

Parent Talk

JUNE 2026

Building Caregiver Connections

Building positive relationships with your child sounds amazing in theory but is very difficult to do in practice. Many caregivers may feel like no matter what they do, they can't seem to understand their kid or constantly feel like they're walking on eggshells. You don't have to manage it alone! In this edition of Parent Talk, we'll review specific strategies you can use to build a great relationship with your child.

Why Are Connections Important?

Creating positive connections with your child can greatly improve dynamics in your household, especially if your child has a mental health condition. Caregivers aren't handed a guidebook when their child is displaying difficult behaviors, so many parents just do what feels right to them. But there is actually science behind how to forge these positive relationships and doing so can significantly improve difficult behaviors in kids.



Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

PCIT is an intervention built around building stronger and healthier parent-child relationships by reducing caregiver stress, managing difficult behaviors and emotions in kids, and promoting self-esteem and confidence. It centers around teaching caregivers specific skills to help them change the ways they interact with their children and speak to them in a way that will resonate more deeply. We offer PCIT through our [Center for Effective Therapy](#).

Using PRIDE Skills

A main component of PCIT is the development of PRIDE skills, each representing a different way you can interact with your kids.



P is for Praise

Provide specific and labeled praise when your child does something good. Often, we default to giving less specific praise, but this doesn't allow your child to learn exactly what they are doing that you like and how to repeat it.

Example: "You did a great job sharing your toy with me just now. That was really awesome!"

R is for Reflect

Allow your child to direct the conversation and then mirror back the things they are saying to show that you're listening and absorbing what they're communicating. Place emphasis on repeating things you'd like to hear more of from your child.

Example: Your child just said they really like a specific TV show. Respond by reiterating that you heard them say they really like this certain TV show and be sure to specifically name the show.

I is for Imitate

When appropriate, imitate your child's behaviors during playtime. Play with the same toys, take the same actions, and reinforce positive actions. Let your child lead this exercise and follow in turn. Just make sure not to imitate behaviors that are not positive or that you don't want to reinforce.

Example: If your child starts to stack blocks to build a castle, start building your own castle side by side. Don't offer judgment, critique, or ask why they're choosing to play in this way. Just do your best to follow along.

D is for Describe

Start to narrate the things your child is doing. This is different from Reflect in the sense that you're not directly responding to things your child is saying and rather are providing an overview of what they're doing in the moment. Commentate on their actions, but just like with Imitate, don't Describe actions you don't want to reinforce.

Example: "You chose a red crayon and are using it to color a drawing of a house. You're coloring the roof red. You just picked up a blue crayon and are coloring the front of the house blue."

E is for Enjoy

Perhaps most importantly, genuinely enjoy the time spent with your child! Outwardly show that you're having fun playing with your child and show a real enthusiasm for the time you're spending together.

Example: "I'm having so much fun playing with you! We built an entire city out of blocks. That's so cool!"

Need more help?

Resources at The Baker Center are just a click away

Therapy & Treatment Services

[CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE THERAPY →](#)

Special Education

[MANVILLE SCHOOL →](#)

Therapeutic Summer Camp

[CAMP BAKER →](#)

College Preparation

[NEXT STEP →](#)

Featured Resources



Which Compliment Is Best For Kids? - Parade Magazine

Our Senior Director of Outpatient Clinical Services, Dr. Sarah Tannenbaum, explains the power of praise in this Parade Magazine article.

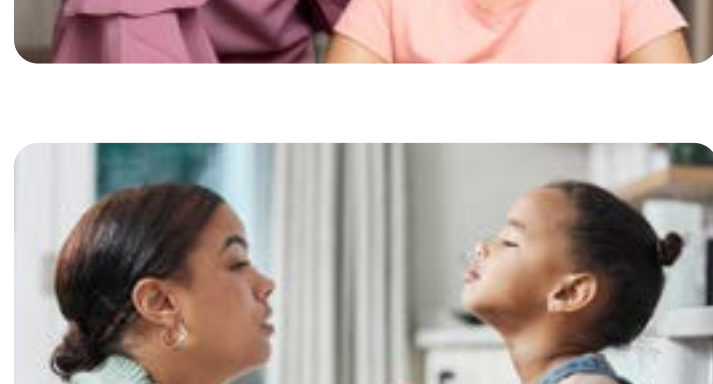
[LEARN MORE](#)



What Is PCIT?

Learn about Parent-Child Interaction Therapy with this informative video from one of the expert clinicians at our Center for Effective Therapy.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Learn More About PCIT

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is a scientifically proven training program that works with caregivers to enhance parenting techniques for use with their children. It typically lasts about 12-20 weeks.

[LEARN MORE](#)