

## **Welcome!**

There sure is a lot to absorb at these conferences, isn't there? Well, this workshop is no different ... are you ready for more info?

As all are settling in, please take a moment to read this *and* the next page, Introduction to Presenter & Breakout Session. These quick reads should help you acclimate to *this* particular session.

This breakout session is indeed appropriate for both the recipients and providers of respite. The proverbial "two way street" will present itself several times during our sharing of ideas. Advice for one group will provide insight for the other as we listen to how we all "tick". We share a common interest and purpose which is a great foundation for learning!

In our 1 ¼ hours together I'm hoping we'll have time to dialogue *and* review some new material I have to offer. The attached outline simply covers the subjects we'll be covering. Actual presentation content is not detailed so that you might jot down "what you like and leave the rest". Some content will predictably fall into the category "I've heard this before" or "been there done that"! Hopefully I can avoid "preaching to the choir" and facilitate the sharing of fresh ideas. You'll likely find the group's input will provide ideas that can, literally, 'fill in the blanks' just as well as what I've prepared to share!

### **Attached breakout session B-2 materials:**

1. Breakout Session work-papers:
  - a. This welcome page
  - b. Overview
  - c. Workshop outline / fill-in sheet; pages 1-3
  - d. Participants' Questionnaire / Class Contribution; page 4
  
2. General information handouts:
  - a. Interviewing strategies and Q&A's
  - b. A model of types or branches of respite needs
  - c. A sample, multi agency collaborative goals list.

My heart is truly with you'all on this path of giving and receiving care and respite. We share the privilege of learning through these "special" circumstances of life.

Blessings,  
Louise

## Reasons, Respect & Relationships For Caregivers and Their Respite Providers

### Introduction to Presenter & Breakout Session

**Presenter:** Louise Bruce is the founder and Executive Director of The LaChris Connection (TLC). TLC's mission is to ensure that families of children with special needs enjoy respite and adventure. Louise is also the mom of three delightful kids, two of whom were born with cerebral palsy. Parenting children with special needs and being a social worker to many similar, yet unique, families are the experiences that support Louise's presentations. The back of TLC's brochure will clarify why Louise often refers to her children, and care-giving experiences, in the past tense. Her personal story includes the deaths of two of her children, Laura & Christopher. Time for a deep breath! Her courageous middle son, Ben, a Sr. in High School is, thankfully, moving beyond the 'teenage alien invasion' stage! Louise was also the primary caregiver during her mom's final stages of cancer and last year of life. This live-in care giving and, of course, the parenting of her children have all been shared with her husband of 23 years, Mike.

### **Session Overview:**

**Semantics:** I don't know about you, but, for years I used the term 'caregiver' to refer to persons hired to help. Well, I've been re-educated and am going to attempt to use the 'industry proper' terms:

1. Caregiver – refers to the full time person, usually family member, primarily responsible for another's special needs (hence "primary caregiver").
2. Respite Providers/Workers – refers to the occasional, hired persons or volunteers who give the full time family member / guardian a break ... or 'respite' from their, often relentless, duties.
3. Client – Typically refers to the person who needs assistance because of disabilities or diagnoses.

### **The 3 R's; Reasons, Respect & Relationship Outline Summary:**

Reasons:

1. Why caregivers need respite provisions
2. Why respite providers enjoy what they do
3. Why clients need caregivers to receive respite
4. Why Nots? Overcoming the true barriers that often 'trump' the reason why
5. The many faces of respite

Respect:

1. Extinguishing stereotypes often held about caregivers, clients and the respite provider
2. Practical advice about questions and answers for both interviewer & interviewee
3. Portraying, and listening for, healthy views and attitudes

Relationship:

1. Our discussions on 'respect' will naturally flow into relationships. Here we'll also touch on:
  - a. Breaking down of fears, that all might have, surrounding the client
  - b. Treasure hunting tools for discovering gifts amidst limitations
2. The good, bad and ugly of ... **expectations**

**Reasons, Respect & Relationships  
For Caregivers and Their Respite Providers**

**Reasons:**

1. Why caregivers need respite provisions
  - a. Conventional wisdom:
  - b. Thoughts on those who seek respite:
  - c. Thoughts on those who do NOT seek respite:
  - d. Workshop participant's thoughts:
2. Why respite providers enjoy what they do:
  - a. Conventional wisdom:
  - b. From an empty or full place
  - c. Workshop participant's thoughts:
3. Why *clients need* caregivers to receive respite!
  - a. Practical
  - b. Social
  - c. Emotional
4. Overcoming some of the true barriers:
  - a. Financial
  - b. Personality Dynamics
  - c. Availability
5. The many faces of respite – taking the idea of respite out of the box!

## Reasons, Respect & Relationships For Caregivers and Their Respite Providers

### Respect:

1. Extinguishing stereotypes held about caregivers, clients and the respite provider:
  - a. Caregivers
  - b. Clients
  - c. Respite Providers
  - d. Underlying attitudes as foundation for behavior/choices:
  - e. Workshop participant's thoughts:
2. Practical advice about questions and answers for both interviewer & interviewee:
  - a. Setting **and** guidelines for an interview:
  - b. General 'tricks of the trade' for any interview
  - c. Interviewer guidelines/ideas:
  - d. Interviewee guidelines/ideas:
  - e. Workshop participant's thoughts:
3. Portraying, and listening for, healthy views and attitudes:
  - a. Demeanor and nuances are not all just etiquette and/or "PC" they mean something!
  - b. Employer/Interviewers responsibility:
    - i. What to portray and practical ways how:
    - ii. What to listen for:
  - c. Respite Provider / Interviewees responsibility:
    - i. What to convey:
    - ii. What to ask & understand:

**Reasons, Respect & Relationships  
For Caregivers and Their Respite Providers**

**Relationship:**

1. Breaking down of fears:
  - a. Respite provider apprehensions:
  - b. Caregiver/family concerns:
  - c. Client's considerations
  - d. Workshop participant's thoughts:
2. Treasure hunting tools for discovering gifts amidst limitations
  - a. 'Shoot for the moon' then glide your parachute down to a landing place
  - b. "Signs of Intelligence" lest we forget to recognize and acknowledge
  - c. Workshop participant's thoughts:
3. The good, bad and ugly of ... expectations
  - a. The positive 'old fashioned' side of expectations
    - i. Best foot forward
    - ii. Work ethic
    - iii. Trustworthiness
  - b. The trouble with expectations
  - c. Expectations that result in disappointment
  - d. The balance between hope & reality and its role in expectations
  - e. Workshop participant's thoughts:

## Participants' Questionnaire / Class Contribution

### Reasons, Respect & Relationships For Caregivers and Their Respite Providers

#### 1. Reasons for respite:

- a. As a primary caregiver, I've discovered respite helps in this unique way:
  
  
- b. As a respite provider, I've discovered that I enjoy this service because:

#### 2. Taking respite "out of the box":

- a. What are some unique examples of respite that you've given or received though they may not be the typical definition:

#### 3. Communication & understanding:

- a. As a primarily caregiver I wish respite providers understood that I/we:
  
  
- b. As a respite provider I'd love for the primary care provider to realize:

#### 4. Knowing the client:

- a. In working with kids/folks who have limitations I've that I discovered their hidden treasures when:

#### 5. Expectations

- a. As a caregiver my expectations of the respite provider have caused disappointment when:
  
  
- b. As a respite provider expectations placed upon me have been difficult in the area of:



Finding, meeting and interviewing care providers and helpers can be a daunting task.

The LaChris Connection has attempted to 'Lighten the Load' for you in this area by recruiting and supporting care providers in the S.F. Bay Area and making them available to your family via our "Meet the Parents" events, individual referrals and the use of care.com's website. However, the task of meeting and/or interviewing prospective care providers will occur and we've got some tips!

If you've read about or attended our "Meet the Parents" event model you'll know that the main 'flavor' of this event is to have a casual setting where families and care providers can meet and mingle in a relaxed setting. The result being an opportunity to see who "connects" with one another. You can incorporate this model into your interviewing approach.

Most of us parents realize that the trick to this type of interview, which has such a personal twist, is striking a balance between the interview being professional yet natural. It is important to establish an employer / employee rapport, yet it is crucial to get a sense of how this care provider might "fit in" with your family and/or your child's needs.

That balance can be struck by being very well prepared yet create a relaxed atmosphere. Have a clear format for your meeting time yet, conduct the interview at a park or in the toy area of your home were your child can be present and comfortable ... structured yet friendly!

Also, scheduling an interview which will provide both alone time with the person *and* time with your child is a great approach. For example, with a slightly older child you might begin the interview ¼ hour before your child arrives home on the bus so your time together overlaps with a chance to meet your child. Otherwise, if you don't have family help, well, then you're in that ironic quandary of needing a sitter so you can interview a sitter! Not funny, but ironic.

If possible, allow time for the applicant to interact while your child engages in their favorite game or activity or listens to their favorite music. This is, of course, easier said than done as many children can "act out" in various ways around new folks. However, even seeing a care provider's reaction to that behavior can be very telling. Also, if your child is physically handicapped and/or their cognitive ability is masked this can be an opportunity for this your child's gifts to shine. Observe whether or not the care provider picks up on these abilities that are so familiar to you!

So, let's get to the meat of this interview! The above mentioned "format" could be as follows:

1. Have an interview form for the interviewee to fill out. (Borrow some or all of TLC's care giver application from online). Not only is this a professional approach but it allows each of you to have a bit of settling in time. Try not to "hover" while the person is writing. Step aside to review any resume they might have brought and/or review the questions you'll be asking them. Also, during this time, if your child is present enjoy some positive loving, complimentary time with your child to "set the stage" for respect. Begin by reviewing their completed application and/or anything that 'jumps out at you' about their resume.

2. Be prepared with your list of questions. This not only helps you to be able to conduct the interview professionally, but also allows you to compare more easily various interviewees. If you don't take many notes while chatting, be sure to jot down your impressions immediately upon their leaving.
3. Establish in your own mind if your family is a "private" or "grand central station" type family and ask question accordingly. For instance:  
Do you see yourself working in the background or becoming like family?  
Give me an example of a private "family situation" and how you would respond?

**4. Here are some interview inquiry ideas (see below what ideas you're digging for)**

- a. If you've worked with or known anyone with special needs, can you tell me about one admirable characteristic or gift that person had?
- b. What are examples of how you might show respect to a differently abled person?
- c. Do you have some ideas on how you might change the direction of a "power struggle", like a yes/no, yes/no, argument between yourself and our child?
- d. How would you handle us as parents having different ideas about discipline?
- e. Since children with special needs cognitive abilities are often masked, what are some tricks to learning what the child understands or "gets"?
- f. At your last job with a family (or co-workers) what is an example of a difficult situation you encountered and how did you get through it.
- g. What type of support system do you have outside of your work?

The above questions are pretty difficult for "on the spot" and a person may naturally have the ability to interact well, yet not be able to put it into words. So, if you delve into such questions you may want to get them started on some answers and ask them to "take it away"!

**5. The ideas, techniques and attitudes you're looking for in the above set of questions are:**

- a. Excitement about the "hidden treasures" of those with special needs.
- b. Asking your child many questions which acknowledge that they have thoughts and opinions. Getting to their physical level (stooping down, etc.). Allowing the child lots of time to respond or 'process' before answering, not fearing pauses. Having a sense of humor and, of course, not having pity, etc.
- c. Behavior management questions reveal if the provider has tools ... such as, in a power struggle, offer a choice of two alternatives to reach the "yes" option the care provider wants to see. Changing the subject entirely and returning to it fresh.
- d. Looking for healthy communication skills and sensitivities
- e. You want to hear that a caregiver will give the 'benefit of the doubt', assume intelligence and adjust accordingly. Again a chance to communicate respect.
- f. Several observations can come from their dialogue about prior positions. If they say 'nothing' was wrong, ask if they would have liked to address a problem and didn't. Listen for blame statements or "all them" scenarios. Listen for "owning" of their own 'stuff'. Also their respectfulness toward all involved. These can be very telling answers.
- g. You're trying to confirm that the applicant does not NEED you family relationships to fill a huge void for them

These questions and suggested tones of answers to “look out for” are meant to help you set a flavor of an interview as specific questions ideas. The purpose of having this on TLC’s website to help you along in the interview process is to simply be an aid to allow some “meatier” conversations to come about.

Your intuition is, of course, your best bet. Your own wisdom and intelligence and familiarity with your child’s needs are more important than any advice this article might give. Know that the wonderful, loving proud understanding you have of your child is o.k. to seek in a care provider’s attitude. Of course that will want to be offset the old “willingness to learn” that we all seek in employees and helpers in domestic and business settings.

Our final comment here is that we hope you have the opportunity to actually be selective in your caregiver interviewing process. We realize that just getting past the practical obstacles of simply finding folks who are comfy with kids with special needs, affordable hourly wage requests, coordinating schedules, gender & language, etc. doesn’t always leave a lot of room for being selective. TLC’s mission is to make that pool to select from greater than you might have hoped. So, here’s to lots and lots of interviews and finding a few great care providers!

It’s important to methodically and consistently replenish our pool of caregivers, who can meet different needs at different times. Try to not be too focused on or overjoyed at the possible discovery of the “perfect nanny.” Sentiments such as, “Oh my gosh, he/she sounds so great, our dreams have come true,” which often result from that first phone conversation with a new caregiver, aren’t more than a bubble waiting to burst. In reality, caregivers come and go over the years, each with their wonderful gifts and shortcomings, just like each of us! Together our loved ones enjoy a balanced amount of care, friendship and assistance they need.

**Marin Respite and Childcare Collaborative (MRCC)**  
**Summary of the many branches of meeting respite needs**  
**For families of children with disabilities**

**Types of Respite families need:**

1. Care provider pools becoming full and accessible
2. Parent familiarity, accessibility and usage of those pools of providers
3. Teen helpers, experienced nannies, nurses, behaviorists, etc. are all very different helpful forms of respite!
4. Day camp opportunities throughout Marin (i.e. letting parents know about JFCS & ESS after school programs, etc.)
5. Extended camp opportunities
6. Physical / Custodial relief systems (vehicle mod., behavioral therapies/helpers, safe environment public arenas)
7. Parent and family adventures with support

**Types of extended education and training:**

1. Care provider and parent trainings
2. Behavioral therapies and/or training
3. Parent support groups
4. Parent/Guardian education re: paperwork for care providers (domestic wage reporting, etc.)
5. Education of options like Care.com, Arcadia, Co-Ops, Do-It-Yourself with above training, etc.
6. What to emphasize in consults with GGRC, IHSS, SSI, CCS, etc. (by the way, TLC's alphabet soup sorter' is almost complete and online for parents!)
7. Education and encouragement addressing the importance of parents getting respite, breaking routines and taking care of selves!!!
8. Education and encouragement that there are opportunities to be adventurous!
9. Information on home and vehicle modification for relief of physical care and transitioning

**'Working the System':**

1. Understanding and/or supporting the forming of eventual Co-ops
2. Advocacy for GGRC and IHSS pay rates
3. Employer of record options (including non-profit)
4. Research of other sources that provide help for admin and/or funds for respite
5. Advocacy and/or plans for respite worker benefits and career atmosphere
6. Tapping into existing areas where great care providers can be found and encouraged to work with families of the disabled

Agencies such as Matrix, GGRC, IHSS, MCOE, MCCC already have funds and/or departments and/or assignments that address these areas ... HENCE ... why The LaChris Connection pulled together MRCC in the first place. Realizing that every agency is overwhelmed, employees are overworked and underpaid, etc. does **not** mean that some of these goals are not already in program and/or job descriptions. I think one of our goals, again, should be looking at the above list and seriously matching the goals with projects/programs/funding, etc. that **already exist** and light a fire under the funds and programs that are already earmarked to address these needs!

***Nat'l Conference Attendees: Again, these ideas need to be adapted to your region's systems, etc.***

## **National Conference Attendees,**

**MRCC is a multi agency collaborative that was formed in by TLC in order to address the ongoing need for respite resources and providers. The "Action Plan" below may keep someone in your region from having to "reinvent the wheel" from scratch for ideas on how to improve services in your area. Of course acronyms are area specific. You can determine if those acronyms represent like-kind systems in your area. Please note that we're able to "check off" items 1 & 2 because of our partnering with care.com/TLC as we streamline respite provider recruits and families to their website. Care.com is also addressing #'s 3, 4 & 5. Being a national for profit company, care.com is there to help those in your area as well! TLC was instrumental in care.com's formation of their 'special needs' vertical of service!**

### **MRCC Action Plan 3/26/08**

**Possible Focus Areas** (listed roughly in order of priority)

- 1) Establish website that enables families to find matches with providers
- 2) Solidify and expand MRCC and increase active collaboration with other stakeholders
- 3) Identify and implement provider recruitment strategies
- 4) Initiate and coordinate provider trainings
- 5) Educate families on access, resources, and need
- 6) Build on the work of existing MRCC members and others
- 7) Promote and expand on \*"Meet the Parents" functions
- 8) Investigate and implement Coop model
- 9) Establish additional non-profit as Employer of Record
- 10) Establish active partnership with Arcadia (EOR)
- 11) Establish active partnership with IHSS
- 12) Expand camp and after school opportunities
- 13) Investigate screening options for providers
- 14) Advocate for increased rates
- 15) Professionalize role of providers

**\*National Respite Conference attendees:** Below is a program begun by TLC that could be a model for a services agency in your area to put in motion for families in need of respite in your area:

#### **\*"Meet the Parents"**

is where families and caregivers mingle in a relaxed setting  
**Come for the great snacks, friendship & entertainment**  
**Go home with a longer list of care providers!**

*The LaChris Connection's* main goal is to help families of children with special needs to access care providers. Much of TLC's effort is spent on the search and recruitment of appropriate respite workers. We then bring these recruits and the families together in a comfortable environment to meet and see who "connects"!

At this gathering we hope you'll discover caregivers with whom you're at ease while you also enjoy fun and friendship.

We delight in sponsoring events that are adaptive and considerate of limitations so that families can have a blast. There will be ample helpers at this event, allowing parents to relax while their children are entertained and cared for. Not all families will necessarily "make a connection" with a future employee. Meet the Parents can also, simply be a great Sunday outing for your family and friends where *all* of your family are welcomed and embraced!