

Background

- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an efficacious treatment for disruptive behavior, and changes children's behavior through coaching the parent's behavior from behind a one way mirror using an earpiece.
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy - Emotion Development (PCIT-ED) is an efficacious adaptation of PCIT, with an added emotion-focused module to target preschoolers' depressive symptoms.
- In the Emotion Development module, the parent is coached on how to help their child manage negative emotions, which are induced with evocative tasks (e.g., giving the child a locked box containing a toy without providing the correct key).
- Previous research with PCIT and PCIT-ED has shown that therapists' coaching frequency predicts parent skill growth and reductions in child externalizing behavior (Barnett et al., 2014, 2017; Caron et al., 2021).
 - This research has focused on the Child Directed Interaction module (CDI) of treatment
- However, given findings that the greatest level of improvement in children's PCIT-ED outcomes occurs during the Emotion Development module (Luby et al., 2020), it is critical to examine therapists' coaching during this module.
- The purpose of this study was to adapt and apply a measure of therapist coaching in PCIT to the novel Emotion Development module of PCIT-ED.

Method

Measure: Therapist-Parent Interaction Coding System (TPICS; Barnett et al., 2014)

- The TPICS is used to evaluate therapists' coaching during PCIT sessions
- All therapist and parent verbalizations are coded
- Parent verbalizations are coded as either "do" or "avoid" skills, such as a labeled praise or a question.
- Therapist verbalizations are coded on two dimensions: the coaching technique and the parent skill targeted
- Coding is completed on an Excel spreadsheet that automatically tallies the frequency of each code
- Previous reliability for frequencies of various therapist coaching techniques in our lab, as assessed by intraclass correlation coefficients, has ranged from .80-1.00.

Examples of Parents' Emotion Coaching	Examples of Parents' Unhelpful Emotion Coaching	Examples of Therapists' Coaching of Parent Emotion Coaching
"But I'm going to give you a hug and a kiss, okay?"	"Don't be sad. It's not a big deal."	"You're leaning in and really showing him you're supporting him."
"Do you remember getting angry with me?"	(Talking about being sorry) "And when you <i>mean it</i> , that's when it really counts"	"See if you can encourage him to apologize to her."
"When keys don't work, it's frustrating, I know. I like how you're staying calm."	Child: "I just want to take that box and throw it at the window." Parent: "No. You need to calm down."	"Good job letting her know that it's okay to feel mad."
"I'm proud of you because even though you got really mad and frustrated, you were still in control of your emotions."	"You should <i>know</i> how to say, 'I'm sorry.'"	"So we'll want to give him a labeled praise for coming up with that solution, and then acting on it too."



Children were given a locked plastic box with a desirable toy, and a key ring with a number of keys that did not unlock the box. The goal was to elicit frustration, so that parents could coach their child through this emotion.

Examples of Therapists' Emotion Observations

- "He looks like he's going to be really happy when he gets this open."
- "It seems like he's starting to get frustrated."
- "He looks like he's not so happy about this."
- "He's persistent and patient and calm."

Method, cont.

Adapting the TPICS for the Emotion Development Module

- Iterative process of coding and discussion among 2 reliable TPICS coders
- Coders completed coding independently and met to discuss coding
- Need for additional codes was determined through consensus
- New codes were tested and confirmed with additional coding

Results

- One therapist coaching technique was added: **Emotion Observation.**
 - Similar to TPICS coaching technique "Child Observation," but focused on the child's emotion
- Two parent skill codes were added: **Emotion Coaching** and **Unhelpful Emotion Coaching.**
 - **Emotion Coaching** (a new "do" skill), represents the strategies taught in the Emotion Development module, such as validating the child's experience of emotion, providing positive verbal and physical support, and helping the child identify solutions to resolve the situation.
 - **Unhelpful Emotion Coaching** (a new "avoid" skill) represents failures in emotion coaching, such as invalidating a child's emotion, giving rigid expectations for emotional response, or expressing negative emotions in response to the child's emotion.

Discussion

Future research should use this adapted coding system to examine how coaching strategies differ in Emotion Development sessions from the standard PCIT treatment modules, and test whether coaching during these sessions is linked to children's internalizing symptom improvement.

References

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