

From November of 2010 through March 2011, seven families came together to undergo group training for RDI (Relationship Development Intervention). The training was provided by RDI Consultants, Maisie Soetantyo and Peter Dunlavy. The training was partly funded by Jeena, and partly by parents (please see footnote for details).

A lot of work went into organizing the training but it was well worth it. This work was shared by all parents – it was truly heartening to see how much effort this group put into helping and supporting one another. Parents took turns coming in early, managing the technical details, supporting the child care volunteers, arranging for food, writing meeting minutes, and sending email reminders. When one parent ran into personal obstacles, another quickly jumped in to take over tasks.

There was a tremendous amount of personal sharing. Everyone's children became 'our children', as we cheered their little steps forward. Parents gave each other lots of activity ideas and shared tips on overcoming obstacles. They spotlighted key moments of co regulation and identified breakdowns. A picture (in this case a video) is truly worth a thousand words. Watching each other demonstrate dynamic communication or optimal scaffolding helped us absorb the concepts faster. The sharing and exchange of ideas became one of the unique and differentiating factors of this training.

The trainers, Maisie and Pete, made themselves available for constant phone and email support between sessions. They were willing to work with each family's unique challenges. They struck a nice balance between being understanding of our obstacles and pushing for more effort and learning. Their support

and encouragement went a long way in helping each family make a closer connection with their child.

When the Jeena board first gave the go ahead for this pilot program, Rajni and I spent some time discussing the desired outcome of the training. Rajni was looking for something beyond basic training – the successful working together of a cohesive group. I suspect she got a lot more than she bargained for – the group's commitment pushed it through Phase 2 training as well.

Rajni lent her support and encouragement in the initial stages of setting up the contract with the trainers. She also checked in with the group at the end of Phase 1 to ensure that things were going smoothly, and training goals were being met. She strongly believed that both parents needed to attend

and be involved in order to make the intervention successful. To this end, she worked hard to arrange for an amazing team of childcare volunteers.

The childcare volunteers Koushi, Radhika, Swetha, Shruti, Prabha, Niveditha, Shanti, and Anoushka took care of our children like their own. They made constant adjustments to be responsive to each child's unique needs. It was very inspiring to see these generous people show up at Jeena, bright and early, every Saturday morning, with a smile on their faces.

If there is one thing this training made evident, it is the fact that parents can and will work cohesively to empower themselves and each other, when given the right framework, setting, and supports. The concept of group training is a powerful one. It showed us that 1+1 is greater than 2. There was a tremendous amount of synergy at work here.

## CREATING A COHESIVE GROUP



By Shanti Kurada

To me, this is what Jeena is all about. A place where we can come together, support and empower one another. A place where we can become stronger together.

**Details of Cost Sharing:**

Phase 1: Childcare was provided by 2 respite workers, supported by a rotating team of volunteers. Jeena paid for the cost of the respite workers as well as 50% of the trainers' fee. Parents paid for 50% of the trainers' fee. Jeena provided the venue and parents brought the food.

Phase 2: Childcare was set up in the same format as above. Jeena paid for the cost of the respite workers. Parents paid for 100% of the trainers' fee. Jeena provided the venue and parents brought the food.

