CASEtools
Instruments and Procedures for Implementing Early Childhood and Family Support Practices

A Framework for Reflective Questioning When Using a Coaching Interaction Style

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This *CASE*tool describes the development and use of the *Framework for Reflective Questioning* for assisting individuals using a coaching style of interaction or adult learning in promoting reflection on the part of another person when using a capacity-building approach. The framework is used to guide the coach in the type and content of reflective questions to ask when assisting another person in reflecting on his or her past, current, and/or future actions. A coach can use the framework for promoting the reflection of a parent, caregiver, or colleague as well as for self-reflection to assess how his or her own practices are consistent with evidence-based practices.

INTRODUCTION

This *CASE*tool includes a description of the development and use of the *Framework for Reflective Questioning*. The framework is useful for assisting coaches in promoting reflection on the part of another person when using a capacity-building approach in early childhood intervention. This article includes an overview of reflection as a component of capacity-building and a characteristic of coaching practices, a description of the framework for reflective questioning, and an explanation of how to use the framework. *CASE*inPoint documents on capacity-building and coaching practices provide more in-depth information on the evidence to support this practice and a more detailed description of the characteristics and indicators of those practices (Rush & Shelden, 2005a; Wilson, Holbert, & Sexton, 2006). *CASE*makers list additional references related to the characteristics and consequences of capacity-building and coaching practices (Rush & Shelden, 2005b; Wilson, 2005).

REFLECTION AS A COMPONENT OF A CAPACITY-BUILDING PROCESS

Reflection is a means of coming to a deeper understanding of what a person already knows/is doing and/or what modifications or new knowledge/skills might be necessary in current and future situations to obtain a desired outcome. Reflection and active participation/engagement on the part of the person being coached are used to strengthen that person's competence related to what he/she knows to do, and build upon current knowledge or skills to acquire new ideas and actions. As a result, the person's confidence is enhanced. This enhanced confidence causes the person to continue to do what works as

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well as try new iterations and evaluate the effectiveness of these actions. The more the person's capacity has been built (i.e., increased confidence and competence), the better the person becomes at more independently achieving his/her desired outcomes now and in the future. The benefits of a capacity-building process are acquisition and use of new knowledge and skills as well as self-attribution related to his/her role in realizing the intended effects (Wilson, Holbert, & Sexton, 2006). The role of a coach is to mobilize experiences, interactions, and opportunities in conjunction with mediating the person's deeper understanding of what is or could be working in order to reach the end goal. This process is consistent with the literature on adult learning by (1) starting with what the person already knows or is doing related to his/her identified priorities, (2) building upon existing knowledge and skills, (3) applying the new information and strategies in meaningful contexts, and then (4) evaluating the effectiveness of his/her actions and generating alternative approaches (Bransford et al., 2000).

COACHING PRACTICES

Coaching is an adult learning strategy that is used to build the capacity of a parent, caregiver, or colleague to improve existing abilities, develop new skills, and gain a deeper understanding of his or her practices for use in current and future situations (Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004; Rush & Shelden, 2005a; Rush, Shelden, & Hanft, 2003). Effective helpgiving includes both participatory (i.e., responsive supports by the helpgiver that promote active involvement by the help receiver in decision-making) and relational (i.e., good interpersonal skills and asset-based beliefs about families by the helpgiver) components, which combined result in family-centered practices (Dunst & Trivette, 1996; Dunst, Trivette, & LaPointe, 1992; Rappaport, 1981; Trivette & Dunst, 1998). In early childhood, coaching may be conceptualized as a particular type of helpgiving practice within a capacity building model to support people in using existing abilities and developing new skills to attain desired child and family outcomes. As part of early childhood practices, coaching promotes self-reflection and refinement by the person being coached on his or her current knowledge and skills. The intended outcome of coaching is competence and mastery of desired skills of the person receiving coaching (Doyle, 1999; Hanft, Rush, & Shelden; Rush, Shelden, & Hanft).

In early childhood intervention programs, coaching builds the capacity of family members to promote the child's learning and development. The key people in a child's life gain competence when a coach supports them in blending new or existing knowledge, skills, and experience to interact with a child in everyday situations, and then assess and perhaps improve upon the results. Early childhood practitioners who use coaching facilitate an interactive information discovery and sharing process based on the parent's intentions and current level of knowledge and skills necessary to promote the child's participation in family, community, and early childhood settings (Bruder & Dunst, 1999; Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004).

The characteristics of an effective coaching process as found in the research literature are: (1) joint planning, (2) observation, (3) action/practice, (4) reflection, and (5) feedback (Rush & Shelden, 2005a). Joint planning occurs as a part of all coaching conversations, which typically involves discussion of what the person receiving coaching supports (i.e., parent, colleague, care provider) intends to do between coaching interactions to use the information discussed or skills that were practiced. Observation generally refers to opportunities when: (a) the coach directly observes an action on the part of the person being coached, which then provides an opportunity for later reflection and discussion, or (b) the person receiving coaching observes modeling by the coach during which the coach may build upon what the person receiving coaching is already doing and demonstrate additional strategies. After modeling occurs, the coach and person being coached discuss how the example matches the intent of the person being coached and/or what research informs us about the coaching topic. The characteristic of action provides opportunities for the person being coached to use the information discussed with the coach or practice newly learned skills during or between coaching interactions. Reflection follows an observation or action and provides the person receiving coaching supports with an opportunity to analyze current strategies and refine his/her knowledge and skills. Feedback occurs after the person being coached has the opportunity to reflect on his/her observations, actions, or opportunity to practice new skills. As part of feedback, the coach may affirm the other person's reflections and/or add information to deepen his/her understanding of the topic being discussed.

REFLECTION AS A CHARACTERISTIC OF COACHING PRACTICES

The coaching characteristic of reflection differentiates the coaching process from basic problem-solving approaches used by practitioners, parents, and other caregivers or a consultative model in which the consultant

asks questions to learn and decide what information he or she can then share with the consultee. Within a coaching approach, reflection is the analysis of existing strategies to determine how the strategies are consistent with evidence-based practices and may need to be implemented without change or modified to obtain the intended outcome(s). Schon (1983, 1987) defines three types of reflection: reflection *in* action, reflection *on* action, and reflection *for* action. The purpose of reflection is to build the capacity of another person in such a way as to promote ongoing self-assessment, planning, and knowledge/skill acquisition by teaching the person receiving coaching supports to be aware of, continually examine, and refine his or her current practices and behavior (Gallacher, 1997; Gilkerson, 2004). When operationalizing the coaching characteristic of reflection, the coach supports the person being coached in building upon what he/she already knows, is doing, has tried, and thinks about within the context of a specific situation as well as generalized to other situations and circumstances. Through a process of reflective questioning and feedback the coach promotes the other person's ability to analyze existing strategies and develop alternatives to build upon current strengths and address identified priorities leading to a plan for action.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR REFLECTIVE QUESTIONING

The capacity-building model and reflection as a characteristic of a coaching interaction style for supporting families and colleagues as part of early childhood intervention (Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004; Rush, Shelden, & Hanft, 2003; Wilson, Holbert, & Sexton, 2006) were used to conceptualize the *Framework for Reflective Questioning.* The four types of reflective questions and types of content were developed based on a review of the literature on capacity-building, coaching, and reflection (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Kinlaw, 1999; Rush, 2004; Schon, 1987; Whitmore, 1996). A pool of questions was identified by a task group of individuals at the Family, Infant and Preschool Program that was examining how coaching could be used to support parents and practitioners in the use of natural learning environment practices. The task group reviewed each question for relevance and to ensure it was stated broadly enough to be used in multiple coaching contexts. Additionally, the task group organized the questions by type and content. Once in a draft format, the framework was then used by the task group members as part of their coaching interactions with families. Feedback was used to make changes and additions to questions on the framework. The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* and instructions for use are included in the Appendix.

The framework consists of four different types of open-ended reflective questions: awareness, analysis, alternatives, and action. *Awareness* questions are used to promote the understanding of what the person being coached already knows or is doing, and how effective the current strategies are (e.g., What have you tried?). Awareness questions may be used initially by the coach to clarify the situation or issue for both the coach and person receiving coaching supports. *Analysis* questions are asked to support the other person in examining how what is currently happening matches what he or she wants to have happen, what we know about child development, and/or evidence-based practices (e.g., How does that compare to what you would like to have happen?). *Alternatives* questions are used to provide the person receiving coaching with an opportunity to consider a variety of possible options to obtain the desired results (What are all the possible options to consider?). *Action* questions assist in developing the joint plan of what the coach and parent, caregiver, or colleague are going to do between coaching interactions as a result of the current conversation (e.g., Who is going to do what before the next time we meet?).

Reflective questions pertain to four different types of content: knowledge/understanding, practice, outcomes, and evaluation. Reflective questions related to *knowledge* and *understanding* are used to assist the person being coached in identifying what he or she currently knows about a particular topic. Questions containing content that focuses on *practice* helps the person explore actually what he or she is doing or has done in the particular situation. Questions about *outcomes* cause the person to think about current or intended results. Reflective questions with content based on *evaluation* ask the person receiving coaching supports to make judgments about the usefulness of opportunities to recognize what he/she already knows or is doing as well as new skills and knowledge he/she desires to learn.

The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* is not designed for use in a linear method. Rather, the questions may be used as they would naturally occur in a conversation and are highly dependent on the questions or comments made by the person receiving coaching supports. During a coaching conversation, the coach generally uses knowledge, practice, and outcomes questions as part of the variety of reflective questions that may be used in a given conversation. A goal of the coach is always to assist the other person in developing a plan for action before

the conclusion of the coaching conversation. While the framework is a guide to the coach for the types of questions to use to promote the other person's reflection, the questions that may be asked during a coaching interaction are not limited to only the questions on the framework. Additional questions used during a coaching conversation can be modeled after questions on the framework based on the intent (type) and content of the question. The majority of questions asked should be analysis and action, and should be open-ended rather than a question requiring only a yes or no response.

USE OF THE FRAMEWORK

Most early childhood practitioners are very familiar with working closely with parents and other care providers of the children enrolled in their programs. The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* is a tool designed to help prepare the coach to streamline the conversation and maximize the potential for building the capacity of the person being coached. This tool assists coaches in having heightened awareness of the types of reflective questions he/she uses as the coach.

The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* may be used in a number of ways. First, the framework may assist an early childhood practitioner or other professional with learning how to use a coaching interaction style (i.e., ask a variety of questions, avoid using closed-ended yes/no questions, ask as few questions as necessary) (see Rush & Shelden, 2008). Second, more experienced coaches may use the framework in preparation for a coaching interaction with a parent, caregiver, or colleague. In this way, the coach can remind himself or herself with a variety of questions or question-stems that may be useful during the conversation. Third, the framework may be used by a person in a coaching role following a coaching interaction to assess and reflect on the types and content of questions asked that promoted parent reflection on his/her knowledge and skills as well as the link between his/her own actions and the desired outcomes. Coaches can then use their own reflections to identify changes they might make to strengthen their reflective questioning skills and to ensure their practices are consistent with the coaching characteristic of reflection. Fourth, the *Framework for Reflective Questioning* may be used by supervisors or peers following observation of a coaching interaction or discussion of a particular situation to assist another person to reflect on his or her use of reflective questioning or coaching practices in general. The supervisor or peer can use the framework as a guide for helping another person reflect on his/her practices against program practice standards or providing feedback related to an observation. Follow-up discussion then assists the supervisee or peer in identifying a plan for changes that would make his or her practices more consistent with the use of the characteristics of a coaching interaction style.

CONCLUSION

The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* can assist coaches in promoting reflection on the part of the person being coached when using a capacity-building approach and coaching interaction style with parents or colleagues. The framework consists of four different types of open-ended reflective questions: awareness, analysis, alternatives, and action. The types of questions may be related to content in four areas: knowledge/understanding, practice, outcomes, and evaluation. The framework may be used by both novice and seasoned coaches prior to or following a coaching interaction with a care provider as well as by supervisors, peers, and the coach himself/herself to reflect on his/her own coaching practices.

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Appendix

Framework for Reflective Questioning

Administration Procedure

The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* is used to assist coaches in promoting reflection on the part of another person when using a capacity-building process and a coaching style of interaction. The framework is used to guide the coach in the type and content of reflective questions to ask when assisting the other person in reflecting on his or her practices. A coach can use the framework for promoting the reflection of a parent, caregiver, or colleague as well as for self-reflection to assess how his or her own practices are consistent with evidence-based practices and program practice standards.

The framework consists of four different types of open-ended reflective questions: awareness, analysis, alternatives, and action. *Awareness* questions are used to promote a person's understanding of what he or she knows or is doing, and how effective the current strategies are. *Analysis* questions are asked to support a person in examining how what is currently happening matches what he or she wants to have happen, what we know about child development, and/or evidence-based practices and program standards. *Alternatives* questions are used to provide the other person with an opportunity to consider all of the options to obtain the desired results. *Action* questions assist in developing the joint plan of what the coach and person being coached are going to do between coaching interactions as a result of the current conversation.

Reflective questions pertain to four different types of content: knowledge and understanding, practice, outcomes, and evaluation. Reflective questions related to *knowledge and understanding* are used to assist the person being coached in identifying what he or she currently knows about a particular topic. Questions containing content that focuses on *practice* helps the other person explore what he/she is actually doing or has done in a particular situation. Questions about *outcomes* cause the person being coached to think about current or intended results. Reflective questions with content based on *evaluation* ask the person being coached to make judgments about the effectiveness of the coaching process.

The *Framework for Reflective Questioning* is not designed for use in a linear method. Rather, the questions may be used as they would naturally occur in a conversation and are highly dependent on the questions or comments made by the person receiving coaching supports. A goal of the coach is to assist the person being coached in developing a plan for action before the conclusion of the coaching conversation. While the framework is a guide to the coach for the types of questions to use to promote another person's reflection, the questions that may be asked during a coaching interaction are not limited only to the questions on the framework. Additional questions used during a coaching conversation can be modeled after questions on the framework based on the intent (type) and content of the question.

The majority of questions asked should be analysis and action, and should be open-ended rather than a question requiring only a yes or no response. Closed-ended questions that require only a yes/no response should be reserved for situations when the coach needs to ask permission and/or avoid making an assumption. Persons using the framework should avoid embedding a suggestion in a question (e.g., What would happen if…? What about…? How about trying…? What do you think about trying…?) or using questions to try and get the person being coached to answer in the way the coach is thinking.

Framework for Reflective Questioning

Question Type / Question Content	Awareness	Analysis	Alternatives	Action
Knowledge/ Understanding (What you know)	What do you know about…? What is your current understanding of (topic, situation)? *Probes (e.g.,):* How did you come to believe this?	How does that compare to what you want to know about…? How is that consistent with (standards, evidence)…? What do you know now after trying…? How does that compare with what you originally thought?	How could you find out about…? What different things could you do to learn more about …? What are other ways to view this for next time?	How do you plan to learn more about…? What option do you choose? Why? How are you going to put that into place? *Probes(e.g.,):* What resources do you have? What supports will you need? Where will you get them?
Practice (What you did)	How are you currently doing…? Why? What kinds of things did you do (have you done so far)? Why? What kinds of things did you try? Why? What kinds of things are you learning to do? What did you do that worked well? *Probes(e.g.,):* What is the present situation in more detail? Where does that occur most often? When did you first notice this?	How is that consistent with what you intended to do (wanted to do)? Why? How is that consistent with standards? Why?	What else could you have done to make practice consistent with standards? Why? What would you do differently next time? How might you go about doing that? What different ways could you approach this? *Probes(e.g.,):* What would it take for you to be able to do…? What would you need to do personally in order to do…?	What do you plan to do? When will you do this? What option did you choose? *Probes(e.g.,):* What types of supports will you need? What resources do you have? What would it take for you to be able to do…? What would you need to do personally in order to do…?
Outcomes (What was the result)	How did that work for you? What happened when you did…? Why? How effective was it to do that? What did you achieve when you did that? What went well? *Probes(e.g.,):* How do you feel about that? What do you think about…? How much control do you have over the outcome?	How did you know you needed to do something else? How did that match (or was different from) what you expected (or wanted) to happen? Why? How do these outcomes compare to expected outcomes based on standards of practice? What *should* happen if you're really doing (practice)? What brought about that result? *Probes(e.g.,):* How do you feel about that? What do you think about…?	What else might happen when you do …? Why? What different things could you have done to get expected outcomes? What might make it work even better next time?	Which option could get the best result? What do you plan to do differently next time? *Probes(e.g.,):* What types of supports will you need? What resources do you have/need? Where will you get them?
Evaluation (What about the process)	What opportunities were useful to you in achieving… (or in learning…)? In what way? How was it useful? Why? What supports were most helpful? What about the supports were most helpful?	How was that consistent with what you expected?	What other opportunities would be useful?	What opportunities do you want to access? How will you access those opportunities? *Probes (e.g.,):* What resources do you need? Where will you get them?

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