



# 5 Top Tips for Teaching Caregivers

(about how to Promote Children's Participation & Learning)

## Tip #1: Teach What Caregivers WANT to learn

- Try to teach caregivers something they are interested in learning – something that they have identified that they want to learn.

What you think someone NEEDS to know or NEEDS to do may not be what that person WANTS to or NEEDS to know from their viewpoint (Think of yourself when you are in classes or workshops and being taught things you don't feel like you need to know or are not important to you.)

You can say things like this to caregivers –

- Address Caregiver **Concerns** about the child:
  - During the MDE/IFSP meeting, you mentioned that you were worried about \_\_\_\_\_'s talking. What are some things you would like to help him with?
  - You mentioned that it is hard to go to the grocery store; let's talk about what happens and some ideas for making this go better.
- You can **ask outright** – “Talk to me about some things you would like to learn to help your child.”
- Build on the child's & caregiver's **strengths**—
  - You told me that you both love to read together – what if we created opportunities for Susie to learn to point by pointing to pictures n books when you are reading – could that work?

- I know that Noah is has learned to reach with his arms and maybe we could brainstorm situations throughout the day where you could help him be able to reach and then also touch or hold an object.
- What if the caregiver does not seem to want to learn – or seems to prefer doing something else during a session?

You can say things like ---

- Last week when I was here, \_\_\_\_ really seemed to like to play with the ball. Let me show you how you could play ball with him when I am not here.
- You told me how you and \_\_\_\_ love to go to the mall together. Let me show you some ways you could help him practice walking at the mall.
- I know that you have said that it is challenging for you that \_\_\_\_ does not play well with his cousins. Let's talk about some ways that you might help him do better with this.

Your goal is for the caregiver to engage in teaching at least one thing or addressing at least one issue pertaining to their child during the session and then to expand by ultimately becoming engaged for the whole session.

Tip #2: Use the "right" teaching strategy(ies).

There are 5 teaching strategies ----that are used to discuss options to try out, show how to do something, or problem-solve what to do.

- Demonstration with Narrative (talking about what you are doing while you are doing it)
- Caregiver Practice with Feedback – you provide feedback while the caregiver works with the child
- Guided practice – a combination of Demonstration with Narrative and Caregiver Feedback with Practice where you and the caregiver DO things with the child directly
- Conversation – you and the caregiver talk about how to do something & the child may or may not be present
- Problem Solving – you and the caregiver jointly discuss, try out, and work towards solving an issue/problem

### Tip #3: 5 Steps to Successful Teaching of How to Do Something

1. **Engage the caregiver**/"attract" the caregiver's attention so that s/he knows that a provider is going to show them something or talk to them about a specific situation or issue. [optimally one that is relevant for the caregiver and not just the provider.]
2. **Use materials in the home** (i.e., Don't bring in your own toys even though you like them better or think they are appropriate – or even though the child loves your toy bag.
3. **Show and Tell** the caregiver what to do with the child. Talk about what you are doing & how the child responds. ("He really likes this – look how his hand opened up." "She understood what we wanted her to do – see how she looked right toward the picture when I said its name.")
4. Give the **caregiver a chance to try this out.**
5. Provide **FEEDBACK** to the caregiver. Reflect with the caregiver on how this is working and where the caregiver might incorporate this in daily activities and routines.

## Tip #4: Everything that caregivers want to learn does not necessarily require practice and doing.

- **Discussion** is an easy way to share information. BUT – don't talk at (preach) to caregivers – talk to them in a give and take but asking their opinion, or finding out what they think or feel about something.
  - A mom wanted to know which foods would be best to feed her 10 month old and whether she should make her own foods and blend them or purchase in a store. She and her EI provider discussed this situation, both looked up things on the internet, and the EI provider helped the mom find a nutritionist for a phone consultation. The mom learned about what to do with her daughter's meals.
- **Everybody does not know everything!!!!** And, sometimes, there is not a "right answer" or just one answer to what a caregiver may want to know. The caregiver has a perspective of the child based on experience, extensive interactions, etc. and the provider has a perspective of the child's current performance, abilities, etc. When both are able to equally share perspectives and ideas, problem-solving occurs and decisions can be made about which approach to try first.
- Use **Problem-solving Language**
  - "Now that you have showed me with \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been able to watch, I see the problem that you are having and I am wondering what might happen if you tried \_\_\_\_\_."
  - "Let me see if I can say back what you just told me so I make sure I am understanding. You said that \_\_\_\_\_ -- is this correct?"
  - "It sounds as though you have tried a lot of different things and none have been as successful as you wanted. That must be so frustrating – Let's see if we can figure something else out."

- "You have been trying to identify why she won't go to sleep at night. You don't think she is afraid, you believe she is really sleepy, and you don't know exactly why she won't go to sleep. Let's see if we can brainstorm some other things that might be going on."
- "When I try to work with her to use her hands more, she seems to just throw everything around. Do you have any ideas about why she might be doing this or what I should do differently?"

### Tip #5: You can never give too much feedback to the caregiver.

- Don't just say "good job" or "you are doing well." Tell the caregiver why this is a good job – "Look what happened when you held the book closer to her face. She actually looked toward the picture and smiled. Great job in helping her learn to focus."
- Be intentional in your feedback. "When he is on your lap, he seems to collapse forward and hold himself up with his arms. I am wondering what might happen if he sat in his highchair rather than on your lap. I am thinking that it might be easier for him to use his arms. Let's try that."
- Reward Effort even if it is not successful – "I see how hard you are trying to get him to play with the bear. Maybe he will be more interested tomorrow."
- Reward Skill – "I can tell you have been doing this a lot with her over the past week – you look like you have been carrying her this new way your whole life."
- Reward Knowledge – "What you found on the internet about this special way to use pictures to help her communicate seems right on track. You learned a lot about how to do this."