

Healing Trauma Through Parent-Child Interactions



UC DAVIS
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Disclosure

- Neither I nor any member of my immediate family has a financial relationship or interest (currently or within the past 12 months) with any proprietary entity producing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on, patients related to the content of this CME activity.
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Learning objectives:

1. How trauma impacts parents & children
2. Common ways trauma is exhibited
3. PCIT for method and core concepts
4. How PCIT benefits families with history of trauma
5. Ways to empower parents to help children heal
6. Strategies to support parents in managing their own trauma

How does trauma impact parents and children?

- How they view themselves and the world
- Ability to trust and feel safe
- Behaviors
- Parent-child interactions have the power to either:
 - Positively “rewrite” their perspectives
 - Reinforce the negative



What are common ways that trauma impacts interactions?

Fear/anxiety

- Children with history of trauma may exhibit:
 - Hyperactivity
 - Hypervigilance – constant alert
 - Increased heart rate
 - Gastrointestinal issues
 - Difficulty concentrating, resembling ADHD
 - Unusual fear around bedtime or bathing



Regression

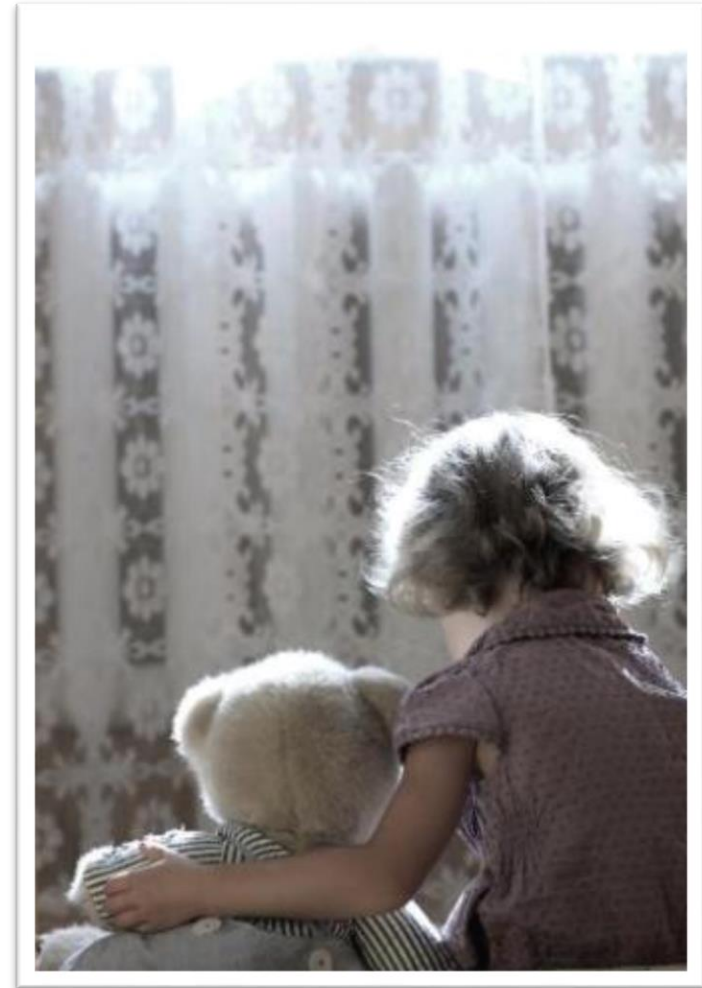
- Trauma makes children feel powerless
- Take comfort in “babyish” behaviors
 - Thumb sucking
 - Bedwetting
 - Asking for bottle
 - Disinterested in play
 - Clinginess, separation anxiety



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Sexualized behavior

- Victims of sexual abuse may exhibit:
 - Sexualized touching
 - Themselves
 - Others
 - Knowing too much about sex
 - Thinking others want them to engage in sexual acts



Difficulty relating to others

- Difficulty forming healthy relationships
- Copying negative behaviors
- Prone to becoming “bullies”
- May develop Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) or Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder



Traumatic play

- Reenacts traumatic experiences
- Result of “reliving” trauma
- Attempts to achieve resolution



Aggression

- Angry
- Hostile
- Dominating
- Aggressive
- Copying violence they've witnessed



Avoidance

- Avoids triggering:
 - Thoughts
 - Behaviors
 - Objects
 - Locations
 - People



Dissociation

- Disconnecting from:
 - Thoughts
 - Feelings
 - Memories
 - Identity



Child Trauma Reactions Handout

English

Spanish

Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)



What is PCIT?

- Coaching intervention for behavioral problems
- UC Davis Protocol is PCIT for Traumatized Children (PCIT-TC)
- **Consists of**
 - One-way mirror
 - Earpiece coaching
- **Designed to:**
 - Increase positive interactions
 - Teach self-regulation
 - Improve parenting skill & child behaviors
 - Instill PRIDE skills (CDI) and BE DIRECT skills (PDI)

What are PRIDE Skills?

- **Praise**
- **Reflection**
- **Imitation**
- **Description**
- **Enjoyment**

Praise

- Complimenting desired behaviors
- Labeling positive behaviors

Examples:

- “Thank you for keeping your hands to yourself!”
- “I love how you’re using a calm voice to ask for a turn.”

Reflection

- Repeating back what the child says
- Emphasizes that parent values their thoughts and ideas

Example:

- Child: “I get scared when someone knocks on the door.”
- Parent: “You feel scared when someone knocks on the door. I understand, and I’m here to make you feel safe.”

Imitation

- Copying child's positive behaviors during play
- Boosts self-esteem
- Enforces desirable behaviors

Example:

Child hugs doll

Parent: "I'm going to hug this baby doll so she feels safe and loved too."



Description

- Describing child's positive behaviors
- Reinforces behaviors that parents approve of
- Boosts language skills

Example:

Child reenacting car accident with toys

Parent: "You're taking the ambulance to pick up the family and take care of them. Now you're driving them to the hospital so they can get the help they need."

Enjoyment

- Expressing joy and fun:
 - Strengthens the parent-child bond
 - Increases feelings of trust
 - Boosts self-esteem
 - Makes children feel safe and secure

Example:

“I love spending time with you! Remember that when you are with me, you can feel safe and have fun.”

Video Demonstration

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=DJhM8sl3fgE

Importance of managing behavior

- Limit setting and nurturing go together
- Behavioral management achieved through:
 - Effective commands and clear rules
 - Providing transitions
 - Maintaining neutral tone & expression
 - Modeling
 - Providing choices (e.g. options, when-then)
 - Selective attention
 - Time out
 - Removing privileges
- PCIT teaches limit setting with BE DIRECT skills

What is BE DIRECT

- Be specific
- Every command positively stated
- Developmentally appropriate
- Individual rather than compound
- Respectful and polite
- Essential commands only
- Carefully timed explanations
- Tone of voice is neutral

PCIT for treating ACEs

- Effective in treating conduct & attachment disorders
- Study (Chaffin et al., 2004) comparing families with history of ACEs w/ and w/out PCIT:
 - 19% of PCIT recipients had repeated incident(s) of abuse
 - 49% of other families had repeated incident(s) of abuse
- Supported treatment by:
 - The National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center
 - The Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

How can I teach parents to use
PRIDE skills in my pediatric
work?

Aggression

- Encourage parents to:
 - Use PRIDE skills to “re-write” what was previously modeled
 - Praise calm, positive behaviors
 - “Ignore” mildly disruptive ones

Example:

“I’m so proud of you for being calm and using your words to tell me how you feel.”

Addressing dissociation with children

- Parents can bring child's attention back with:
 - Description
 - Reflection
 - Enjoyment
 - The "I-wonder" skill

Example:

"I love when we play with blocks! I wonder what you want to build with them."

Traumatic play

- Reenacting trauma during play is a normal response
- Great opportunity to reassure child
- Encourage parents to show understanding with:
 - Description
 - Reflection

Example:

“I see you’re driving the police car to the house like the night mommy and daddy had a scary fight. I’m going to have the parents comfort their kids. When you’re feeling scared, I can help comfort you.”

Sexualized behaviors

- Parent can show child how to love in appropriate ways
- Encourage parents to reinforce appropriate contact by:
 - Describing gentle, appropriate touching
 - Praising safe touching

Example:

“I see that you’re doing a great job of keeping your hands to yourself and respecting your friend’s space.”

How can I support parents who have a history of trauma?

Re-experiencing

- Common when children behave in ways that remind parents of trauma
- Remind parents that:
 - The child is just a kid
 - They've learned some bad habits
 - PRIDE skills teach better ways to handle tough emotions



Parent dissociation

- Re-experiencing can lead to dissociation
- Help parents regain focus on present moment

Example *(Pediatric Provider to Parent)*:

“You seemed to zone out after your daughter started kicking. That’s a normal reaction after trauma. Take a few deep breaths and focus on the present moment.”

Avoidance

- Many parents' try to avoid discussing trauma
- This tells child that it's too horrible to speak of
- Encourage parents to:
 - Let children discuss incident(s)
 - Listen without judgment
 - Praise their child for expressing feelings
 - Reflect what child tells them

Example (*Pediatric Provider to Parent*) :

“I know you don't like talking about the accident to your daughter. But when you show her healthy ways to deal with tough feelings, you tell her it's okay to talk about hard things.”

Breaking old habits

- Empathize with parents
 - You understand it's tough to change old habits
 - This is an opportunity to teach their kids a better way

Example *(Pediatric Provider to Parent)*:

“It’s hard to break old habits, especially if you were hit at as a kid. By not putting your hands on your kids in anger, you’re teaching them how to manage their feelings without getting physical.”

Parental guilt

- Parents may feel guilt disciplining kids with history of ACEs
- Remind them that discipline gives kids:
 - Training for a positive future
 - Predictability (cause and effect)
 - A sense of being cared for

Example (*Pediatric Provider to Parent*):

“It’s hard to watch your daughter throw a fit in time out. Let her know that once she follows directions, she can play again. By setting limits, you’re showing her you care because you’re teaching her acceptable behaviors.”

Parental fear/anxiety

- Parents also prone to anxiety
- Support them by:
 - Acknowledging their feelings
 - Encouraging breathing
 - Reciting affirmations



Example (*Pediatric Provider to Parent*):

“Take some deep breaths and tell yourself, “I’m being a good parent right now by sticking to my rules and consequences. I’m paving the way for him to have a healthy future.”

Controlling behavior

- Children with history of ACEs:
 - Long for a sense of control
 - Struggle with commands
- Let child know they can gain control once they listen to command(s)



Example (Pediatric Provider to Parent):

“**When** you are ready to keep your hands to yourself and use your calm words, **then** I will let you can choose which game we will play.”

Examples of affectionate repair

“I understand your son has seemed scared of you when you discipline him. Reassure him by saying ‘I used to spank you to get you to follow directions, but I’m not going to do that anymore. Now I’m using time out to help you learn.’”

“Reward following directions with affectionate bonding, “Now that you’ve cleaned your room, I wonder if you’d like to cuddle and sing together.””

“Tell her, ‘Daddy loves you no matter what, and my rules are here to help you learn.’”

When and where should I refer families for PCIT?

Families who may benefit from PCIT

- Domestic Violence
- Physical Abuse
- Traumatic events
- Overcoming ACE's (complex/multiple traumas)
- Behavioral challenges

When should I refer to another trauma treatment?

- Functioning issues but no externalizing or disruptive behaviors
- When parent-child relationship should not be fostered:
 - Parent has sexually abused the child
 - Child has been removed indefinitely from parent's home
- Alternative: Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Ages 3-18
 - Evidence-based
 - Provided by Child Guidance Center & several other local providers

Where should I refer my patients?

- Access to PCIT is limited
- Child Guidance Center (CGC) is experienced in:
 - Providing PCIT & TF-CBT
 - Training clinicians & trainers in PCIT
- PCIT available through other community agencies (WYS, Seneca, OCAPICA, Pathways) and HCA clinics in Costa Mesa, Santa Ana, Brea.
- If you live outside of OC, go to UCD website for National provider listing:

<https://pcit.ucdavis.edu/find-a-provider/united-states/state/california/>

Want to Learn More about PCIT?

- **Take Free 10-hour PCIT-TC web course:**

- <https://pcit.ucdavis.edu/pcit-web-course/>

- **Get Trained in PCIT**

- Child Guidance Center: Dr. Shinn
mshinn@cgcinc.org

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