

Becoming a Coaching Pro: Guiding Your Child's Learning of Executive Functions

In previous articles, we've discussed executive functions and choosing the right games. Now, let's talk about your role as a parent coach. Gameplay alone (especially if you have chosen fun, engaging, and cognitively challenging games such as [Minecraft](#), [Stardew Valley](#), [Animal Crossing](#), [Roblox](#), or [Splatoon](#)) will be helpful. But, your guidance is essential in helping your child connect their game-based learning to the real world.



Parents coaching their child through the video game to help them use their screen time effectively and productively.

Coaching vs. Teaching:

It's important to understand the difference between coaching and teaching. Teaching often involves direct instruction, lectures, and providing answers. Coaching, on the other hand, is about facilitating your child's learning and self-discovery. As a coach, you're a guide, a facilitator, and a support system.

Key Coaching Strategies:

1. **Ask Guiding Questions:** Instead of telling your child what to do, ask open-ended questions that encourage them to think critically. For example:
 - “What’s your plan for this level?”
 - “What challenges are you facing?”
 - “What strategies have you tried before?”
 - “What could you do differently next time?”
2. **Listen Actively:** Pay attention to what your child is saying and how they’re feeling. Show genuine interest in their gameplay and their thought process.
3. **Encourage Self-Reflection:** Help your child reflect on and think about their learning. Ask questions like:
 - “What did you learn from that?”
 - “How did you feel when you succeeded?”
 - “What will you do differently next time?”
4. **Provide Support and Encouragement:** Offer praise for effort and persistence, not just for winning or achieving a high score. Help your child see mistakes as opportunities for learning.
5. **Use “Talking Points” and Debriefing:** After your child plays, take a few minutes to talk about the experience. Use questions like:
 - “What skills did you use in that game?”
 - “How did you solve that problem?”
 - “Where else could you use those skills?” (This is key for generalization!)

Growth Mindset:

A crucial aspect of coaching is fostering a “growth mindset.” This means helping your child believe that their abilities can be developed through effort and practice. Praise effort, strategies, and perseverance, rather than just talent or intelligence.

Using [LearningWorks for Kids](#) Coaching Guides:

We provide specific coaching guides for various games and technologies on our website. These guides offer:

- Step-by-step instructions.
- Observation tips.
- Questions to guide your conversations.
- Suggestions for connecting game skills to real life.

Handling Resistance:

Sometimes, children may resist your coaching efforts. If this happens, try these strategies:

- **Back Off:** Give your child some space and let them play independently for a while.
- **Make it a Game:** Turn the coaching into a fun challenge or activity.
- **Focus on Their Interests:** Tailor your coaching to what your child is most excited about.
- **Be Patient:** Remember that building these skills takes time.

Your Role as a Partner:

Ultimately, your role as a coach is to partner with your child in their learning journey. By asking questions, listening actively, and providing support, you can help them develop valuable executive function skills and apply them to the real world.

For those seeking additional support and resources on managing screen time or capitalizing on it, South County Child and Family Consultants offers a wealth of information and

expertise. By visiting our website, you can access a curated selection of books and materials, connect with knowledgeable specialists, and find tailored advice to help you or your child navigate the complexities of screen time and video games. Whether you're looking for strategies to improve daily routines, educational accommodations, executive functioning, or to simply better understand the impact of screen time, South County Child and Family Consultants is an invaluable resource for empowering individuals and families.