

# PCIT as a Trauma-Focused Intervention

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# Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

- Family-centered intervention
- Best suited for children aged 3 to 7
- Originally developed for children with behavioral issues

# Other considerations

- Caregiver is the main locus of intervention
- Adaptations for toddlers and children aged 8-11
- Considered a first line of treatment for children who have experienced trauma
- Families should be referred before harms occurs

# Goals of PCIT

- Enhance bond between child and caregiver
- Improve child's behavior by improving caregiver's parenting skills
- Decrease parental stress
- Increase child's ability to self-regulate
- All these will result in reduced risk of child maltreatment

# Exclusion Criteria

- Caregivers with limited or no ongoing contact with the child
- Caregivers with serious mental health problems (e.g. active psychosis) or active substance use disorder
- Caregivers who are hearing impaired or have significant language deficits
- Sexually abusive caregivers, non-offending caregivers who do not believe the allegations to be true, caregivers who have engaged in sadistic physical abuse

# What makes PCIT different?

- Sessions consist mostly of live coaching with a “bug in the ear”
- Parent training intervention
- Highly prescriptive
- Expectation of daily practice

# Phase I: Child Directed Interaction

- Emphasis is on building a nurturing relationship between caregiver and child
- Caregiver follows the child's lead in play situations according to certain "rules" (skills):
  - DON'T: Ask questions, give commands, use negative talk
  - DO: PRIDE skills

# PRIDE Skills

- Praise
- Reflect
- Imitate
- Describe
- Enjoyment

## Selective Attention

- Noticing and praising appropriate behaviors
- Ignoring disruptive/ annoying behaviors

# What it all looks like

- Therapist codes caregiver's interactions with the child
- Therapist gives feedback in real time and coaches while the caregiver and child play
- Progress is measured by a standardized questionnaire (ECBI) and caregiver's "mastery" of CDI skills

[Let's see it!](#)

# Phase II: Parent Directed Interaction

- Increase child's compliance
- Caregiver learns to give effective commands and manage non-compliance
- Timeout is used as a consequence for non-compliance

# General Considerations

- Extensive evidence of the lasting benefits of PCIT, even when dropout occurs.
- It has been researched with different communities and ethnicities
- Minimal adaptations or tailoring needed
- Highly portable intervention

# When NOT to refer to PCIT

- There's been allegations of sexual abuse by caregiver
- Non-offending parent denies or minimizes allegations of abuse
- Caregiver is not spending significant amounts of time with the child (e.g., prior to reunification after removal)
- When there are logistical barriers (e.g., lack of childcare for siblings)

# Do refer when

- Families are at risk of maltreatment
- Child is in foster care
- Once reunification has happened

Have questions about PCIT? Let's talk!

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