

## An Optimistic Approach to Treating Challenging Behavior

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## Fundamental Concepts

- Children with disabilities can learn
- All children and behavior problems are not the same
- Implications for parents/teachers/staff?

## How do We Help This Mother?

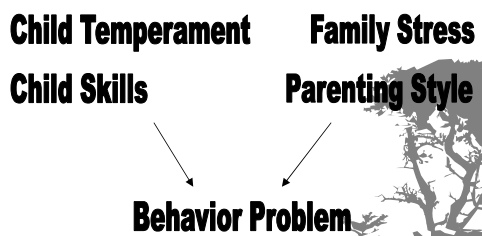
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## Prevention Project

- Prospective longitudinal study
  - N=128
  - Age 3 to age 6

Durand, V.M. (2001). Future directions for children and adolescents with mental retardation. *Behavior Therapy, 32*, 633-650.

## Developmental Progression



## Predicting Later Problems

- Not severity of disability
- Not severity of behavior problem

## Predicting Later Problems

- Best Predictor?
- Parental pessimism



## How you see yourself as a parent

### Negative Thoughts

- *I cannot control my child.*
- *I have doubts about my ability to help my child improve his/her behavior.*

### Positive Thoughts

- *I am usually able to handle problem situations.*
- *I am capable of helping my child improve.*

## How you think others see you as a parent

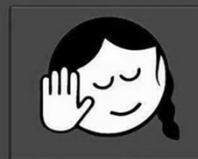
### Negative Thought

- *When my child misbehaves, people see me as a bad parent.*

### Positive Thought

- *I believe I am a good parent.*

## Dear Mother-in-Law



Don't teach me how to handle my children,  
I am living with one of yours and  
He needs a lot of  
Improvement.

## How you think others view your child

### Negative Thought

- *I think that other people judge my child when he/she is misbehaving*

### Positive Thought

- *Most parents have times when their child misbehaves.*

## How you see your child's ability control his/her behavior

### Negative Thoughts

- *My child is not capable of behaving better.*
- *My child's behavior is related to the disability.*

### Positive Thought

- *My child is capable of behaving better.*

### How you view the problem situation

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <u>Negative Thought</u>   | <u>Positive Thought</u>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All of these situations are always a major problem.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This particular incident was a problem.</li></ul> |

### How you view the future

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <u>Negative Thought</u>  | <u>Positive Thought</u>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Things will never get better or will get worse.</li><li>• I will never have my own life.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Things can and will get better.</li></ul> |

### Who is responsible for a problem situation (Child)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <u>Negative Thought</u>  | <u>Positive Thought</u>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My child is doing this on purpose.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My child is not intentionally being disruptive.</li></ul> |

### Who is responsible for a problem situation (Others)

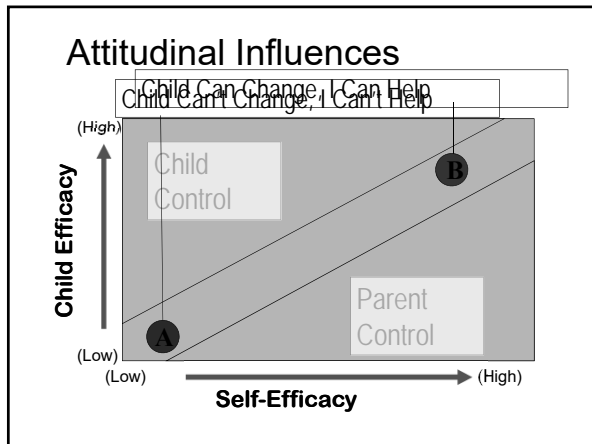
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <u>Negative Thought</u>   | <u>Positive Thought</u>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If only others would follow my suggestions correctly, my child would be better behaved.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everyone is doing their best under the circumstances.</li></ul> |

### Who is responsible for a problem situation (Self)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <u>Negative Thought</u>   | <u>Positive Thought</u>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is my fault that things are going wrong.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am doing the best that I can under the circumstances.</li></ul> |

### Who should be responsible for the problem situation

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <u>Negative Thought</u>   | <u>Positive Thought</u>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why am I always the one who has to be responsible for these situations?</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everyone is doing the best they can under the circumstances.</li></ul> |



### The Thoughts Quiz

- Reflect back on a recent problem situation.
- Estimate what was going through your mind at the time by indicating if you “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” that you were thinking something like this around the time of the difficult situation.

### Thoughts

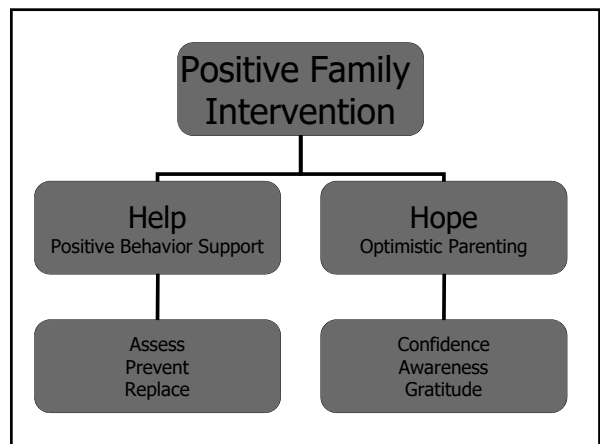
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I have little or no control over this situation.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I'm not sure how best to handle this situation.	1	2	3	4	5
3. In this situation, others are judging me negatively as a parent.	1	2	3	4	5
4. In this situation, others are judging my child negatively.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My child is not able to control this behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My child's disability or condition is causing or contributing to this problem.	1	2	3	4	5
7. This type of situation is always a problem for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
8. This will never get better or may become worse.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I will never have time for just me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My child is doing this on purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
11. This situation is (spouse's, partner's, family member's or other's) fault for not handling this like I suggested.	1	2	3	4	5
12. It is my fault that this is a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Why am I always responsible for my child's behavior?	1	2	3	4	5

### Current Approaches

- Providing Intervention Strategies
- General Family Support

### Positive Family Intervention

- Can we make pessimistic families more optimistic?
- Integrating *cognitive-behavioral intervention* with *positive behavioral support*



## Positive Family Intervention

- Standard protocol
- 8 weeks
- 1 ½ hours per individual session
- Standardized and observational measures



## PFI Protocol

- Review homework (e.g., information gathered; strategies attempted)
- Share a difficulty and a success and thoughts/feelings associated with the event; introduce strategies
- Teach PBS: presentation, examples, application, and practice
- Analyze self-talk throughout session

## Positive Family Intervention

- Session 1: Establishing Goals
- Session 2: Gathering Information
- Session 3: Analysis and Plan Design
- Session 4: Preventing Problems
- Session 5: Managing Consequences
- Session 6: Replacing Behavior
- Session 7: Putting Plan in Place
- Session 8: Monitoring Results

Self-Talk Journal – Session 1

Situation What happened (success or difficulty)?	Beliefs What did you think or feel (self-talk)?	Comments

## Self-Talk Journal

### Situation

What happened?  
(success or difficulty)

*When my son sat down for dinner, he started whining and crying. (difficulty)*

### Beliefs

What did you think and feel?

*I thought "We will never have a normal dinner" and felt defeated, thinking that meals will always be a problem.*

### Consequences

What happened as a result? (actions)

*I gave him cookies so he would stop crying.*

## Situations & Beliefs

- Identify situations that provide triggers to negative thinking (e.g., What was exactly happening? Where were you? What did your child and others do?)
- Identify beliefs associated with the event (e.g., What were you feeling and thinking while this was going on? What did you say to yourself?)

## Example from Protocol

- **Homework** (i.e., information gathered through watching and recording; MAS)
- Ask them to **share a difficulty** and thoughts/feelings associated with the event
- Ask them to **share a success** and thoughts/feelings associated with the event

## Share a Difficulty

- **Example** - “She wouldn’t leave the TV to go to school.”
- **What were you thinking?**
- **Pessimistic Scenario** – “Here we go again.”
- **Optimistic Scenario** – “I knew this might happen and I have a plan to handle her if she tantrums.”

## Share a Success

- **Example** - “My son sat through a whole meal without yelling.”
- **What were you thinking?**
- **Pessimistic Scenario** – “He must be in a good phase.”
- **Optimistic Scenario** – “My efforts and patience are beginning to pay off.”

## Consequences

- Identify the consequences or results of the negative (and positive) thinking (e.g., When you were thinking \_\_\_\_\_, how did that affect what you did? What were the results of your actions – both immediate and long-term?)

## Recognizing Consequences

- Parenting “in the moment”

## Distraction

- Strategy to help with pessimistic beliefs
- Distracting oneself from the pessimistic thoughts

## Disputation - *A strategy for challenging beliefs*

- Step 1: Identify the negative belief (e.g., What exactly do you say to yourself that is pessimistic?).
- Step 2: List evidence that supports the belief. (e.g., What makes you believe that to be true?)

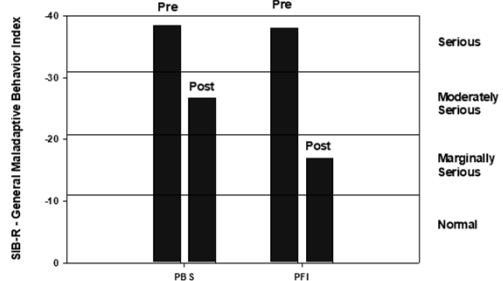
## Disputation

- Step 3: Find alternative explanations for the problem (e.g., Are there other possible reasons/motives?).
- Step 4: Evaluate the usefulness of maintaining the belief. (e.g., In what ways does that belief benefit you/ others or improve the situation?)

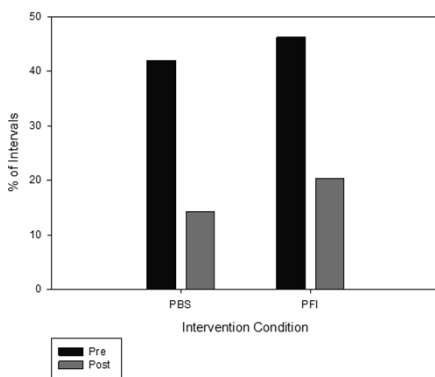
## Substitution

- Replace the pessimistic ideas with positive thoughts or affirmations (e.g., "This is a difficult situation and I am handling it well. I am a committed, loving parent. If I can follow through with my plan, things will get better.")

Standardized Behavior Change Data  
SIB-R GM (N=34)



Observational Data



## Quality of Life

- Families from both groups reported significant improvements on following questions;
  - *Other members of the family have to do without things because of my child.*
  - *Sometimes I feel very embarrassed because of my child.*
  - *My child is able to take part in games or sports.*

## Quality of Life

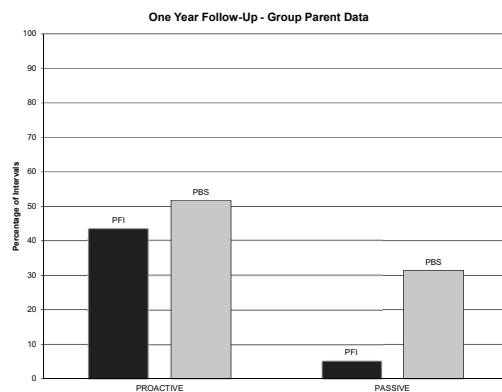
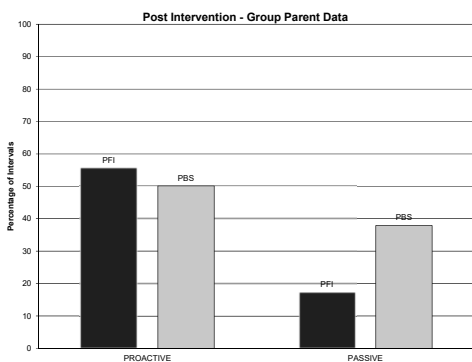
- Mothers in PFI condition reported improvement on these questions;
  - *My child will be limited in the kind of work he/she can do to make a living.*
  - *I get almost too tired to enjoy myself.*
  - *There is a lot of anger and resentment in our family.*
  - *I am worried much of the time.*

## Self-Efficacy

- PFI group responded more positively than mothers in the PBS groups.
  - *I feel less tense when I take my child out in public.*
  - *I am less likely to avoid taking my child out in public.*
  - *Members of our family get to do the same kinds of things other families do.*

## Child Behavior Change Data One Year Follow-Up

## Parent Fidelity Data Post Intervention and One Year Follow-Up





## Pre-Intervention PBS

- ALOS



ALOS PBS Pre.wmv

## Follow-Up PBS

- ALOS



ALOS PBS 1 Year.wmv

## Pre-Intervention PFI

- CHON



CHON PFI Pre.wmv

## Follow-Up PFI

- CHON



CHON PFI Post.wmv

## Summary of Results

- Both PBS and PFI result in significant improvements in child behavior
- These improvements continue after one year
- Parents report overall improvements on QoL

## Summary of Results

- PBS families tend to use avoidance strategies to improve child behavior
- PFI families tend to use more active strategies
- PFI families report more community involvement with their children and less anxiety

## The Concession Process

- The tendency to change environments and approaches to avoid problem behavior



**WHEN MOM CALLS YOU**



**BY YOUR FULL NAME**

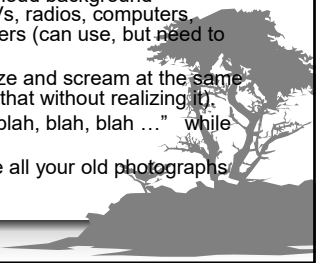
## Home Rules

<http://blog.autismspeaks.org/2010/08/29/flow-becker-2/>



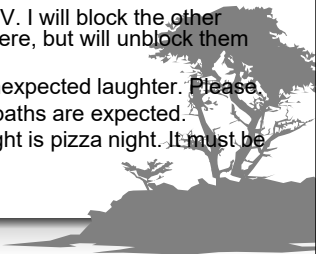
## Rules

- Rule #1: Do not yawn. Especially no yawning and talking at the same time.
- Rule #2: Do not have loud background noise. That means TVs, radios, computers, vacuums, or hand mixers (can use, but need to alert him first).
- Rule #3: Do not sneeze and scream at the same time (some people do that without realizing it).
- Rule #4: Do not say "blah, blah, blah ..." while speaking.
- Rule #5: I need to see all your old photographs when I visit.



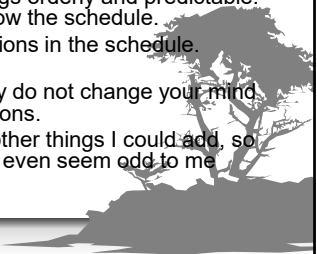
## Rules

- Rule #6: I also need to take a mental inventory of all your DVDs, and any VHS movies you may have.
- Rule #7: I rule the TV. I will block the other channels while I'm here, but will unblock them before I go.
- Rule #8: No loud unexpected laughter. Please.
- Rule #9: Unlimited baths are expected.
- Rule #10: Friday night is pizza night. It must be gluten-free.



## Rules

- Rule #11: I need to touch you on the chin and the head every time you yawn, sneeze, or sing.
- Rule #12: Keep things orderly and predictable. Please. I need to know the schedule.
- Rule #13: No deviations in the schedule. Please.
- Rule #14: Absolutely do not change your mind or give me more options.
- There are so many other things I could add, so many that they don't even seem odd to me anymore.



## Why ASD?

- Blame disorder (child efficacy)
- Failure to back down in the face of discipline escalation
- Subjective reaction to distress

Esposito, G., Nakazawa, J., Venuti, P., & Bornstein, M. H. (2012). Perceptions of distress in young children with autism compared to typically developing children: A cultural comparison between Japan and Italy. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 33(4), 1059-1067.



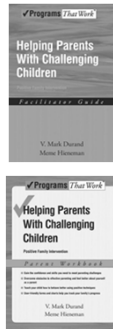
## Positive Family Intervention

- Addresses the needs of children with challenging behavior
- Addresses the need of family members who carry out the plans
- Better outcomes when we address both



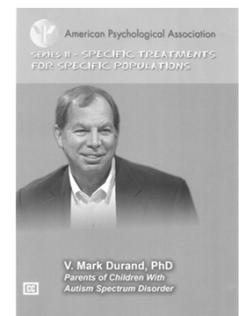
## Optimistic Parenting

- Durand, V.M. & Hieneman, M. (2008). *Helping parents with challenging children: Positive family intervention, Facilitator's guide*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Durand, V.M. & Hieneman, M. (2008). *Helping parents with challenging children: Positive family intervention, Workbook*. New York: Oxford University Press.



## Optimistic Parenting

American Psychological Association (Producer). (2014). APA Psychotherapy Video Series [DVD]. Parents of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder with V. Mark Durand. Washington, D.C.: APA.



## Optimistic Parenting

- Durand, V.M. (2011). *Optimistic parenting: Help and hope for you and your challenging child*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

