

Helping you helps me! The Perks of Supporting Others

BY ROBYN KELTON

Whether or not there is such a thing as a completely selfish act has been argued by philosophers, psychologists, and many others for hundreds of years. And while I do not propose to offer a stance on that debate, I would like to point your attention to the science that supports the idea that, whether intentional or not, when we help others, we often end up helping ourselves, at least when it comes to giving advice.

As a presenter and coach who often covers content from the [*Program Administration Scale*](#) and [*Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care*](#) related to the fiscal management of both center-based and home-based child care programs, I end up talking and teaching about fiscal management. Topics include monitoring income and spending, recordkeeping, examining financial patterns, goal setting, and creating budgets to help reach goals and guide future financial practices. However, like many people, I do not always practice what I preach...except when I have recently or frequently been preaching it.

I recently listened to a podcast interview hosted by Dr. Katy Milkman—a professor at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and co-founder and co-director of the Behavior Change for Good Initiative. In the podcast episode, Dr. Milkman interviewed a psychology professor and post-doctoral scholar who described their research on advice-giving. Looking at a number of different populations (e.g., adults, children, students) and contexts (e.g., workplace, personal, educational), they found a strong pattern showing that when one person advises another, the person *giving* the advice tends to improve *their own* practices in the area in which they are giving advice! When I heard this, I immediately thought about my role as a coach and trainer in the field of early care and education and how, just recently, my own behavior had aligned so well with these research findings.

I have presented *Making Dollars and Sense*, a training related to fiscal management for family child care providers, six times in the past three months—four days of training directly to providers and two days presenting to those in technical assistance positions that support providers as a part of The [BAS Transformative TA Institute](#). During those same three months, I spent more time taking a deep dive into my personal financial and recordkeeping practices than I had in the previous nine months! The more I told others how and why to monitor their financial practices, the more I monitored my own.

This even carried over for me when it came to retirement advice. Practitioners in the field of early care and education often do not have employer-provided retirement plans and thus have to search out and enroll in retirement plans independently. This breaks my heart because those providing some of the most important work for society by helping to shape the development of young children are not currently saving for retirement; therefore, they will not be prepared to live comfortably when they are ready to retire. I spend a lot of time talking to practitioners about the importance of exploring which retirement plans make the most sense for them and how to commit to routinely contributing to a plan. While I am fortunate to work for a company that includes retirement plans in their benefits packages, in mid-November, I decided it was time to re-familiarize myself with my own plan and evaluate my satisfaction with the path I am on. I discovered I could benefit from making a few changes to my retirement plan myself.

I did just what the research on advice-giving predicted. All my carrying on to others about the need to monitor, evaluate, and rethink financial and recordkeeping practices resulted in my rethinking my practices and changing my own behavior!

SELF-REFLECTION:

1. What are your thoughts on the research findings mentioned above?
2. Why do you think advising others might result in improving our own behaviors?
3. Does the notion of “helping you, helps me” align with your own experiences?
4. Can you think of any specific examples of a time when you helped a coachee, employee, or coworker and, in the process, ended up learning something valuable in return?
5. How could you harness the idea that advising others helps the advisee in your organization or when working on peer-to-peer support and learning?

Interested in learning more about the tools or trainings mentioned above? The McCormick Center has a wide selection of professional development opportunities designed to meet the needs of center-based administrators, family child care providers, and those in technical assistance roles. Click [here](#) to contact us and learn more.

References:

Milkman, K. (2020, November 24). Why Coaching Other People Can Help You Achieve More. Choiceology. <https://www.katymilkman.com/newsletter-feed/why-coaching-other-people-can-help-you-achieve-more>

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