

## Dancing with Differences

### Keynote

*“Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own.”*

*(Edward T. Hall from The Silent Language)*

Working with children is unavoidably about working with differences. Working with young children is unavoidably about working with adults – their parents or other caregivers, which adds yet another layer of differences. Working with young children and their families in their homes takes dealing with differences to a completely different level.

Cultures have some clearly defined rules that are easy to learn. You figure out pretty quickly if it is a good idea to leave your shoes at the door or not to hurry with calling everybody by their first names. But how do you ever account for all the unspoken rules or deeply held values and beliefs that govern how people react to your presence in their house or the fact that you are there because something is wrong (“not normal”) with their child. How do you build trust across cultural differences not knowing what in your actions is judged as trustworthy or not?

This keynote will focus on what it means to be an interculturally competent professional in the field of Developmental Therapy. It will address complexities of navigating differences while on somebody else’s most private ground – in their homes. The main emphasis will be on what it takes – in the most practical terms – to dance with differences. After all, dancing is about ambiguity, going with a flow, leading through resistance, stepping on each other’s toes, adjusting as you go, learning to trust your partner, and having moment of pure joy when it all comes together.

The keynote will be followed by a workshop with the same title, that will take participants further into discussion of practical skills needed for their success in dancing with differences. In the workshop participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences, which will be used as case examples to identify and examine challenges and to consider effective ways to navigate culturally different terrains in the future.

### Presenter:

Tatyana Fertelmeyster is a bi-cultural and bi-lingual Intercultural and Diversity consultant and a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. Her company is called Connecting Differences and her approach to work is wherever there are people, there are differences. Tatyana has been training Early Childhood Educators of Illinois on issues of intercultural competency and diversity and inclusion for over 12 years.