



THERE'S MORE TO CAREGIVER COACHING THAN JUST TALKING

The purpose of early childhood intervention (EI) is to support parents and other caregivers to use everyday activities and routines to promote child learning and development. Coaching has become widely used by EI practitioners to build the capacity of these key adults in the life of the young child. Unfortunately, a common misperception of coaching is that it only involves talking in the form of asking questions and making suggestions or sharing information.

According to the approach developed by Rush & Shelden (2011, 2020), five research-based characteristics must be used for coaching to have a capacity-building effect: observation, action/practice, reflection, feedback, and joint planning. Three of these characteristics involve much more than just talking.

OBSERVATION HAPPENS AS PART OF THE COACHING PROCESS, SO THE COACH CAN:

- See what the everyday routine or activity typically looks like.
- Determine how to help the caregiver analyze what's working/not working and consider possible options to promote the child's participation.
- Watch the caregiver use existing and new responsive strategies with the child.
- Identify what adjustments might need to be made so caregiver can support the child to participate more successfully in the everyday activity.



ACTION/PRACTICE IS USED WITHIN A COACHING INTERACTION WHEN:



- The caregiver has opportunities as part of the present activity or routine to practice responsive strategies with the child while the coach is available to observe and provide support as needed.
- The coach uses modeling, verbal prompting, or direct teaching if necessary to support the caregiver within the actual activity.

JOINT OCCURS BETWEEN THE CAREGIVER PLANNING AND COACH TO:



- Prepare the caregiver for practicing responsive strategies that support child participation within specific daily activities between visits with the coach to keep the learning going.
- Ensure opportunities for observation and action/practice occur as part of a real-life activity during the next visit.
- Acknowledge the previously planned practice opportunities that occurred for the caregiver and child between coaching conversations, which may prompt further observation and action/practice during the current visit with the coach.

Coaching should be a very engaging, interactive, and action-oriented process between the coach and caregiver while supporting the child's involvement in natural learning opportunities during and between visits to promote child learning and development.