



The Efficacy of Coaching

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Coaching is an evidence-based adult learning strategy and style of interaction used by early intervention practitioners to build the capacity of caregivers to support child learning as part of their typical daily activities. A recent CASEmakers bibliography (Rush, 2021) available on the FIPP website (www.fipp.org) includes references documenting the conceptualization, operationalization, and the outcomes and benefits of coaching for caregivers and children when used as part of an early childhood intervention program.

A commonality of the references in the CASEmakers is the use of a coaching approach based on the following operational definition: An adult learning strategy in which the coach promotes the learner's (coachee's) ability to reflect on his or her actions as a means to determine the effectiveness of an action or practice and develop a plan for refinement and use of the action in immediate and future situations. (Rush & Shelden, 2005, p. 3)

This coaching process includes five research-based practice characteristics that when used together result in the intended outcomes: observation, action/practice, reflection, feedback, and joint planning (Rush & Shelden, 2005, 2011, 2020).

Conceptualization

Coaching provides the person being coached with an opportunity to reflect on what they already know and are doing rather than the coach providing feedback immediately following an observation or moving directly to modeling what to do. Coaching does not follow a step-by-step process, however, use of all the characteristics is necessary to practice with fidelity, and the sequence in which the characteristics are used is important.

Operationalization

Coaching can be effectively implemented as part of tele-intervention and in-person visits.

Coaching has been applied across disciplines (i.e., early childhood special education, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech-language pathology), areas of development (i.e., adaptive, cognitive, communication, motor, social-emotional), and specific diagnoses or conditions (i.e., autism, challenging behavior, etc.).

Outcomes and Benefits

Research studies have demonstrated that coaching has a positive impact on young children and their parents. Use of the coaching practice characteristics with parents provided the following outcomes and benefits: increased parent competence, improved parent mindfulness and self-efficacy, and decreased parent stress. The resulting impacts on the children were improved child participation, social-communication skills, joint attention, social interest, and positive affect.