

## Early Intervention Metaphors: Deciding on Dosage

The success of Part C services rests on our ability as early interventionist to support families to carry out interventions within their own routines and activities. This may appear to be an easy task on the surface. However, helping others change their everyday actions, is much more difficult than it appears. What follows are some example of other activities and approaches that are taken with the end goal being helping another person achieve a specified goal (individual or team).

### **Weight Watchers Metaphor**

Weight Watcher's is a well-known diet program that focuses on a simple way to count and allocate the number of calories (Point System) in a given day and provide guidance on the types of food that a person can eat to lose weight and be healthy. The fundamental idea is to make meal planning and calorie counting as easy as possible. Another aspect of the program is the importance of regularly scheduled meetings where dieters can meet with others who are working on the same goal and/or have a good understanding of the plan. Frequent meetings help support the individual by having a safe place to talk about the difficulties of following through and/or to learn from others who have experienced similar situations. Additionally, individuals are often motivated to stick with the program when they know they will be reporting their progress to peers in a short period of time. Each week is an opportunity for individuals to share their "small wins", that over time turn into bigger wins. Together the group acts as both progress monitors and cheerleaders. People who achieve the desired results at the end of a year get to attend the meetings for free as a reward.

### Questions to Ponder

For dieters starting the program-

- In general, will they be more successful with more frequent meetings or less frequent meetings?
- Does "dieter's knowledge" weigh into the frequency of meetings needed for success?
- When should the number of meetings be decreased/increased?

### **Coaching Baseball Metaphor**

Coaching and practice are two essential components for successful baseball teams. This is true for both little league and professional teams. When coaching little league practice will likely focus on skill development. To support learning the coach will participate in an "I do" (coach models skill), then "we do" (coach supports player to go through the movement step by step \* this is usually done several times) and then "you do" (coach watches player to see if the skill is mastered, and if not, goes back to the "we do" phase). Coaching beginning players takes a lot of patience, modeling, redirecting and celebrating small steps.

When coaching professionals', the emphasis is less likely to be "I do, we do, you do" and probably more time spent on perfecting individual/team plays based on observations overtime. Additionally, much attention is likely made to upcoming opponents and what they will bring to the game.

### Questions to Ponder

Is the frequency of practice different for little league vs professional teams? Why/why not?

What similarities do you see between little league/professional baseball and Early Intervention dosage?

### **EI Home Visits**

Families – the frequency of visits is a hard thing to figure out especially at the beginning. A family may have all the "right words" and initially seem like they have a lot of experience (like our baseball players) OR they might have a lot of knowledge and understanding about how to eat right, but putting things

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into action alone is overwhelming (e.g. Dieters). The same may be true for families in early intervention. Families come to us with a variety of skills and resources, however when first starting out in services they may be overwhelmed and need the extra and frequent support of staff just to get in the habit of carrying out the intervention. They may need a “cheerleader” to keep them motivated or someone who can objectively see the small wins that have been accomplished.

When it comes to changing human behavior, having knowledge alone is not enough. Families need opportunities to practice their new skills and receive frequent feedback until they have mastered that skill. If knowledge alone was all that was necessary for family members to carry out early intervention strategies, then a quick “Google” search, and/or providing informational handouts without further support, would be sufficient. In general, families WANT to support their children’s development, but the majority will need a coach on a more frequent basis, just like a dieter or athlete, to move forward more quickly.