

Coaching as a Style of Interaction

Adapted from: Rush D. D., Shelden, M. L. (2011) *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Co.

Coaching is an interaction style. It is NOT a model of service delivery or an intervention.

The coaching style of interaction is based on adult learning principles and is a way to interact with parents, caregivers and other team members to build their confidence and competence in being able to enhance their child learning and development within the typical activities of the family. The role of the Early Intervention coach is to “identify the parent’s priorities for their child’s development, determine what they already know and are doing in relation to their child’s development, share new information and ideas, and then work together to support the child’s participation and expression of interest within everyday activity settings to provide opportunities for learning.”

The 5 evidence-based characteristics of coaching that build confidence and competence in parents include:

- **Joint Planning**: Two part joint plans include collaboratively determining the specific activities and strategies the parent will focus on between visits, AND the parents determining the specific activity that will be the focus of the next visit. Every visit starts and ends with a review of the 2 part joint plan. (Refer to Joint Planning Fact Sheet)
- **Observation**: Opportunities when the coach observes the learner interacting with their child in the context of the everyday activities OR when the learner observes the coach model an action, strategy or behavior within the context of the daily activities. The learner must have an understanding of what he/she is watching, why it is important, and how it will be useful to help their child during the regular, daily activities, as well as have an opportunity to practice and reflect on what is or is not working.
- **Action**: Allows opportunity for the learner to use information discussed or modeled both during the visit and in between visits. The coach supports the learner in practicing and analyzing their skills while using strategies with their child in everyday life activities – during and between visits.
- **Reflection**: The use of reflective questions to determine what the learner(parent...) already knows and is doing, as well as to foster the learner’s analysis of what worked, what didn’t work and why. It encourages deeper analysis by the learner and generation of alternative ideas. There are 4 types of reflective questions:
 - Awareness – to understand what the learner already knows or is doing
 - Analysis – to help the learner look deeper at what is happening, if it matches what we want to happen, and if it is consistent with best practice and child development research
 - Alternatives – to help the learner consider and come up with alternative ideas and options that might work within the context of their everyday activities
 - Action – to develop or review a joint plan of what the learner will do or did between visits
- **Feedback**: Occurs after the learner has had an opportunity to reflect. There are 4 types of feedback:
 - Affirmative – active listening and noncommittal acknowledgement of what the learner said
 - Informative – Opportunity for coach to share knowledge or information with learner after an observation, action, reflection or question by the learner. This includes hands-on modeling and direct teaching if necessary, after probing what the learner knows or thinks. Ask before you share. Watch before you show.
 - Evaluative – Used when trying to affirm the learner but has a judgment (“good job”)
 - Directive – Telling the learner what to do without probing their ideas. It is NOT to be used as it is not consistent with coaching practices, except in situations of clear and present danger.

For more information: Rush & Shelden’s Early Childhood Coaching Handbook (referenced above) or CT. Birth to Three Website
<http://www.birth23.org/aboutb23/lookslike/>