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## USING COACHING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PARENTS WHEN PROMOTING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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USING COACHING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT  
PARENTS WHEN PROMOTING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION  
IN INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of  
Science in Education in the College of Education  
at the University of Kentucky

By

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### USING COACHING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PARENTS WHEN PROMOTING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The purpose of this practitioner's piece was to provide educators with a research-based coaching model that will increase opportunities for meaningful collaboration with parents or guardians in order to promote family-centered and socially meaningful child outcomes for their children with autism or other intellectual disabilities. The training model was based on Lane et. al.'s (2016) brief coaching method approach. Other suggested components to parent training included cultural competency, goal setting, planning for generalization, following up and asking for feedback, and troubleshooting any problem behaviors.

**KEYWORDS:** parent coaching, social communication, special education, autism, intellectual disabilities, collaboration

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## CHAPTER 1. USING COACHING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PARENTS WHEN PROMOTING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

*Shanice is a special education teacher in a middle school classroom for children with moderate and severe disabilities (MSD). Jody, a student in Shanice's class, typically communicates using vocalizations, guiding an adult to an item, orienting her body to communicate interest or displeasure (e.g. turning her head away when presented with work she does not enjoy), or engaging in challenging behavior. Jody's behavior communicates that she is frustrated that other adults and children seem to misunderstand her wants and interests. Jody's mother, Hannah, has expressed concerns to Shanice about Jody's lack of functional communication. After a conversation with Hannah, Shanice and the school's speech therapist collaborate and determine that Jody meets the criteria to use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) in the form of a speech-generating device. Once Jody receives and is taught to use the AAC device, her expressive language begins increasing in the classroom, which leads to subsequent decreases in challenging behaviors. Shanice is excited about Jody's progress and communicates this to Hannah. Although Jody is taking the AAC device home every night, Hannah continually reports that Jody does not attempt to use the AAC device at home and often becomes frustrated if she or a family member encourage her to use it. While Jody's mother is proud of her progress in the classroom, they are not seeing the same progress at home and are becoming disheartened. Hannah decides to ask Shanice for advice on how to address this issue.*

Early language of children typically follows an expected pattern of development (e.g., emergence of joint attention in infancy; emergence of first word between 9 and 18

months of age; Siller & Sigman, 2002), but some children may deviate from this expected pattern and display significant communication deficits including but not limited to children with autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disability. Parents of children with or at-risk for disabilities often report concerns about their child's social communication, especially as it relates to sharing wants, interests, and feelings during conversation. Children with disabilities who receive individualized services at school are typically supported by a variety of educators and related practitioners, with parents serving as centralized figures throughout this process. Special education teachers, in collaboration with other professionals, are in a unique position to directly empower parents and promote positive outcomes for their children in the classroom and at home. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) *Standards for Professional Practice* (2015) state that special education professionals will “actively seek and use the knowledge of parents and individuals with exceptionalities... and empower them as partners in the educational process” and will “promote opportunities for parent education using accurate, culturally appropriate information and professional methods” (p. 4). A number of studies have reported that the relationship between families and professionals can directly enhance or inhibit positive outcomes for parents and their children (Fine & Nissenbaum, 2000).

Promoting meaningful social communication in children with disabilities who display significant delays is directly influenced by effectively collaborating with parents when selecting goals and implementing strategies and interventions during routines and typical activities. Before selecting goals for parent coaching, it is important to select goals for child outcomes. Special educators can use coaching strategies with parents to facilitate this process. Goal setting is defined as identifying an observable and measurable

behavior that is socially significant and determining a specific criterion for the child to attain over a certain period of time. Goal setting for the child should be family-centered with the student's desires at the forefront of the decision-making processes. Educators should be committed to recognizing the family's knowledge of their child's strengths and areas for growth throughout this process (Collins, 2018). Parent coaching is defined as an adult-learning strategy that is used to build the capacity of a parent in their natural environments to improve existing abilities, develop new skills, or help them gain a deeper understanding of a topic. Coaching is meant to empower parents and, in turn, promote more positive and meaningful interactions with their child with or at-risk for disabilities (Russ & Sheldon, 2011). Parents are oftentimes their child's first language teacher and many aspects of parent behavior influence the language development of their children (Kaiser & Roberts, 2013). Several family-coaching strategies have been evaluated and identified across multiple research studies (e.g., Dogen et. al., 2017, Gross et. al., 2007, Lafasakis & Sturmey, 2007, Lane et. al., 2016), with consideration of which strategies will most likely lead to short- and long-term outcomes in parents use of strategies (e.g., Woods et. al., 2010, Trivette et. al., 2009).

When planning coaching sessions, six key components of adult learning are recommended and are likely to lead to positive outcomes in adult behaviors:

1. **Introduction:** providing a preview of materials, knowledge, and practices that are related to the target skills
2. **Illustration:** demonstrating or modeling the use of the target skill with relevant materials

3. **Practice:** providing opportunities for the learner to practice the target skill and deliver performance-based feedback
4. **Evaluation:** evaluating the outcome of the use of the target skills
5. **Reflection:** evaluating progress and setting goals for next steps in collaboration with the learner
6. **Mastery:** supporting the learner in examining how the target skill fits within the broader conceptual framework to promote ongoing monitoring, self-assessment, and continual self-improvement (Ledford et. al., 2019; Trivette et al., 2009)

Robust improvements in adult outcomes are associated with using multiple components in training (Trivette et al., 2009).

## Multi-Component Models

There are a number of multi-component coaching models available in the literature, including behavior skills training (BST), Teach-Model-Coach-Review (TMCR), and other routines-based systems for supporting parents of children with disabilities. Many of these approaches utilize some or all of the six key components of adult learning, which are oftentimes tailored to a specific audience, strategy, or intervention.

### 1.1.1 Behavior Skills Training

BST is one type of coaching model used to support skill development across populations. BST includes four of the six key components of adult learning: (1) instruction (a rationale, description of procedures, and when and how to use the strategy) as a way to introduce the topic, (2) modeling to illustrate, (3) rehearsal or practice, and (4) supportive and corrective feedback in order to evaluate outcomes related to fidelity of implementation of a strategy or intervention (Ledford et. al., 2019). BST was evaluated in multiple studies to coach parents on a variety of skills including but not limited to social skills training (Dogen et. al., 2017), parent training on children's safety skills to prevent gun play, (Gross et. al., 2007), implementing the five steps of incidental teaching (Hsieh, Wilder, & Abellon, 2011), discrete-trial training (Lafasakis & Sturmey, 2007), and guided compliance (Miles & Wilder, 2009).

### 1.1.2 Teach-Model-Coach-Review

Teach-Model-Coach-Review (TMCR) is another adult coaching model that, to some extent, incorporates each of the six key components of adult learning (Ledford et

al., 2019). For example, Kaiser and Roberts (2013) utilized TMCR when teaching parents to use enhanced milieu teaching (EMT). EMT is a manualized intervention that involves utilizing naturalistic instructional strategies to promote early language development (Lane & Brown, 2016). Kaiser and Roberts (2013) compared whether children receiving parent and therapist EMT showed greater gains than children receiving therapist only EMT. They also compared whether parents who received EMT training using the TMCR method were more likely to use these strategies in the home environment versus parents who did not receive the training. Results indicated that children who received parent and therapist EMT training made greater gains in early social communication and parents who received the parent and therapist EMT training incorporated and maintained these strategies in the home environment.

### 1.1.3 Other Examples

These are just a few of the training models available in research that utilize components of adult training. Other models include the family-guided routines-based intervention (FGRBI) designed to teach parents to use practices that will support language development in their young children with communication delays (Cripe & Venn, 1997) and the routines-based model, which is designed around a semi-structured interview that aids caregivers in identifying priority outcomes (McWilliam et. al., 2009).

Lane et. al. (2016) used the six training components outlined above in a brief coaching model used to train parents on using naturalistic strategies. Lane et. al. (2016) trained two parents on the use of naturalistic strategies (narration, imitation, and environmental arrangement and responding) during play-based activities with their young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Although the coaching model was brief,

Lane et. al. (2016) were still able to use the components of adult training including introducing, illustrating, practicing, evaluating, reflecting, and mastery. The methods used in their research provide practitioners with a model of rapid training that can be used with parents that capitalizes on the components discussed above, which may be useful for educators who already lack sufficient time for work completion and more accurately reflect real-world resources. Because of this, the individualized coaching approach described below is modeled after the brief coaching done by Lane et. al. (2016).

All described training models can be used by special educators in order to collaborate with and train family members in a productive way that will equip them to use naturalistic strategies to promote functional communication for their child in the home environment. Highlighted in the following sections are key components of parent coaching that educators can put into practice when working with their students' families.

## | Suggested Components of Parent Coaching

The purpose of this section is to provide suggestions for how to plan and implement coaching using a family-centered approach including developing rapport and cultural competency, selecting socially significant goals and identifying natural opportunities and activities already in place for the family, designing coaching materials, addressing problem behavior, planning for generalization across family members, and providing continued support and feedback.

### 1.2.1 Building Cultural Competency

Prior to coaching parents on specific behaviors, educators should do the work to check their biases and develop their cultural competency. Collins (2018) stated that the “first step to working with families is to establish strong viable modes of frequent communication, which takes into account differences in perceptions that may be due to cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 80). It is important as educators to remember that families, especially families with cultural and linguistic diversity may have difficulty grasping concepts that Western special educators deem as valuable or important. Relatedly, educators must spend time establishing trust with families, with special attention to learning more about cultures and backgrounds that are different than their own. According to Ledford et. al. (2019), a component of family-centered practice is demonstrating an awareness and respect for individual family values and beliefs.

One way educators can build this awareness is through cultural competency self-assessments such as the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) self-assessment for service professionals providing behavioral services for youth or early childhood services. These types of assessments can help educators identify hidden biases

or stereotypical thoughts within themselves and, in turn, improve service delivery. By doing this an educator may begin to develop a more dynamic view of culture and what it means for individual families (ASHA, 2017). Research shows that cultural competency can help families more easily trust educators, creating a more reciprocal and positive relationship. This will be crucial in moving forward with goal setting and coaching.

### 1.2.2 Goal Setting

First, families should assist with identifying goals that are significant to their daily lives, with an emphasis on selecting instructional targets for the child that are immediately useful and meaningful for the student during routines and activities. Thus, educators must work with families to identify routines and activities for the family and the child. Focusing instruction during routines and typical activities is a component of planning for maintenance and generalization. During this process, the educator takes on the role of facilitator and must “be committed to a student-centered philosophy, be an aware and conscious listener, and be able to communicate clearly” (Collins, 2018, p. 80). Structured interviews may be helpful to have on hand in case families need assistance when identifying meaningful goals or natural routines or activities that could incorporate proposed goals. Educators should work with families to identify what environmental conditions must be in place to promote student success. While working through this process, educators should ask open-ended questions that guide parents to begin critically thinking through generalization in order to maintain the skill. Educators should not come to the meeting with pre-proposed goals, but should, instead, involve families from the beginning to end of this process can begin shaping their critical thinking and prepare them to independently make decisions regarding goal setting for their child in the future.

Several tools are available to help educators guide families in this process, such as ecological inventories (e.g., C-SETT framework), structured interviews including the Choosing Outcomes and Accommodations for Children (COACH), and various behavior checklists (see Table 1).

Table 1 List and Description of Goal Setting Tools

<b>Name</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Child Behavior Checklist	Checklist	A behavior checklist for school aged children 6-18 that is completed by parents and used to detect behavioral and emotional concerns in children with disabilities	Can be downloaded for free at: <a href="https://aseba.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/schoolagecbcl.pdf">https://aseba.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/schoolagecbcl.pdf</a>
Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff (FACTS)	Checklist	A planning tool that can be utilized by teachers, family members, or other persons that know the child best when building behavior support plans. Helps to identify behaviors of concern and where, when, and with whom they are most likely to occur.	Can be downloaded for free at: <a href="https://www.vbisd.org/cms/lib6/MI01000711/Centricity/Domain/138/FACTS%20-%20Revised.pdf">https://www.vbisd.org/cms/lib6/MI01000711/Centricity/Domain/138/FACTS%20-%20Revised.pdf</a>
Functional Assessment Screening Tool (FAST)	Checklist	A planning tool used to identify maladaptive behaviors and assist in hypothesizing what is maintaining that behavior.	Can be downloaded for free at: <a href="https://www.cmhcm.org/userfiles/filemanager/961">https://www.cmhcm.org/userfiles/filemanager/961</a>
Motivation Assessment Scale	Questionnaire	Used to identify situations in which an individual is likely to behave in specific ways, which helps to determine appropriate replacement behaviors.	Can be downloaded for free at: <a href="https://www.sfps.info/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=5972770">https://www.sfps.info/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=5972770</a>
Questions About Behavioral Function (QABF)	Checklist	A planning tool used to identify maladaptive behaviors and assist in hypothesizing what is maintaining that behavior.	Can be downloaded for free at: <a href="https://www.gscenter.org/images/oscampus/files/06-ICDD-">https://www.gscenter.org/images/oscampus/files/06-ICDD-</a>

			Questions-About-Behavioral-Function-QABF.pdf
SETT Framework	Organizational Tool	A chart that can be completed with the family to identify and organize the areas of concern, their current needs and abilities, their current environments, and what tools will be necessary to complete the appropriate tasks within those environments	Can be downloaded for free at: <a href="https://assistedtechnology.weebly.com/sett-framework.html">https://assistedtechnology.weebly.com/sett-framework.html</a>
Congruence Assessment	Organizational Tool	A chart that can be completed with the family that takes a top-down approach in identifying specific activities and the necessary steps the child will need to master in order to be successful across environments	Review this article for an example of conducting a congruence assessment: <a href="http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.853.4739&amp;rep=rep1&amp;type=pdf">http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.853.4739&amp;rep=rep1&amp;type=pdf</a> (Wolery et. al., 2002)

As stated above, an important component to goal selection is collaborating with families to assist them in identifying activities and routines that are already in place where intervention could occur naturally, or by coaching parents on using strategies that are flexible and adaptable and can be utilized across a variety of routines. This is important in that it helps ensure that the family will need to make only minor adjustments (Ledford et. al., 2019). Educators should consider using interview tools such as the Routines-based Interview (RBI) when talking with families to help guide their conversation. Educators also will want to ensure that routines incorporate opportunities for interaction or coach parents on how to create opportunities for interaction such as putting materials in sight but out of reach or providing the child with inadequate

materials. Coaching parents on using naturalistic teaching strategies such as arranging the environment, providing opportunities for turn-taking and choice making, and utilizing siblings as peer models are just some examples of strategies that are flexible in nature, can be utilized across environments, and promote opportunities for interaction.

Throughout this process, educators also should provide opportunities for discussion on how to generalize across routines and help families understand how already established routines can be maximized as learning contexts (Woods et. al., 2010). Finally, educators should keep in mind the age of the child they are working with to ensure activities or routines being selected are socially appropriate. Age-appropriate examples of routines where intervention may be naturally embedded for early-aged children, adolescents, and adults can be found below (see Table 2).

Table 2 Routine and Activity Examples

Age range	Age-appropriate routines	Age-appropriate activities
Toddlers and young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to the store</li> <li>• Washing hands</li> <li>• Taking a bath</li> <li>• Eating breakfast</li> <li>• Cleaning up before bed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing with a doll house</li> <li>• Playing with toy cars</li> <li>• Playing with siblings</li> <li>• Coloring a picture</li> <li>• Playing outside with neighbors</li> </ul>
Adolescents and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-care activities (brushing teeth, taking a shower, etc.)</li> <li>• Dinnertime</li> <li>• Household chores (cleaning up after dinner, watering flowers, loading the dishwasher, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going out into the community</li> <li>• Hanging out with friends or neighbors</li> <li>• Playing a sport outside</li> <li>• Following a recipe</li> <li>• Watching TV or playing video games</li> </ul>

### 1.2.3 Coaching Specific Behaviors

*Shanice met with Hannah and together they set a goal for Jody to practice using her AAC device while at home. After going through their daily routines, Shanice discovered that Jody loves to cook dinner with her mother. Other activities were identified as well, including getting dressed in the morning and interacting during down time in the evenings, when the family would typically play a game together or go outside to play a sport. They set a goal to start with cooking, as this was Jody's favorite activity. Jody would use her AAC device while preparing the meal with Hannah. As Jody and her family got more comfortable with using the AAC device, they could continue to incorporate it into the other identified activities above. Shanice added a cooking folder to Jody's AAC device and with the help of Hannah, included a variety of frequently used utensils and ingredients Jody and her mother use to cook. Shanice and Hannah discussed a variety of naturalistic strategies that they could incorporate into this activity, including arranging the environment, such as putting ingredients and utensils in sight but out of reach of Jody, waiting expectantly, and engaging in aided language modeling by narrating what Jody is doing using her AAC device. Shanice made arrangements to come back to the house in a week to coach Hannah on how to use these strategies.*

When coaching parents on specific behaviors it is important to individualize your approach to meet the needs of the specific family you are working with. Below is an outline of steps based on Lane and colleagues (2016) brief coaching model that an educator can take when working with families:

#### 1.2.3.1 Introduce and Illustrate the Topic

Take 2-3 minutes to introduce and illustrate the topic by providing the parent with (a) two to three pre-recorded video examples of the coach demonstrating the target behavior with a child, (b) a handout and review on expectations for the parent during intervention sessions, and (c) a description of the rationale for the target behavior. In the scenario above, this meant the teacher reviewed with mom a few video models the teacher made prior to the training of her engaging in the naturalistic strategies described above. The teacher also provided mom with a short 2-3 sentence rationale for why it is important for her to put these strategies in place in regard to the goals they set for Jody.

#### 1.2.3.2 Facilitate Practice Opportunities

Following the 2 to 3-minute training, provide parents with an opportunity to practice the behavior. Lane et. al. (2016) set aside approximately 4 minutes for this part of the training. Provide behavior specific praise, as well as constructive feedback to the parent during this time. In the scenario above, mom would practice using the strategies discussed with Jody while Shanice observed and provided positive feedback to the mom for arranging the environment, waiting expectantly, or modeling the appropriate language.

#### 1.2.3.3 Evaluate and Reflect

Following each opportunity to practice, set aside approximately 2-3 minutes to reflect and evaluate on the training with the parent by answering any questions and providing additional feedback through video examples or discussions on new ways the parent could use the target behavior. Shanice and Hannah allowed Jody to play so they could discuss the session and reflect back on how Hannah felt throughout. Shanice

answered a few questions mom had around arranging the environment, they watched the video model again, and Shanice facilitated another practice opportunity for Hannah and Jody.

#### 1.2.3.4 Mastery

Complete these steps with the parent until they feel comfortable with the skill or reach mastery criterion set by the educator. Something the educator could consider when setting mastery criterion for the parent is how frequently the parent displays the behavior during the practice opportunities. For example, Lane et. al. (2016) set mastery criterion as the parent displaying the trained behavior at least once per minute during the 4-minute practice session. No data were collected in the scenario above, but Shanice did come prepared with a few self-evaluating activities to complete with Hannah to ensure she felt comfortable with the naturalistic strategies.

A checklist may help the educator stay organized and ensure they miss no steps throughout the process. The example checklist below is adapted from Lane et. al. (2016) and outlines the necessary steps to complete their brief coaching model (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Coaching Checklist

<i>Figure 1 Checklist for Parent-Practitioner Coaching Session</i>	
<b>1. Introduce &amp; Illustrate</b>	<b>Check if Implemented</b>
Review expectations for the parent during training	
Show video example(s) of the strategy	
Provide the parent with a handout that describes the strategy and rationale for using the strategy	
<b>2. Practice &amp; Evaluate</b>	<b>Check if Implemented</b>
Provide an opportunity for the parent to practice the target behavior	
While practicing, provide behavior specific praise following demonstrations of behavior	
While practicing, direct parent's attention to opportunities where they could have demonstrated the behavior	
<b>3. Reflect using Post-Session Feedback</b>	<b>Check if Implemented</b>
Answer any questions the parent has about the target behavior	
Play back video of parent engaging in behavior from the previous session	
Provide another video example of how the parent can use the behavior	
<b>4. Mastery</b>	<b>Check if Implemented</b>
Provide opportunities for practice until the parent feels equipped to exhibit the behavior independently	
Provide the parent with a list of ideas to promote generalization	
<b>5. Follow-up</b>	<b>Check if Implemented</b>
Schedule a time to follow-up with the parent within the next two weeks	
Establish a system to communicate in case any questions arise before it is time to follow-up	
<b>Coaching Notes</b>	

#### 1.2.4 Planning for Generalization

Research suggests that individuals with social deficits or delays, such as individuals with ASD, may display more difficulties than same-age peers with generalizing skills to novel situations (e.g., unlearned stimuli, unfamiliar people or settings), which impacts the extent to which children reliably use and maintain learned skills over time (Wolfe et. al., 2017). Therefore, an important component for educators to consider when coaching parents to implement strategies is how to plan for generalization. Strategies to facilitate generalization incorporated within naturalistic language intervention include using the behavior across multiple natural routines or activities, across toys or materials, across responses, across environments such as from the home to the community, as well as across family members. When developing strategies to promote generalization, the educator should first discuss with the family the importance of incorporating the skill in as many activities and across as many people as possible and the rationale for why it is important.

The teacher and parent can then discuss and brainstorm other family members in the home that may be interested in learning, other activities that are already naturally occurring, or other settings the child visits often. The educator could offer to schedule a training during a time that would work for all people involved in the child's life that are interested in learning. The educator could also provide different examples to the parent when modeling and practicing, including using a variety of materials or activities, so the parent is able to see generalization in action. Lastly, the educator should provide the family with a list of generalization strategies that require little effort and could naturally occur in already established routines so that families may be more likely to incorporate

this into their practice. This could include changing the room the activity takes place in, switching the toys they use to play with, switching recipes or ingredients when cooking, changing their walking routes, and more. The practitioner should include generalization in their coaching model by including examples of generalization in their video examples, practice sessions, and post-session feedback. They could also provide the parent with a handout including a list of generalization strategies appropriate to the desired outcome as well as a rationale for generalization.

#### 1.2.5 Follow-up and Ask for Feedback

Research consistently shows that training without follow-up coaching and support is largely ineffective (Fettig & Barton, 2014). Planning for follow-up and providing additional coaching when necessary is a crucial part of working with parents. Educators should develop a plan with families on how often they would prefer follow-up occurs, as well as put in place a method for communicating any questions or issues that arise in between the scheduled times for follow-up conversations. In addition, educators should make it a priority to reflect upon and critique their role as a coach and make adjustments for future planning as needed. Asking families for feedback is another way an educator can continue to improve their approach to adult training. If working with multiple families or people at once, one suggestion would be for educators to create an anonymous survey (e.g., hosted using a free site like Google) that can be sent to families immediately following their coaching. Consultations are more likely to be effective when they involve providing feedback and in turn, allowing parents to provide feedback will likely make educators more effective coaches for future families.

### 1.2.6 Troubleshooting

Although the procedures are designed to coach parents to teach during typical activities and routines, as well as utilize preferred items and activities with their child, their child may still display challenging behaviors. Challenging behaviors may occur for a variety of reasons including communication difficulties, a lack of structure or clarity in their daily lives, an overwhelming amount of demands, and the inability to cope with one's emotions (Bowring et. al., 2017; Wolkorte et. al., 2019). Research also indicates that families are at an increased risk of isolation and segregation from the community when they have a child that exhibits challenging behaviors (Fox et. al., 2002). According to a study completed by Jacobs et. al. (2016) which interviewed parents on their perceptions on their child's challenging behaviors, many parents did not feel that behaviors of concern were a consequence of the disability only but instead felt that the behaviors could be changed over time. The majority of parents expressed an expectation that behavior could become less frequent through child and parent learning. Parents reported feeling responsible for these behaviors and motivated to change them. Jacobs et. al. (2016) suggests that parents could benefit from support in this area due to the complexity of the behavior, and that the support should build on the parent's strengths, such as their sense of responsibility.

During sessions, it is crucial that educators provide parents support for managing challenging behaviors that may occur. Inadequate supports may increase parental stress and, in turn, decrease the likelihood of parents implementing strategies in the future. Educators should involve the family in all aspects of planning in order to empower them to not only feel better equipped to address the current challenging behaviors but any

future related behaviors as well. Educators can do this by brainstorming intervention strategies with the family that incorporates the child's preferences, provides them with prevention strategies, new skills for the child, and new ways the family can respond to the challenging behavior (Chai & Lieberman-Betz, 2016). It is also important to note that often behaviors can occur because the child is attempting to communicate something. Therefore, it may be a good idea for the educator to include the school's speech and language therapist (SLP) for communication support and when determining an appropriate replacement behavior that will have the same communicative intent.

When a function-based intervention is not possible, educators can provide the family with foundational reactive strategies for addressing challenging behaviors, such as providing a timer, presenting choices, distraction, or redirection. They could also provide families with proactive strategies as well. These could include but are not limited to environmental modifications (e.g. dimming the lights, preferential seating, minimizing distraction, using highly preferred materials), providing a schedule for the child, or drawing attention to appropriate behaviors. If simple strategies do not help reduce targeted behaviors, the educator could provide the family with a referral to a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) since research shows behavior plans are most likely to be effective when the intervention matches the function.

The components of a behavior assessment include indirect assessments (e.g. interviewing the client and significant others, behavior checklists and rating scales), direct assessments (e.g. direct observation, antecedent-behavior-consequence data collection, ecological assessments), prioritizing and defining target behaviors, and setting a criterion for behavior change (Cooper et. al., 2017). Collaboration with parents when

completing the behavior assessment is crucial (Fettig & Barton, 2014). Educators should take into consideration the family's goals, strengths, support, and needs, and work to build on strategies that parents have already tried at home (Chai & Lieberman-Betz, 2016). If necessary, educators can follow similar models of adult coaching described above such as introducing the intervention, modeling, practicing, and providing feedback to increase each parent's fidelity of implementation of these practices.

*A few weeks after Shanice trained Jody's mother to use these strategies in the home environment, Shanice called Hannah to check in about their progress. Hannah reported that Jody was communicating using her AAC device more frequently and independently. Hannah told Shanice that she had started to use the strategies during unstructured activities in the evenings, such as when playing a game, and that Jody's father had noticed the positive change in communication and asked Hannah to show him how to use the strategies as well. Hannah even sent Shanice a video so that she was able to observe the progress! She told Shanice the strategies were a great fit for their family and that she felt more excited about communicating with Jody and empowered to support her communication while at home. Hannah provided Shanice with feedback on the training, both positive and constructive. Shanice made notes on how to improve the coaching process for the next time and Jody's mother stated that she believed the communication would continue to get better and was looking forward to seeing the progress, especially once Jody's dad began implementing the strategies as well.*

Parent coaching is a crucial aspect of an educator's role in promoting meaningful social interactions that will have a lasting effect for the students they are working with. Culturally competent educators will work with families in selecting goals for their child,

coaching the parents or guardians on strategies that will promote positive outcomes for their child, and troubleshooting any problems that may arise throughout the process.

Research shows that parent-practitioner relationships that result in mutual trust, respect, and an equal partnership can have a lasting and meaningful impact on parent's relationships with their children (e.g., Fine & Nissenbaum, 2000, Russ & Sheldon, 2011).

Educators can use the strategies outlined in this paper when working with parents to better ensure a positive experience for all parties involved in the coaching process.

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