

Coaching vs. Mentoring in Early Childhood Programs

Dr. Tamar Andrews
Senior Director of Degree Programs/American Jewish University
International Mentor and Coach

Three Helpers — One Simple Distinction

Time Orientation: Where Each Helper Lives

The diagram shows a horizontal purple line with an arrowhead pointing to the right. Three dots are placed along the line. Below the first dot is the word 'PAST' and 'Psychologist'. Below the second dot is 'PRESENT' and 'Coach'. Below the third dot is 'FUTURE' and 'Mentor'.

PART 1 – MENTORING

Sharing Experience to Light the Way Forward

What is Mentoring in Early Childhood?

Mentoring in Early Childhood: Real Scenarios

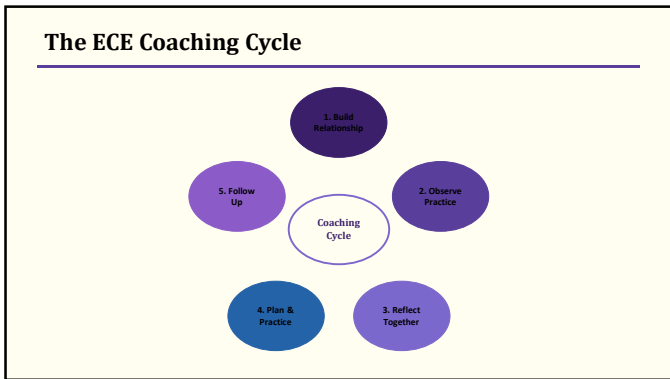
Core Mentoring Skills for ECE Leaders

<p>01 Active Listening Before you share your story, fully receive theirs. Ask: 'Tell me more about what's been happening.'</p>	<p>02 Story-Sharing Offer your experiences as gifts, not prescriptions. 'What I did when I faced something similar was...' — not 'You should...'</p>
<p>03 Opening Doors Introduce your mentee to people, resources, and opportunities they wouldn't access on their own.</p>	<p>04 Honest Feedback Real mentors tell the truth kindly. 'I want to share something I noticed, and I share it because I believe in your potential.'</p>
<p>05 Visioning Help them see a future for themselves. 'Where do you want to be in 3 years?' And then hold that vision with them.</p>	<p>06 Boundary-Setting Great mentors know what they can and cannot offer. Refer to coaching, HR, or counseling when appropriate.</p>

PART 2 — COACHING

Unlocking What's Already Inside the Practitioner

What is Coaching in Early Childhood?



The Coach's Most Powerful Tool: The Question

Great coaching questions are open-ended, non-judgmental, and return ownership to the practitioner.

PART 3 — SIDE BY SIDE

Coaching vs. Mentoring: Key Differences

Coaching vs. Mentoring: At a Glance

Dimension	Mentoring	Coaching
Time Focus	Future (career & growth)	Present (current practice)
Knowledge Source	Mentor's experience & expertise	Practitioner's own insight
Primary Tool	Advice, storytelling, guidance	Powerful questions & observation
Agenda	Shared or mentor-guided	Practitioner-owned
Relationship	Hierarchical (wise → newer)	Collaborative & peer-like
Duration	Longer-term, ongoing	Goal-bound, cyclical visits
Success Looks Like	Career growth, network, vision	Shifted practice in the classroom

Common Mistakes — and How to Course-Correct

Blank space for notes under the heading "Common Mistakes — and How to Course-Correct".

When to Mentor. When to Coach. How to Decide.

Ask yourself two questions:

Blank space for notes under the heading "When to Mentor. When to Coach. How to Decide." following the prompt "Ask yourself two questions:".

PART 4 – APPLICATION

Putting It Into Practice in Your Program

Scenario Practice: What Would You Do?

Building a Coaching & Mentoring Culture in Your Program

Scenario 1 — What's Your Move?

Scenario 1 — The Answer & Why

Scenario 2 — What's Your Move?

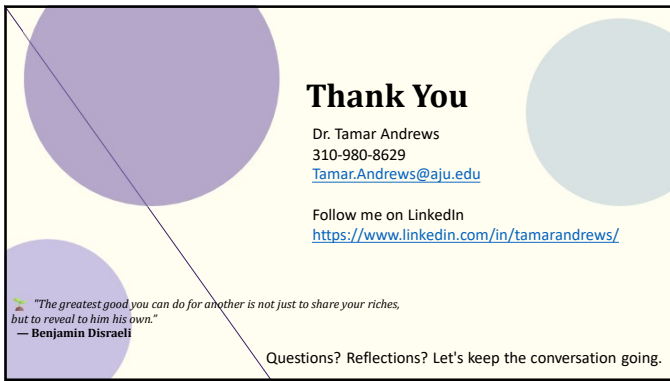
Scenario 2 — The Answer & Why

CLOSING

Bringing It All Together

What to Take With You Today

- 1 **Three helpers — one distinction**
Psychologist = past. Mentor = future. Coach = present. These aren't better or worse. They're for different moments.
- 2 **Mentoring gives. Coaching unlocks.**
Mentors offer their knowledge and experience. Coaches help practitioners access their own. Both are essential in early childhood.
- 3 **The coaching cycle creates change**
Real practice shifts happen through repeated cycles of observation, reflection, planning, and follow-up — not one-off conversations.
- 4 **Questions are the coach's superpower**
Resist the urge to answer. Ask instead. The insight a practitioner generates is more durable than the insight you give them.
- 5 **Be intentional about which hat you wear**
You can mentor and coach. Just not at the same time. Know which role you're in — and be transparent about it with your practitioners.



Thank You

Dr. Tamar Andrews
310-980-8629
Tamar.Andrews@aju.edu

Follow me on LinkedIn
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tamarandrews/>

*"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches,
but to reveal to him his own."
— Benjamin Disraeli*

Questions? Reflections? Let's keep the conversation going.
