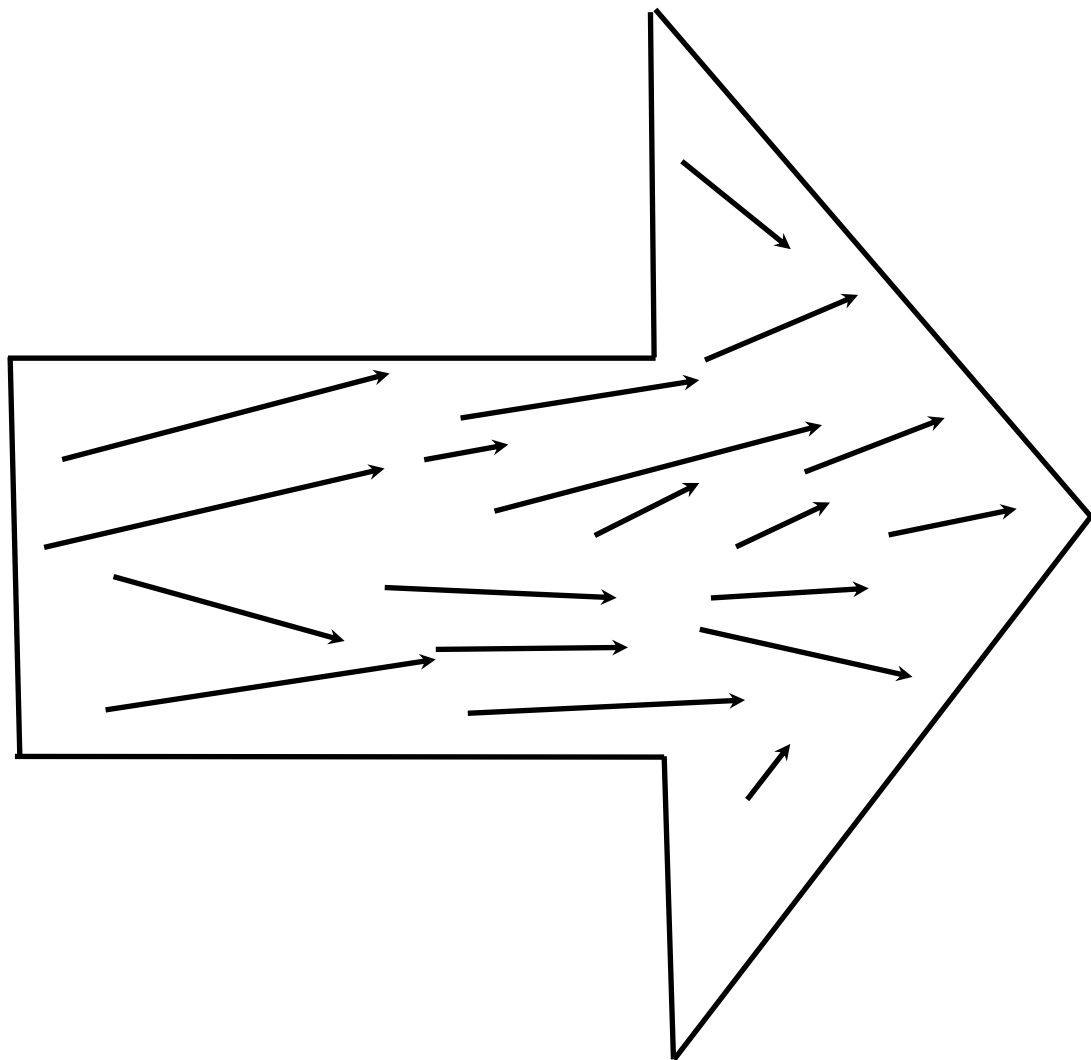
FROM

TO

Effective Parenting

Child Development

When talking about parenting…

Avoid:	Do:
Talking about how all parents struggle and that parenting is 'hard work'	Start with children and their needs.
Talking about 'improving' parenting or pointing to 'effective' or 'good' parenting	Build understanding of childhood development – and the support all parents need to raise thriving children
Using stats that show poor outcomes for children to argue for parenting support	Explain how circumstances affect parents and families using the 'Navigating Waters' metaphor
Starting communications with the idea of 'parenting skills'	Focus on parenting skills after establishing how circumstances affect families
Rebutting or disproving ingrained ways of thinking about parenting	Telling a positive, consistent story about supporting child development
Talking about 'evidence-based parenting' or the 'science of parenting'	Explain why parenting matters for positive childhood development

What helps with parent engagement?

It's hard for parents to seek help

- Child related problems can cause high anxiety
- Parents expect to be blamed
- Many don't seek help
- Often wait a long time
- Feel frustrated (sometimes victimized)
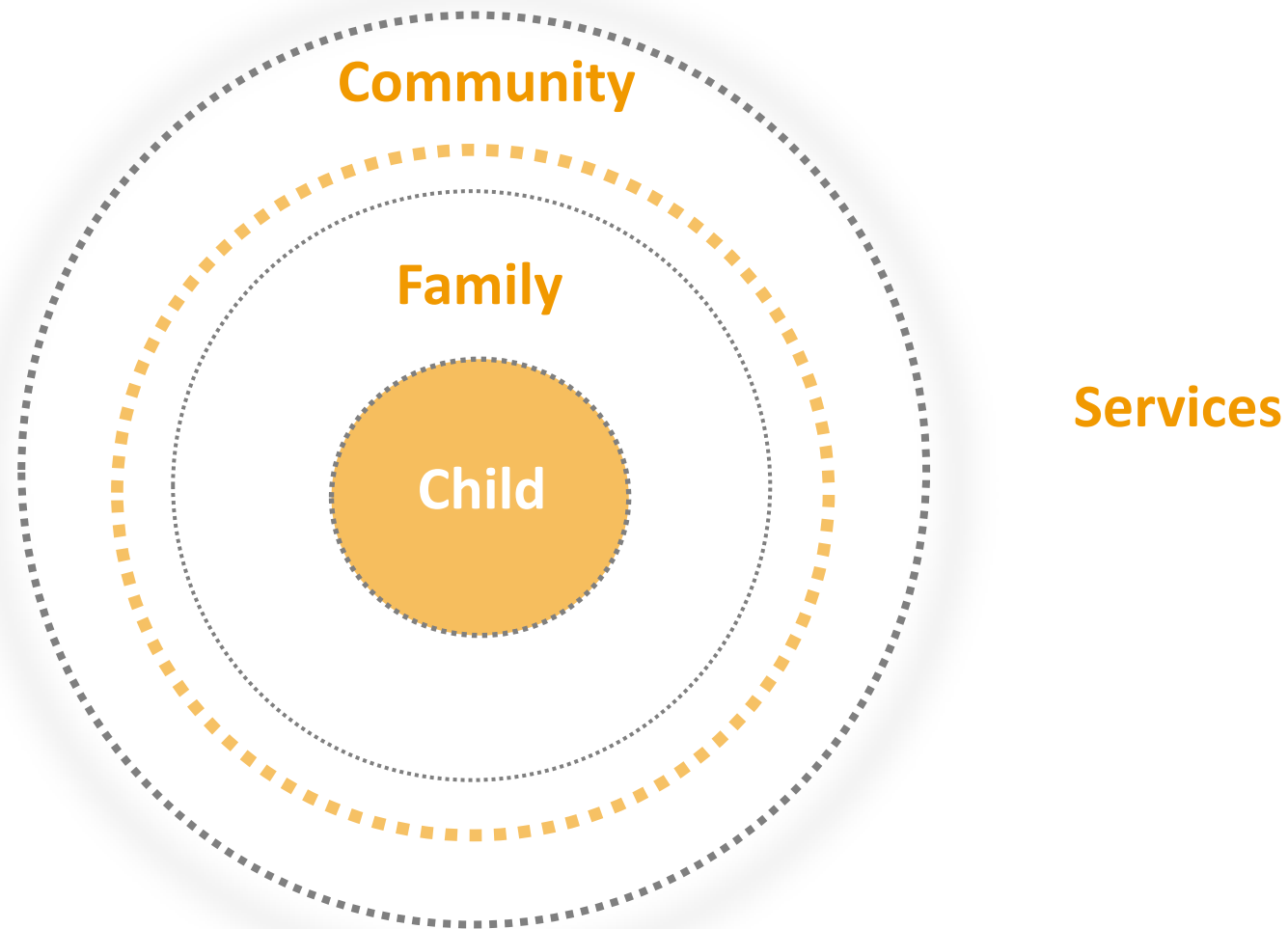- Feel demoralised

Why parents mightn't seek help

They might …

- feel their parenting is being judged
- feel like they are the only ones in this situation
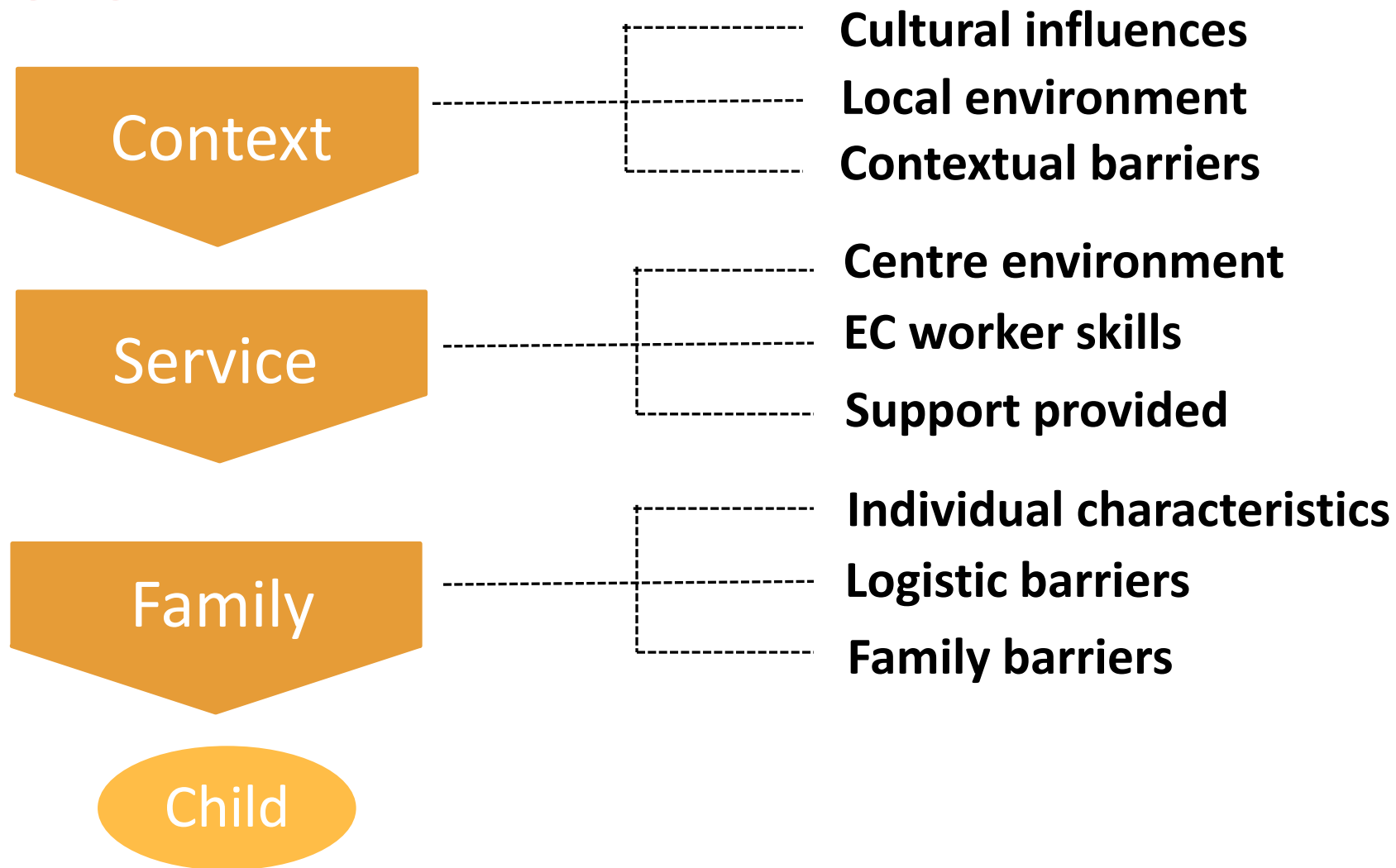- feel embarrassed that they don't know all the answers
- have other things that get in the way.

The importance of context

The child and their context

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Factors impacting parent engagement

```
Context ──┐
          ├── Cultural influences
          ├── Local environment
          └── Contextual barriers

Service ──┐
          ├── Centre environment
          ├── EC worker skills
          └── Support provided

Family ───┐
          ├── Individual characteristics
          ├── Logistic barriers
          └── Family barriers

Child
```

Different things impact at different times

Family

Families apply strategies to support their child's early education

Different things impact at different times

Service →

Families continue to engage with services and supports

Families apply strategies to support their child's early education

Different things impact at different times

Context →

Families access resources & support about the child's early education

Families continue to engage with services and supports

Families apply strategies to support their child's early education

Different things impact at different times

Context

Families access resources & support about the child's early education

Service

Families continue to engage with services and supports

Family

Families apply strategies to support their child's early education

Child

Opportunities for engaging around children's early learning

Plain language information

01

Multiple formats for information

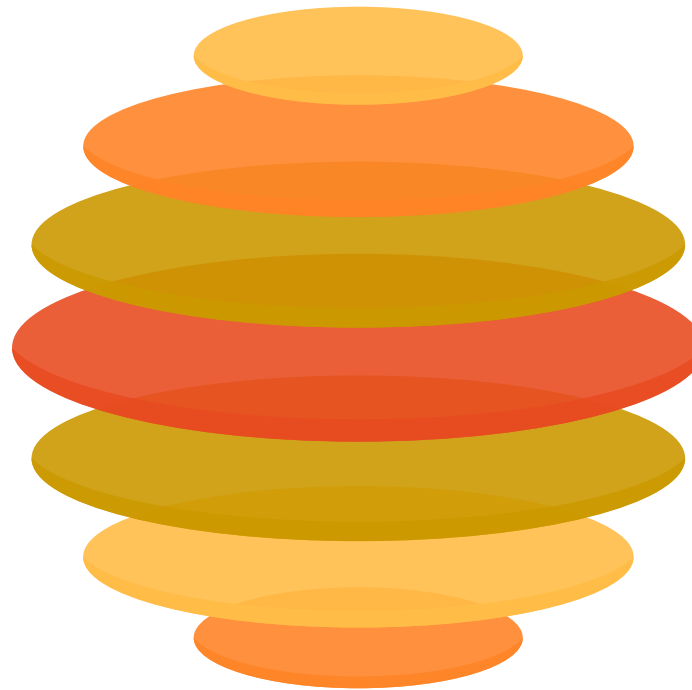**02**

Accessible - when and where the parents need it.

03

04 'open door' approach

05 'Ask' rather than 'tell' what parents need

06 Follow through - check in on how they're going

Opportunities for engaging around children's early learning

Plain language
information

01

Multiple formats
for information

02

Accessible - when and
where the parents need it

03

**Clear emphasis on
the benefits for their
child's development**

04

'open door'
approach

05

'Ask' rather than 'tell'
what parents need

06

Follow through - check in
on how they're going

How ECEC settings can support parenting

- Non-stigmatizing source of support

- Incidental teaching (modeling)

- First port of call (advice)

- Personal support (encouragement)

- Social support (opportunity to connect)

- Information support (evidence informed information)
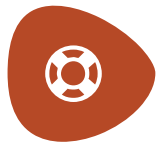
Supportive environment

Welcoming environment

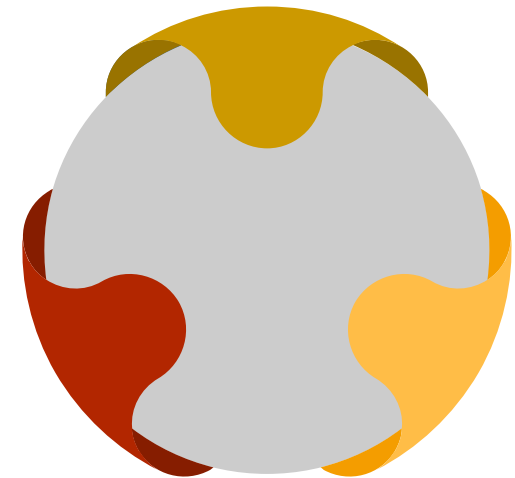Showing interest in the parent as a person

Seeing parents as partners

Seeking agreement before offering info

Communicating positives about the child

What this means for your practice?

Information strategy

Proactive
- Resourcing parents

Reactive
- Responding with information

Responding to help seeking

- Listen (really try to understand)
- Clarify (seek an example)
- Validate
- Share information (observations)
- Clarify the parent's goals
- Be slow to give advice (get permission first)
- Share information
- Prompt further help seeking
- Follow-up

A free resource for your toolkit

- 1 million visits per month
- 2 million page views per month
- 60% traffic via mobile
- 80% traffic via parents' search
- Top referral site: Facebook
  (200,000 Followers)
- Return and new visitors 2:1

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The resource

PREGNANCY
Alcohol and pregnancy
Use this picture guide to find out about how to cut down or quit drinking alcohol when pregnant.

INTERACTIVE & MOBILE APP
› Baby Karaoke
Get words and music for old and new songs with our popular Baby Karaoke tool.

TEENS
Burns first aid
Burns and scalds need immediate first aid. This guide has the first aid you need – in pictures.

NEWBORNS
Good attachment
Good attachment is key to successful breastfeeding. This video shows how.

AUTISM & DISABILITY
Children with ASD and disability app
Get a handy services tool, funding info, parent videos, articles and more – on iTunes and Google Play.

ALL AGES
My Neighbourhood
Looking for a child health centre? Enter your postcode into My Neighbourhood to find services near you.

PRE-TEENS TO TEENS
Changing body
Physical changes during adolescence can happen in different ways at different times, although there's a general pattern. Here's...

PREGNANCY
Birth Choices
Make the best choice for your pregnancy and birth care with our award-winning guide.

2200 articles, videos, parenting in pictures

Pregnancy, newborns to teens

Evidence-based

Quality assured

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Knowledge translation and quality assurance

DEVELOPMENT	PRODUCTION	WEB OPTIMISATION	UPLOAD	PUBLISH ONLINE
Scope the topic with experts and sector professionals	Select Subject Matter Expert & incorporate evidence	Quality Assurance review by independent experts	Web Editor & Managing Editor final check	Promote new content to parents and professionals
Approval to go ahead	Internal review	Scientific Advisory Board review	Executive Director sign off	

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Different families, different needs

Different families, different needs

New platforms - webinars

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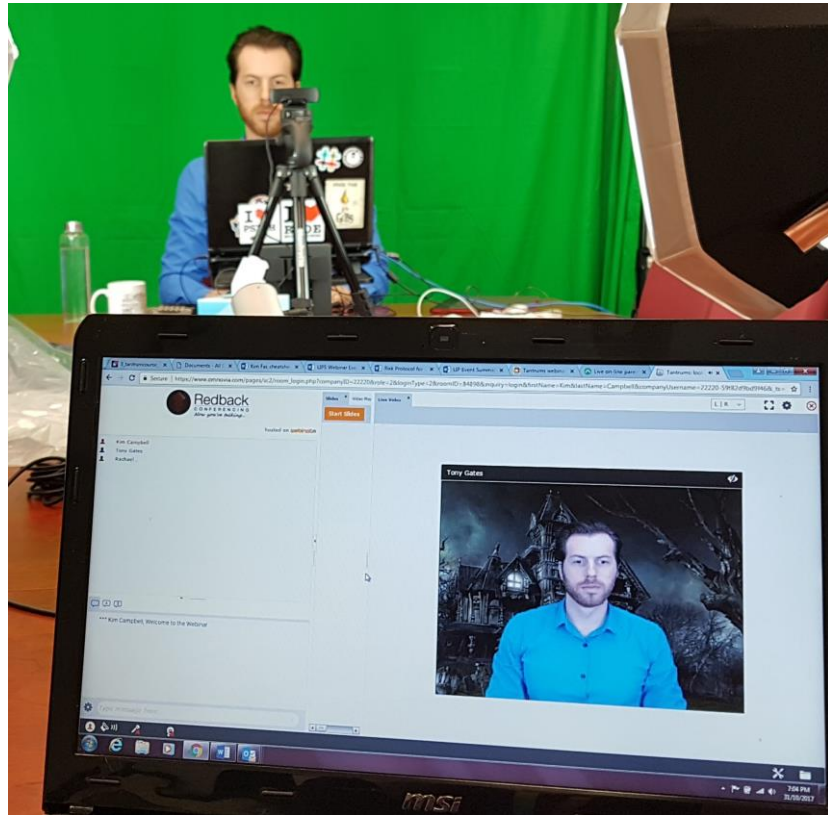
Partnering to enable others initiatives

Child and family health and wellbeing

Hospital

General Practice

Research

Curricula and professional resources

Partner initiatives
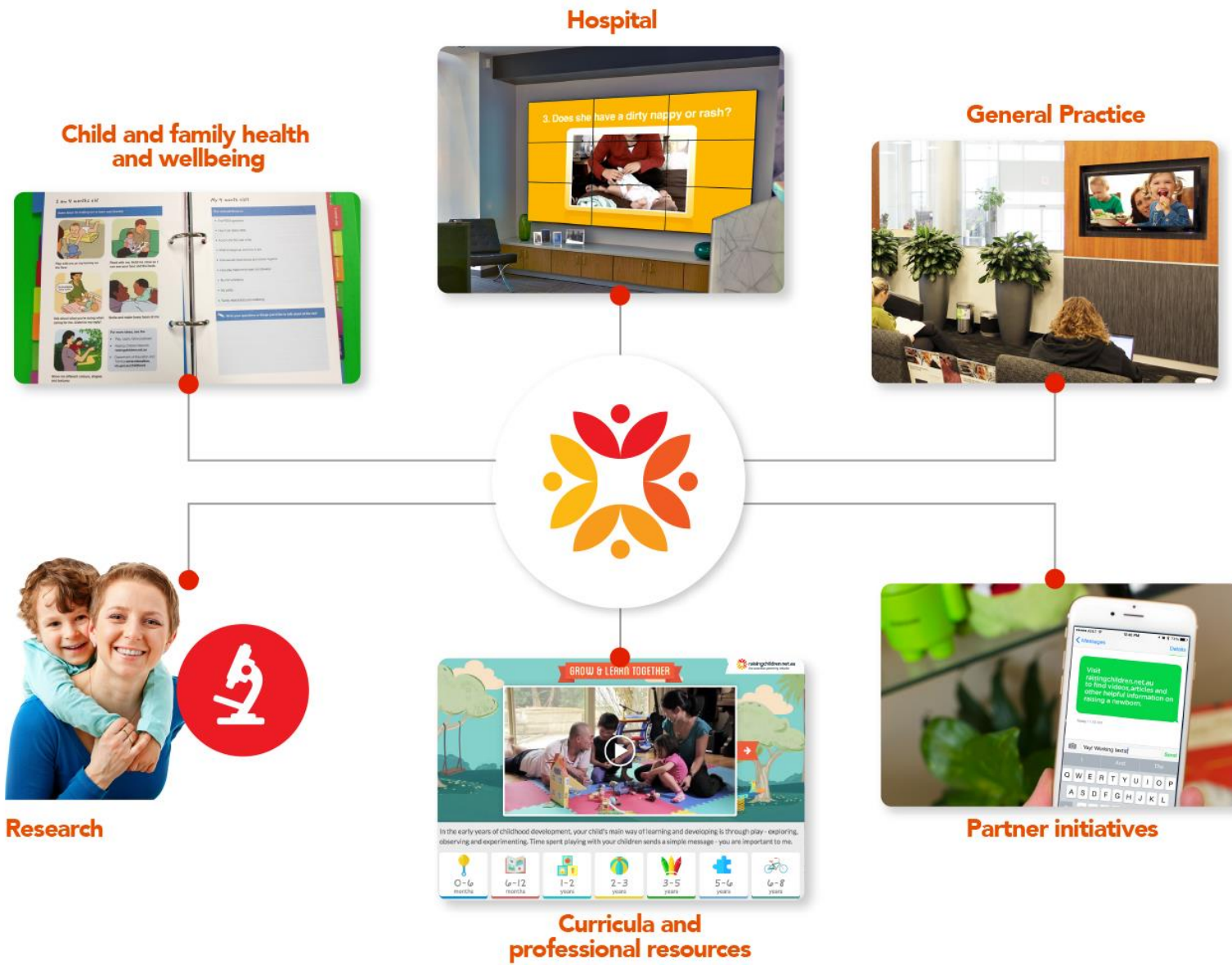
What do parents take away?
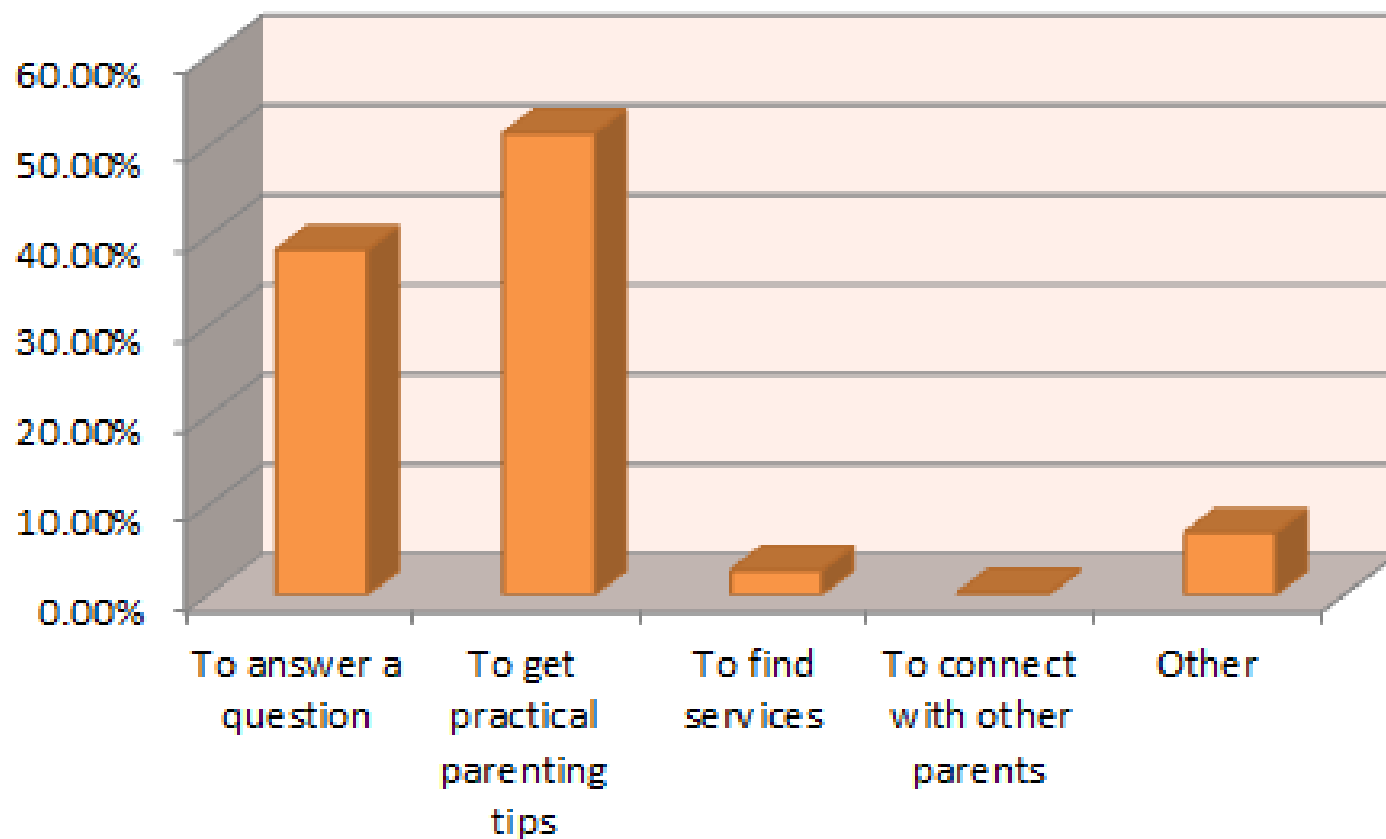
Raising Children Network survey with 1018 respondents, 2017

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