

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Coaching Parents to Change: The Impact of In Vivo Feedback on Parents' Acquisition of Skills

Shanley, J. R., & Niec, L. N. (2010). Coaching parents to change: The impact of in vivo feedback on parents' acquisition of skills *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 39(2), 282-287. doi:10.1080/15374410903532627

SUMMARY: Parent educators use many different strategies in order to increase positive parenting behavior. This study investigated the use of in-the-moment coaching (i.e., coaching offered during parent-child interactions) for mothers with young children. Results indicated that the in-the-moment coaching was effective in increasing positive parenting behavior.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Mothers who received in-the-moment coaching regarding positive parenting skills showed a significant increase in those skills.
- Those who did not receive coaching showed a significant decrease in positive parenting skills over the course of the study.
- Increases in positive parenting skills for the mothers who received coaching were specific to the skills that were targeted by the coaching.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Provide coaching for military parents regarding in-the-moment strategies for increasing positive interactions with their children
- Help parents recognize strategies they already use to create positive interactions with their children

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Incorporate in-the-moment coaching into parent education classes for military parents
- Teach new skills for parents by first modeling the skill and then allowing the parents to practice that new skill through role playing, offering coaching during that practice; this can be used especially in cases when it is impractical to give feedback regarding actual parent-child interactions

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend training for professionals who work with military families regarding the use of coaching
- Continue to support programs for military parents that aim to increase positive parenting skills

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METHODS

- Mother-child pairs were recruited through flyers at local schools and daycares.
- The pairs were randomly assigned to a coaching group or a group who did not receive coaching.
- The coaching group received direct feedback in an ear piece to increase a specific skill for creating positive interactions with their child. The other group played with their child without feedback.
- Data were analyzed to determine if there was a difference in use of skills to create positive interactions between the coaching and non-coaching group during a play period at a later time.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 60 mother-child dyads; the children had an average age of 4.38 years old (SD = 1.53) and 55% of them were girls.
- Mothers identified as White (88%), Multiracial (5%), Black (2%), or Native American (2%), while 3% did not identify their race.
- Most (88%) of the mothers were married and they had on average 15 years of education (SD = 2.69).

LIMITATIONS

- The children in this study were two to seven years old; it is unclear whether these results extend to children of other ages.
- Coaching was provided in one session; results may differ if coaching is provided over a period of time.
- Mothers in the group that did not receive coaching received no instruction. Therefore, it is unknown whether coaching is superior to simply providing information to increase parents' knowledge.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Compare the use of coaching in the development of positive parenting behaviors to providing information regarding positive parenting behaviors without coaching
- Evaluate the effectiveness of coaching parents with older children
- Investigate whether coaching over a longer period of time is more effective than short-term coaching

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