

# Effective Parenting Interventions to Prevent Social, Emotional and Behavioral Problems in Children and Enhance Child Well-Being

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# Why are parenting interventions important in the early childhood context?

- Parenting practices impact child adjustment AND academic readiness
- Children who enter school with social, emotional or behavioral problems
  - are at risk for learning difficulties
  - can benefit from family-based intervention

# Overview

- Effective parenting interventions for:
  - Prevention of children's social, emotional and behavioral problems
  - Strengthening parenting practices and parental confidence
- Strong evidence base
- Well developed intervention strategies

# Four Outstanding Programs

- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)
  - The Incredible Years (IY)
  - Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
  - Triple P—Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)
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- IY, PCIT, and Triple P are parenting interventions with much in common

# Nurse-Family Partnership

- Developer: David Olds, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center
- Focus: prenatal and postnatal support and health-related coaching
- Eligible population: young, first-time economically disadvantaged mothers
- Delivery agents: specially trained nurses
- 60 home visits over 2-year period

# NFP: Evidence

- Three randomized controlled trials
- Long-term follow-up
- 2 of the 3 trials showed relatively strong results
- Impressive long-term impact on:
  - Maternal and child health
  - Injury and child abuse prevention
  - Maternal life course

# The Incredible Years

- Developer: Carolyn Webster-Stratton, University of Washington
- Focus: promote social, emotional and academic competence; prevent child conduct problems
- Target populations:
  - Indicated: young children (e.g., 3-8 with conduct problems)
  - Selected: parents with children at risk for difficulties (e.g., Head Start families)
  - Mental health treatment for ODD and CD

# IY (continued)

- Delivery agents: variety
- Core program
  - Parents of 3-6 year olds
  - 16-18 weekly 2-hour group meetings
- Extensions
  - 7-12 year olds; additional parent modules
  - child and classroom programs



# IY: Evidence

- Many randomized efficacy and some effectiveness trials
- Consistent impact:
  - Increasing positive parenting
  - Decreasing harsh parenting
  - Reduction of child behavioral problems
  - Increasing child social competence
- Parent, observation, and school data

# Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

- Developer: Sheila Eyberg, University of Florida
- Focus: treatment of children ages 3-8 with conduct problems or ODD
- Populations: families seeking clinical treatment; parents who have abused
- Delivery agents: therapists (and case workers)

# PCIT: Evidence

- Several randomized efficacy trials (and a few effectiveness trials)
- Primarily treatment focused (clinic cases)
- Consistent impact on:
  - Parent-child interaction
  - Child behavioral problems
  - Parental confidence
- Parent and observation data

# Triple P—Positive Parenting Program

- Developer: Matthew Sanders, University of Queensland
- Focus: Prevention of children's social, emotional and behavioral problems; prevention of child abuse; strengthening parenting at a population level
- Target populations:
  - All parents
  - Blending of universal, selected, and indicated prevention

# Triple P (continued)

- Target populations:
  - All parents
  - Blending of universal, selected and indicated prevention
  - Early intervention and treatment
- Delivery agents: existing workforce in many different settings serving parents
- Multi-level system
  - 5 levels of increasing intensity
  - Combining of media and programming strategies
  - Variety of delivery formats

# Triple P: Evidence

- 81 outcome studies to date (143 Triple P studies total)
- Including 45 randomized controlled trials (efficacy, effectiveness, and dissemination)
- 22 service-based evaluations (effectiveness studies under conditions of usual service delivery)
- 3 meta analyses

# Triple P Evidence (continued)

- Consistent impact:
  - Increased positive parenting
  - Reduced coercive parenting
  - Lower social, emotional and behavior problems
  - Improved parent-child relations

IY, PCIT and Triple P (and other effective parenting interventions) have several features and attributes in common



# Theoretically driven

- Based on empirically derived theories about:
  - Child development
  - Family interaction
  - Developmental psychopathology and resilience
  - Intervention concepts

# Theoretical foundations

- Social learning/social-interactional theory
- Cognitive-behavioral principles
- Developmental psychopathology
- Attribution theory
- Public health concepts
- Family systems
- Communication theory
- Attachment theory

# Action focused

- More than just talk
- Parents actually do things during the intervention
- Activities in the session
- Activities at home (“homework”)

# Problem-solving oriented

- Address specific challenges faced by the parent
- Work towards solutions to identified problems
- At the same time building on child and family strengths

# Specific parenting strategies

- Parenting strategies:
  - Specific
  - Concrete
  - Practical
- Parents can add these parenting practices to their repertoire
- Example: differential attending

# Collaborative goal setting

- Parent sets the child and family goals
- Intervention agent provides guidance but works collaborative
- PCIT: All parents go through the child-directed and parent-directed components of the intervention; but the parent decides which child problems they want to target

# Consultative rather than prescriptive

- Intervention agent is a consultant rather than a “boss”
- Triple P:
  - Provides a menu of parenting strategy options
  - Intervention agent gains a mandate from the parent (i.e., gets parent’s permission at each step)
  - Emphasis on self-regulatory model

# Adoption of positive frame

- Non-judgmental about the parent
- Looking to build on parent and child competencies
- Emphasis on expanding positive child behaviors to displace problematic behaviors
- Optimistic, encouraging, patient delivery of programs
- IY: focuses on instilling, promoting and recognizing positive behaviors in the child; de-emphasizes and softens disciplinary strategies (reframed as teaching strategies)



# Conclusions

- These four interventions (NFP, IY, PCIT, and Triple P) offer well supported strategies for early childhood programming
- Each offers a different twist
- NFP targets a particular segment of the population intensively

# Conclusion (continued)

- IY provides a strong group intervention that links well to school and provides parental social support
- PCIT is an excellent therapy for coaching parents in moment-to-moment interactions with children
- Triple P provides a system for a cost-efficient population-wide approach