

## Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

### Managing Children's Dangerous or Destructive Behavior During PCIT Sessions

#### Principles:

- 1) Make the PCIT room a safe space for the parent and child.
- 2) When faced with an unexpected situation or crisis, manage the best you can making safety your priority, and plan how you might prevent or manage it in the future.
- 3) Collaborate with the parent to develop a shared definition of dangerous/destructive behavior.

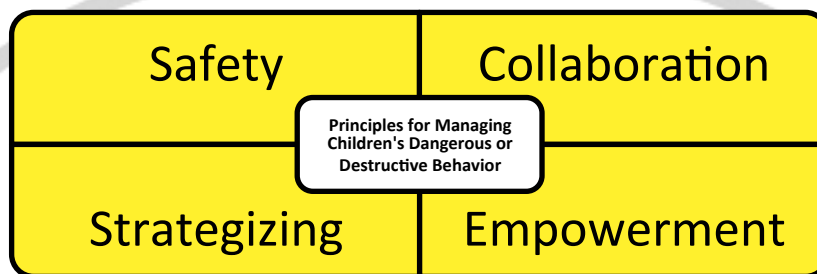


Figure 1. Principles used during PCIT session.

- 4) Tell parent how you will prepare for or respond to dangerous/destructive behaviors when they occur during sessions. Use strategies consistent with current phase of PCIT during coaching sessions and home practice.
- 5) Support and empower parents to use PCIT strategies for managing dangerous or destructive behavior at home by giving them opportunities to practice strategies during PCIT sessions. In other words, view the occurrence of these behaviors during sessions as an opportunity to coach the parent through management of the behavior showing them how behavior can be managed using the PCIT skills.

### Strategies for Managing Dangerous or Destructive Behaviors

#### In waiting room prior to initial intake/pre-treatment DPICS

Coach parent through managing situation and getting child back to the PCIT room and away from reinforcing attention (i.e. audience) that may be present in the clinic waiting area.

#### During initial intake/pre-treatment DPICS:

Enter PCIT room to distract parent and child and diffuse situation. Depending on assessment of situation and therapist preference, some of the strategies you might use when you enter room include (*turn page*):

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- Enter with a flourish, using the element of surprise to distract the child.
- Casually walk in the room and remove the problematic object while giving a plausible explanation (e.g. "I forgot to take the train track out of the room" *Español: Se me olvidó sacar la vía del tren del cuarto*).
- Send parent out of the room to neutralize the situation.
- State rules for PCIT room (e.g. "The rule is people have to play safely in my room." *Español: "La regla en la sala de PCIT es que las personas tienen que jugar con cuidado"*).
- Pick up some of the toys to make room less chaotic.
- Turn down the lights to reduce stimulation.
- Describe what you are doing to distract the child.
- Do CDI with the child.

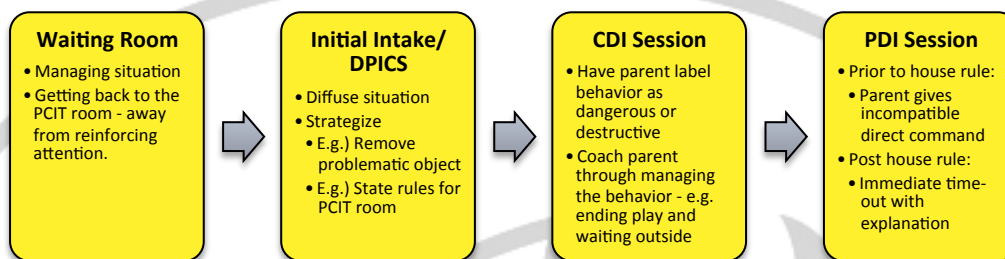


Figure 2. Strategies used during PCIT sessions.

### During CDI coach session (during initial coding or coaching)

If it is towards the end of the session and situation is not too volatile, end session early. If it is towards the beginning of the session, have parent step out briefly. Work to coach the parent through the behavior using skills to manage behavior (go to: [http://pcit.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/44\\_2.09-Skill-to-Manage-Behaviors1.pdf](http://pcit.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/44_2.09-Skill-to-Manage-Behaviors1.pdf)).

If it is a borderline "call" (i.e. you and parent are still developing clear definition of dangerous or destructive), you can have the parent label the behavior and give a warning (e.g. "Throwing toys is dangerous. If you throw toys again, special play is over. Dr. Beth will come in and I will wait outside" *Español: "Es peligroso tirar juguetes. Si tiras un juguete otra vez, se terminará el juego especial. La Dra. Shinn va a entrar y yo voy a esperar afuera."*).

### During PDI coach session prior to establishing house rule about dangerous or destructive behavior

Coach the parent to give an incompatible direct command that interrupts the cycle of negative behavior. For example, if child hits parent, have the parent give the child a command to put their hands on top of their head. *Español: "Pon tus manos encima de tu cabeza."*

### During PDI coach session after establishing house rule about specific dangerous or destructive behavior

Coach the parent to take child immediately to the time-out chair while saying "You hit me, so you have to go to the time-out chair. Stay on the chair until I say you can get off." *Español: "Me pegaste, por eso tienes que ir a la silla de tiempo fuera/aparte. Quédate en la silla hasta que yo te diga que puedes salir."*