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**IoWA-PCIT Pre-treatment Evaluation**

**Goals:**

1. Obtain baseline assessment of parent-child interaction
2. Obtain assessment of disruptive behavior
3. Communicate a positive attitude towards parent and child
4. Increase parent’s and child’s sense of hope

**Activities (assessment) (45 minutes):**

1. Observe and code parent-child interaction during Preschool Separation Reunion Procedure (5 minute pre-separation; 5 minute separation (separation #1), 5 minutes together (reunion #1), 5 minute separation (separation #2), 5 minutes together (reunion #2)
2. Observe and code parent-child interaction during child-led play (5 minutes), parent-led play (5 minutes), and clean-up (5 minutes) using the Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System (DPICS)
3. Administer Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI)

**Instructions for conducting Preschool Separation Reunion Procedure**

Prior to the observation day, inform the parent there will be two brief separations where they will be asked to leave the child in the room alone. Reassure the parent they will be able to observe the child from the observation room and go in if they think the child is too distressed by the separation.

**Pre-separation (5 minutes) (*timing begins after you leave the room*)**

At the beginning of the pre-treatment evaluation, take the parent and child into the room with toys. Have the parent put the communication device in their ear and do a sound check. **Do not** tell the parent to play with the child. Tell the parent they need to stay in the room with their child until you tell them to leave. Tell the parent that it is important they get the child to stay in the room by himself/herself. This information should be delivered matter-of-factly to the parent in front of the child. The information should not be directed to the child. If the child asks you questions about the separation, you should not answer them.

**Separation #1 (5 minutes) (*timing begins after the parent leaves the room*)**

Over the communication device, tell the parent to leave the room and come to the observation room. **Do not intervene during the separation**. If the parent takes a very long time to negotiate their departure, this is important information for us. If the parent makes up an excuse of leaving such as saying they have to go to the bathroom, this is important information for us. If the parent leaves abruptly without saying anything, this is important information for us. **Don’t intervene**.

*Exception to don’t intervene*: If the parent has been unable to leave after a few minutes, insist a bit that they leave. First, offer to keep the door open. Second, offer to stay in the room with the child. If you do stay in the room with the child, avoid interacting with the child.

If the child’s distress is high or judged to be high by the parent, shorten the separation and send the parent back in before the end of 5 minutes. (If you think the parent and/or child were so stressed by the 1st separation you have concerns about separating them again, you may skip the 2nd separation).

If the child tries to leave the room during the separation, tell the child they need to stay in the room and close the door. Be polite but firm with the child.

Don’t spend all the time negotiating with the child.

Don’t enter the room and play with the child.

Don’t give excuses like the parent is at the bathroom (the child will want to go) or had to make a call (the child will point out the parent has a cell phone).

If the child wants to go to the bathroom, tell them to wait a minute and their parent will be in to take them. Send the parent in to take them to the bathroom. Use your judgment in determining whether you need to do an additional separation and reunion due to the shorter separation.

Avoid talking to the parent during the separation. If the parent tries to talk to you, say something like *This observation is very useful and I want to make sure I don’t miss anything*. *We will have a chance to talk more about it at our next session.*

**Reunion # 1 (5 minutes) (*timing begins after the parent enters the room*)**

Tell the parent to go back in the room. Let them know you will tell them when they need to leave again. If you are videotaping (recommended), try and zoom in on the child’s face during the reunion so you can see his facial expressions.

**Separation #2 (5 minutes) (*timing begins after the parent leaves the room*)**

Over the communication device, tell the parent to leave the room and come to the observation room. Rules for handling any issues with the separation are the same as for separation #1.

**Reunion #2 (5 minutes) (*timing begins after the parent enters the room*)**

Tell the parent to go back in the room. Let them know that in 5 minutes you will tell them the next situation.

**Instructions for observing attachment during preschool separation-reunion procedure**

The form for recording observations of attachment during the preschool separation-reunion procedure is adapted from research coding used in studies of preschool attachment. Training in using these observations clinically as part of IoWA-PCIT training does *not* provide therapists with adequate training to reliably code preschool attachment assessments. The purpose of these evaluations in IoWA-PCIT is to provide therapists with a baseline assessment of how this particular parent-child attachment relationship “works” for this dyad.

Important points to remember when observing attachment:

1) Observations are of a particular dyad. The focus of the observation is the parent-child attachment relationship. Children can have different patterns of attachment with different caregivers. Most therapists are more familiar with evaluating an individual – child or parent. Keeping your eye on the relationship is often difficult.

2) The focus is on the organization of behaviors. The context of a behavior is as important as the frequency of a behavior. For example, an indication of anxiety such as hair twirling reflects differently on the relationship if it occurs during a separation than it does if it occurs at the moment of the reunion.

**Instructions for Behavioral (Dyadic Parent Child Interaction Coding System (DPICS)) Assessment**

**Child-Led play (CLP) (use pre-treatment CLP coding sheet) (5 minutes)**

Over the communication device, tell the parent: “In this situation tell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that he/she may play with whatever he/she chooses. Let him/her choose any activity he/she wishes. You just follow his/her lead and play along with him/her.”

*Code CLP for 5 minutes using pre-treatment CLP coding sheet.*

**Parent-Led play (PLP) (use pre-treatment PLP coding sheet) (5 minutes)**

Over the communication device, tell the parent: “That was fine. Now we’ll switch to the next situation. Please don’t clean up or put away the toys. Tell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it is your turn to choose what to play. You may choose any activity. Keep him/her playing with you according to your rules.”

*Code PLP for 5 minutes using pre-treatment PLP coding sheet.*

**Clean-Up (CU) (use pre-treatment CU coding sheet) (5 minutes or until toys are picked up)**

Over the communication device, tell the parent: “Now please tell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that it is time to clean up the toys. Make sure you have him/her put the toys away by him/herself. Have him/her put all the toys in their containers and put all the containers away.”

*Code CU for 5 minutes using pre-treatment CU coding sheet.*

*If toys are picked up before the end of 5 minutes (this is rare but it does happen), end the observation after the toys are picked up.*

*If toys are not picked up at the end of 5 minutes, end the observation after 5 minutes.*

**Instructions for DPICS coding of Child-Led Play (CLP), Parent-Led Play (PLP), and Clean-Up (CU)**

Use a different coding sheet for each situation. Parent verbalizations are coded during CLP. During PLP and CU, a subset of parent verbalizations are coded (Negative Talk, Direct Commands, and Indirect Commands). In addition, child compliance following parent commands and parent labeled praise following child compliance is coded. Refer to the abbreviated DPICS manual for details regarding the definition of each code.

**Managing dangerous or destructive behavior during pre-treatment evaluation**

Since a number of the children referred for IoWA-PCIT have disruptive behavior and a history of aggression towards their parent, you will occasionally see behavior that is so dangerous or destructive you need to intervene during the observation.

This is most likely to occur during Parent-Led Play or Clean-Up. If this happens during a pre-treatment assessment, enter the room with a flourish (this has been called the “Kramer flourish” after the Kramer character from Seinfeld). This will distract the parent and child briefly and disrupt the negative cycle of interaction. Use your clinical judgment to determine what may help to diffuse the situation and calm the parent and child.

**Post-assessment wrap-up (5 minutes):**

1) Describe positive aspects of child, parent, and their interaction to parent and child.

2) If child and parent seem appropriate for IoWA-PCIT, talk about how this approach has been helpful to other families like their family.

3) If parent reports the child has been better behaved than usual during the observation (*this is typical*), talk about how the room and observation situation is specifically designed for children with disruptive behavior. Tell the parent the goal of IoWA-PCIT is to help learn what works in the clinic in order to get more of the type of positive behavior seen during the observation to occur at home and at school. (If the parent brings a tape of the child’s misbehavior at home that they want you to watch, tell them to bring it to the next session and you will watch it then).

4) If child’s behavior has been typical or worse than usual during the observation, talk about how IoWA-PCIT will address the types of behaviors seen during the observation. This is especially important if you had to enter the room due to the severity of behavior problems.