



Coach Mini Lessons: Communicating with Families/Caregivers the Experience of Trauma, About Behavior Support Plans, and Aligning School/Home Support



Goal of Coach Mini Lesson

What practice/mindset are we focused on in this conversation?

- Teach educator best practices for talking to caregivers about the student's experiences of toxic stress or trauma and how they are manifesting.
- Teach best practices for sharing what was learned from BSP assessment and what supports are being implemented for the young person at school.
- Teach strategies for aligning trauma-informed, resilient-focused practices between home and school.



Conversation/Experience

How can I help this person/group of people reflect on their behavior and make changes? Will it be through an activity or through dialogue?

During this discussion or coaching session, one of the easiest ways to coach on the dialogue to have with parents is to have an example Behavior Support Plan completed OR if appropriate an already completed Behavior Support Plan for the student whose parents or caregivers will be contacted.

To begin, it will be important to help the teacher understand that there is part of this process that is a dance. Keying them into being empathetic to how parents can receive some of this information and it is important to follow the strength-based approach of the Behavior Support Plan itself. This is an opportunity to have some dialogue about the types of phone calls this parent generally gets about their child and using that information to support the need for positivity and support.

Next move on to the beginning of the Behavior Support Plan and discuss each section identifying key points to talk through with parents to develop a strong plan also providing them with insight and information on how their child is presenting in school. Allow space for the teacher to take notes or practice how they plan to discuss certain sections with parents. Be sure that the educator is prepared to share the following key information:

- Share the information about the student's resilient traits/strengths early on so the tone of the conversation stays focused on resilience.
- Supports for the student that have been or will be implemented.
- Make the parent/caregiver the expert. Ask the parent/caregiver for their advice on what may help their student.
- Offer any psycho-education that will be supportive to parents/caregivers to understand the need behind the behavior. (Review Coach Mini Lessons on Understanding Trauma as an Experience)

- Teach the parent caregiver about the Circle of Courage and Universal Needs. (Review Focus on Resilience Coach Mini Lessons).

This session may be another great opportunity to talk through with teachers the importance and value of having relationships with parents. Reflect on past coaching sessions and give space for the teacher to talk about their current relationship with the parent. If there is some discontent in that relationship, make time to process and coach on how to repair. Provide support to the educator as there may be some anxiety or stress around communicating with this parent.

Always highlight and bring the coaching session back to the need for positive relationships with families and aligning systems of support for the student both at home and in school.



Story Telling Strategy

What personal story could you tell to support transformation?

Coach Note

It is most impactful when you can tell the person you are coaching a personal story of your direct experience with communicating with families. We have added an example from a Starr Resilience Coach below to support you.

This would be a good space to share a story of a time when you as a coach had to enlist a parent who did not have a good relationship with the school or you as an educator. Share your own experience and talk through how you worked to repair that relationship with that parent for the benefit of the student in your classroom. Real stories can help ease some of the anxiety and tension that an educator may have about making a phone call to a parent they don't have the best relationship with or when they have to explain something for the first time.



Context

Why is this practice/mindset meaningful?

Part of creating a trauma-informed, resilience-focused school is creating a collaborative and supportive relationship with parents. As difficult as some of the conversations with parents may be it is important to keep them involved in the process. In addition, parents are a great resource for gathering information about their child. The more informed and involved that you keep the parent the better the collaboration and relationship between them and the educator will be. There is also a considerable benefit to having the school environment and home environment as aligned as possible. This helps the student predict outcomes and maintain consistency.



Meeting Resistance

Prepared responses for meeting potential resistance to concept/strategy.

Common resistance for communicating with families:

Denial: This is a common response from parents when attempting to discuss the possibility or likelihood that a child has experienced trauma. Parents don't want to believe that their child has experienced something stressful and/or maybe don't want to admit that they were a part

of or put their child into that situation. Referring to the experience as stress rather than trauma is sometimes helpful when speaking to parents.

Avoidance: Parents may avoid communication with the school or contributing to plans for their children for a number of reasons. There are times when parents themselves are so overwhelmed with their child's behaviors at home or other outside factors that they can't handle "one more thing" that they have to do for the school. Some parents have had stressful or traumatic experiences related to their own school experience that makes communicating with school overwhelming. For parents who do not return calls or emails, just stay the course and keep reaching out with curiosity, patience, and non-judgement.

It's always essential to go into these interactions with empathy and understanding. Stay the course and be positive and solution-focused. Try to continuously re-route the resister back to change and progress. Help them to understand that what may seem like additional work up front in the long run will help their child both at home and at school.



Reflective Question

What are some questions I can ask the teacher/staff to help them reflect on their practice of this particular skill?

- What are some of your own concerns about discussing the Behavior Support Plan with parents?
- Prior to a phone call with a difficult parent, what are some strategies you can practice to help with your own regulation and confidence?
- Are there additional supports that can help make this process smoother for you as the educator?



Motivational Moment

What can you say or do at the end of your conversation/experience that will give people the feeling of leaving a team huddle with hope and energy to do what needs to be done?

Coach Note

Be sure to follow up and schedule with colleagues to model/co-teach the corresponding lesson plan to support the mini lesson concept. You may want to use the guided practice tool to organize the set up.

Always remember that one of our ultimate goals in creating trauma-informed and resilience-focused schools is to bridge the gap between schools and families. We want to expand our support as far as we can to ensure that our students' needs are being met in multiple environments. Getting the parents on board with regards to a student's Behavior Support Plan can be the starting point for that journey.