



Reflection and Feedback

Embed adult learning principles into coaching.

During the coaching session give examples of when and how the coachee demonstrates the targeted practice so s/he can connect it to what s/he is already doing. Encourage the coachee to try new strategies as soon as possible after they are introduced. Be aware of how much you are talking during the coaching session, Encourage coachees to discuss and reflect on their own practice. Remember, an effective coach is a *guide on the side*, not the *sage on the stage*.

Share successes: Build on the positive. We all like to feel encouraged! Notice what is going well, comment on it, and then build on it. Using a strengths-based approach to coaching prevents coachees from feeling their coach is going to “fix” them. Instead, the goal is to work together to become more fluent in existing practices and learn new skills.

Be prepared: Keep some helpful phrases handy. Being a coach can leave you at a loss for words at times! Having a few key phrases handy can really help when you are not sure what to say next. Some tried-and-true favorites include: “Let’s just give it a try,” “Tell me more about...,” “What can we do to make this practice easier to implement?,” “How do you think meal time went today?,” “What have you tried so far?” or “I observed...” For example: I observed that Bobby’s resistant behavior escalated when he was told he couldn’t leave the group. I noticed that the key to him wanting to join the group previously was simply an invitation to sit by an adult. For the next week or two, try inviting him to sit on a square next to you and let’s see if he will come to join the group more willingly and with more enthusiasm.”

Anchor it: Use data to anchor your observation and feedback. Using data is a way to be objective when providing feedback. You can use assessments that your program is already using, such as the CLASS, ECERS, ITERS, HOVRS, or ELLCO; or consider collecting data on specific behaviors, such as child engagement or instances of challenging behaviors. Having something to base your coaching on gives you focus and makes feedback more objective and meaningful. Regardless of your tool, using data to provide some concrete evidence of progress can be very rewarding. It takes some getting used to, but data can be very powerful—many times coachees start asking to see more!

Provide supports: Give materials and ideas to support coachee needs. Sometimes offering a material such as a rules poster or a visual schedule at a coaching meeting is the jump start for getting a good strategy in place. Be sure to model what to do with the material you provide ...or it may end up in a drawer instead of being used in the early learning setting. Avoid providing too many materials or ideas at one time, so the coachee can focus on what is most important to implement.

Connect with a community of coaches: Share successes and challenges. Network with other coaches to get support along the way. Being able to share “coaching highs” and work through “coaching lows” is crucial. Whether it is bouncing ideas off of each other, sharing materials, or just helping work through an issue—coaches can learn a lot from each other!