How Executive Functioning Coaching Prepares Students for College

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Today’s Focus

- What is Executive Functioning (EF) Coaching
- EF skills necessary for college
- Recognize the difference between enabling and empowering
- Strategies
What is Coaching?

- As defined by the ICF

  “Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential”.
What is Coaching

Academic coaching

“A relationship that merges the potential for growth of the individual with the skills of the coach; as a result, the individual achieves more than he or she could have on his or her own” (Quinn, 11, 2000)

Executive Function Coaching

“Coaches provide students with education on ADHD and brain functioning, facilitate brainstorming, and explore strategies that fit within an individual’s learning style” (Goudreau & Knight, 6, 2015)
Why Are Executive Functions So Important?

- EFs are the foundation for an expansive variety of life skills, competencies, and behaviors.
- Influences children and adolescents ability to plan and act accordingly to be good students and friends.
- “Considered to be the common denominator for both learning and social interaction.” (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011, pg. 5)
Executive Function skill set desired for college

- Goal directed behavior
- Flexibility
- Emotional Regulation
- Task Initiation
- Sustained Attention
- Time Management
- Organization
- Planning
- Prioritizing
- Metacognition

Peg Dawson, EdD and Richard Guare, PhD
Observations of First Semester Freshmen

- Either extremely organized or not organized at all
- Low motivation
  - Hesitant to explore new strategies
  - Resistant to doing homework without a tutor
- Poor follow through
- Poor metacognition
- Poor self-advocacy
Enabling

“Some men have thousands of reasons why they cannot do what they want to, when all they need is one reason why they can”
— Martha Graham
Enabling or Empowering

- Helping: Things people *cannot* do for themselves
- Enabling: Things people *can and should* do for themselves
- Doing things for other people
What does it look like?

Enabling
- Telling how
- Developing a plan for

Empowering
- Questioning how
- Developing a plan with
Using an Executive Function Coach

- How does a executive function coach help?
  - The coaching process helps support the development of executive functioning
  - Be the frontal lobe
  - Comes from a non judgmental place
  - Work with the parents to put systems in place to help empower the student
    - Reduces anxiety for both the student and parent
Planning and Goal Setting

- As defined by the ICF – “Ability to develop and maintain an effective coaching plan with the client.”
  - The importance of the student creating their own plans, agenda and goals
  - Creating a plan with the parents
    - Expectations of both the coach and the parents during the process
      - This is not about the parents being involved in the coaching session but how they can support the clients goals created during the session.
      - What to do if the parents have different goals from the student for the coaching session?
Managing Progress and Accountability

- As defined by the ICF – “Ability to hold attention on what is important for the client, and to leave responsibility with the client to take action.”
  - Help the parents understand why this is so important for their adolescents to experience before going off to college
  - “Clearly requests of the client actions that will move the client forward towards his/her stated goals.”
  - “Is able to move back and forth between the big picture of where the client is heading, setting a context for what is being discussed and where the client wishes to go.”
  - “Promotes client’s self-discipline and holds the client accountable for what they say they are going to do, for the results of an intended action, or for a specific plan with related time frames.”
Awareness

- Pointing out habits, trends and thought patterns
- Developing specific and measurable goals
- Remind students to “set” their intentions at the start of the semester
  - Prime our perceptual system by what we pay conscious attention to.
  - Repetition of this movement can result in hardwiring

* Rock & Page, PhD., (2009)
Strategies

- Begin with a Check-list to increase awareness
- Help them create goals
  - Create long term and short term goals
  - Have them identify action steps to achieve goals
  - Have them create a system to monitor progress
    - How to handle slow progress or failure
Strategies

- Increase their responsibilities
  - Responsibility for creating an AM and PM routine
  - Cooking and laundry
  - Start them making their own appointments – tutoring
  - Create own system for being organized
    - Appointments/schedule
    - Homework
    - Medication
Strategies

- Increase responsibilities continued
  - Being in charge of getting ready to leave for college
    - Have them checking all email and sharing important information
  - Have them making a list of what will be needed
    - Dorm room, school supplies, personal items
  - Have them in contact with their academic advisor and scheduling classes
    - Ask them about their schedule
  - Allow for consequences - PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION
Highlights

- Start using an EF coach in HS
- An EF coach allows parents to take a step back while also learning strategies to support confidence building
- How to be intentional with your actions
Questions
References


