

THOMPSON/JACOBS SCRIPT Part II

In this next visit, Caseworker Thompson checks on Mr. Jacobs recent telephone contact with his daughter and helps him prepare for their initial face-to-face contact. It should be noted that an ongoing risk and safety assessment did not identify any areas of concern regarding potential safety risks to Mr. Jacob's daughter Katie. As you observe and follow along with the script, again notice how the Shulman Interactional skills are used by the caseworker to engage Mr. Jacobs.

- Caseworker So Chuck. What happened with your telephone conversation with Katie the other day (open-ended question)?
- Mr. Jacobs The call went really well. She seemed really excited to be talking with me. I was afraid she might refuse to talk to me or be angry. None of that happened. She seemed happy.
- Caseworker You must have been relieved that it went so well (reaching for feelings, tuning in to others). The foster parents tell me that your daughter is a quite a girl. All things considered, she seems to be adjusting well (communicating information).
- Mr. Jacobs I got to talk to the foster mother briefly when I made the call to talk to Katie. She seems like a good woman. I was afraid she might judge me. I'm good at picking up on that kind of stuff. She really cared. You hear so many stories about kids in foster care. I'm glad my daughter's with good people.
- Caseworker Foster parenting has changed for the better over the years. We've come to realize how critical they are in helping the children adjust. When the foster parents and natural parents are able to get along, things work so much better (conveying information). I'd like to spend a little time this morning discussing your upcoming visit with your daughter (redirection). Remember last time, we put in the family service plan that we would be having you visit your daughter regularly while she is in placement (identifying next steps).

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- Mr. Jacobs No problem. I've got the time. I work second shift this week. I don't have to leave for work until 3:30. I'd like to talk about our visit.
- Caseworker Great! Let's get started. So tell me. How are you feeling about the upcoming visit (reaching for feedback)?
- Mr. Jacobs I'm excited. I feel a lot better since our talk on the phone. I have to admit I'm a little nervous. I'm not sure what to expect. She may ask me some tough questions.
- Caseworker Having all these different feelings is pretty normal for parents going through what you're going through. What can I do to help you prepare for the upcoming visit (open ended question)?
- Mr. Jacobs I've missed four years of her life! God, I don't even know what five year old girls are like. I'm not even sure what we'll do this first visit.
- Caseworker Kids do grow up quickly and you certainly have missed a lot. I understand from the foster parents that they have made arrangements with you to bring Katie to the park and that you'll have her for a couple of hours. Let's hope the weather cooperates. They have a really nice playground. Many of my families take their kids there. I also brought along some parenting information on the stages of growth and development and appropriate activities for children at different ages. We can take a look at the information and see if it might be useful to you (communicating information). If you'd like, I can talk to the foster parents. They could give us some information on what Katie likes to do.
- Mr. Jacobs Being a father isn't easy. There is so much that I don't know.
- Caseworker Well parenting certainly isn't for the faint of heart. I know it can be overwhelming (putting client's feelings in to words). The National Fatherhood Initiative says "*It takes a*

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man to be a dad!” Let’s not get too far ahead. My policy is “*keep it simple.*” After this visit, we’ll meet again and discuss what needs to happen next (identifying next steps). If you feel the need for some additional parenting support, I can hook you up with the local chapter of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance. They offer parenting classes and support groups. I believe they even have a dad’s group. It might be good to meet some other fathers.

Mr. Jacobs I have a lot to learn. I’d appreciate the help.

Caseworker You mentioned that you were worried about what Katie may ask you. Could you tell me a little more about that (open ended question, reaching for feedback)?

Mr. Jacobs What if she asks me why I haven’t been around these past four years? What do I tell her? I’m afraid she might ask me if she can come and live with me. I’m beginning to realize how much I missed and how much I do want to be a part of my daughter’s life but I’m not ready to take her in.

Caseworker I appreciate your concern and honesty, I see that you are really taking an honest look at all that you’ll be dealing with if we do determine that your having Katie permanently is in her best interest (tuning in to others). She may indeed ask you some tough questions. Honesty is the best policy. I encourage parents to be honest and try not to get too defensive. Be cautious of making promises you can’t keep. This is a process. We’re taking this one step at a time. Try to avoid justifying your absence and, above all, do not bad mouth Katie’s mom (communicating information).

Mr. Jacobs Your last piece of advice sure won’t be easy. I’m still angry at Jennifer for all this mess she’s created. You’re right though. She always put me down all the time when we were together. I know how bad it made me feel. It must be hard for a child to hear that.

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- Caseworker We're not talking easy here. We're talking what's best for Katie's well-being. I know you want what's best for her.
- Mr. Jacobs I care about her a lot.
- Caseworker (Mr. Jacobs becomes silent. There is a long pause). You just got quiet on me Chuck? What's that about (reaching in to silences)?
- Mr. Jacobs My girlfriend and I have been fighting. I think she's having a hard time with all this. I'm worrying about how this will affect our relationship.
- Caseworker This is quite an adjustment for all of you (tuning in to others). You told me the two of you are talking about getting married and having children. There will be issues that your family will have to deal with. If you'd like, we can look at some couple's counseling. There's a local chapter of the Stepfamily Association that I can have you get in touch with as well. We can add that to the Family Service Plan.
- Mr. Jacobs Let me think about that for awhile. I'm not even sure if my girlfriend is willing to go to counseling. I need to discuss this with her.
- Caseworker Sounds like a plan. Let me know what the two of you decide. I'm glad to help in any way I can. I think we've had a good meeting here this morning. We've discussed the upcoming visit and your plans. We also talked about the importance of being honest when dealing with any questions Katie might ask. Be careful not to make promises you can't keep and avoid saying anything negative about Katie's mom. You've told me that you'll discuss counseling as a possibility with your girlfriend and let me know what you decide (Summarizing and identifying next steps). I'm writing all of this down so we can keep track of what we've done here. If I might, I'd like to offer one last suggestion.

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Mr. Jacobs Go for it!

Caseworker I think it's important to plan the next visit with Katie while you're with her. That will reassure her that you are committed and that you want to be a part of her life (communicating information). There's an open house at the school where your daughter attends kindergarten. I thought it might be nice if the two of you went together. I can get you the information if you like.

Mr. Jacobs Sounds like a great idea. I'd love to take her.

Caseworker Good. I've got one more appointment this morning then I'll be back in the office. I'll give you a call with the information before you head out to work.

