

Potential Risks and Benefits of PCIT

PCIT is *a lot* of work AND it is often a lot of *fun*. There are potential risks of participating in PCIT that parents should consider as they make the commitment to PCIT. One such risk is the possibility of frustration during the initial stage of the treatment if parents are anxious to begin working immediately on “discipline” (or punishments) for misbehavior or are expecting an immediate solution for a long-standing or severe behavioral problem. In PCIT there is an initial emphasis on relationship-building and less directive methods of behavioral management in order to create a foundation of skills and interactions that are believed to maximize the chances for the potential benefits of treatment. Finally, parents may experience some discomfort in relation to the amount of effort and change required in their own behaviors, as well as in response to the highly directive interactions between therapist and parents during coaching session.

With these potential risks in mind, it is important to point out the potential benefits involved, as well. First, PCIT has been found to be a highly effective approach to treating children’s disruptive behaviors and noncompliance. In clinical studies, PCIT has resulted in improvements in children’s behavior at home, improved behavior in untreated siblings, reduction in parenting stress, and improvements in children’s self-esteem.

We’re looking forward to working with you and your child and to doing our best together to make a positive difference in your life.

The PCIT Clinic at the Moore Counseling Center, P.C. is administered by Jennifer L. Morris, Ph.D., who currently practices child psychology under the supervision of Dr. Gant Ward. Dr. Morris earned her doctoral degree from the clinical child psychology program at the University of Alabama and completed her pre-doctoral internship at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, Arkansas. Dr. Morris has been doing PCIT for over 5 years.

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Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)



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What is PCIT?



PCIT is an empirically supported treatment and is appropriate for a broad range of presenting problems in young children between the ages of 2 - 7 years. Typical problems treated with PCIT include externalizing problems, such as noncompliance, defiance, verbal and physical aggression, stealing, lying, inattention and over-activity; parent-child relationship problems in the context of divorce and adoption; internalizing problems such as sad affect, anxiety, low-self-esteem, and perfectionism; and sequelae of abuse and neglect.

When and Where Does PCIT Take Place?

The PCIT clinic is held on Thursday afternoons/evenings at the Moore Counseling Center. If you have questions about scheduling or other issues during the week, you may leave a message for Dr. Morris at the Moore Counseling Center and the receptionist will contact her as soon as possible to relay your message.

What to Expect

PCIT is a highly structured treatment that requires a lot of involvement from parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers are first asked to participate in a pre-treatment assessment and interview to become acquainted with each other and your specific concerns, as well as to measure your child's behavioral problems prior to starting treatment. Once treatment is started, parent(s)/caregiver(s) are provided with direct instruction on a very specialized way of interacting with their children. A total of 12-15 sessions are typically needed to complete the intervention. Booster sessions are offered, as needed, and are usually scheduled at 1, 3, 6, and 12 months after the post-treatment assessment.

Some PCIT sessions involve teaching skills to parent(s)/caregiver(s) and other sessions involve coaching skills with parent(s)/caregiver(s). During teaching sessions, parents/caregivers are presented with the specific skills they'll be working on in therapy and at home, and during the coaching sessions, parents/caregivers receive direct coaching on how to use their new skills during play and discipline interactions.



Teaching sessions are completed without children present, while coaching sessions involve parent(s)/caregiver(s) and the child playing together at a table in the therapy office. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) are equipped with an ear piece during coaching sessions so they can

receive direct instructions about what to say and do during the play and discipline interactions. Coaching is provided from behind a one-way mirror so that it doesn't distract the child in the room. However, it is okay for the child to know that the parent(s)/caregiver(s) are learning a special way to play and that Dr. Morris is helping them learn this special way to play. In addition, parent(s)/caregiver(s) are expected to practice their new skills between sessions in order to continue making progress. Furthermore, during the discipline phase of treatment, parent(s)/caregiver(s) will gradually be provided with more "real-life" opportunities to use their new skills in session.



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