

PARENTING PROGRAMS

What Are Parenting Programs?

Parenting programs provide parents with skills to help reduce challenging behaviors in their child (e.g., aggression, defiance) and improve their relationship with their child. During sessions in these programs, parent develop and strengthen their skills to improve their child's functioning.

Sessions are delivered to either an individual parent or to groups of parents, and sometimes include children to provide parents with additional opportunities to learn and practice these skills with their child. The number of sessions can vary and occur either in person at a clinic or the family's home or via the Internet. Parents learn the new skills by verbal instruction; video and live demonstrations of the use of skills; and feedback from therapists or other parents in group sessions. Although there are different types of parenting programs, several characteristics are shared by most programs and include the following:

- Set realistic and age-appropriate expectations for children's behavior.
- Praise positive behaviors that parents want to encourage (e.g., sharing).
- Provide positive attention (e.g., special, one-on-one play time).
- Ignore minor misbehaviors (e.g., throwing blocks in play).
- Time-out from attention for negative child behaviors.
- Consult with school personnel to help children develop academically and socially.

Research Supporting Parenting Programs

Parenting programs have been evaluated as a treatment for decreasing behavior problems (e.g., disobedience, temper tantrums) in hundreds of studies with children ranging in ages from infancy through adolescence. Studies have also found that these programs led to improvements in parenting stress, as well as child sleep, language, and academic skills. Additionally, these programs have been found to be valuable for the treatment of behavior problems in children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, developmental disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

Evidence-Based Parenting Programs for Younger Children

- *Parent Child Interaction Therapy* (PCIT; <http://www.pcit.org/for-parents.html>)
- *Triple P Positive Parenting Program* (<http://www.triplepparenting.net>)
- *The Incredible Years* (<http://www.incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/>)
- *Helping the Noncompliant Child* (<https://www.guilford.com/excerpts/mcmahon2.pdf>)

Evidence-Based Parenting Programs for Older Children

- *Parent Management Training* (<https://www.parentmanagementtraininginstitute.com/treatment-programs1.html>)
- *Coping Power* (https://www.copingpower.com/parents_teachers.html)
- *Defiant Teens* (<https://www.guilford.com/books/Your-Defiant-Teen/Barkley-Robin/9781462511662/reviews>)

What Is Cognitive Behavior Therapy?

Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Behavior Therapy are types of treatment that are based firmly on research findings. These approaches aid people in achieving specific changes or goals.

Changes or goals might involve:

- A way of acting, like confronting our feared thoughts
- A way of feeling, like helping a person be less scared, less depressed, or less anxious
- A way of thinking, like evaluating the probability of an event occurring
- A way of dealing with physical or medical problems, like lessening back pain or helping a person stick to a doctor's suggestions.

Behavior Therapists and Cognitive Behavior Therapists usually focus more on the current situation and its solution, rather than the past. They concentrate on a person's views and beliefs about their life, not on personality traits. Behavior Therapists and Cognitive Behavior Therapists treat individuals, parents, children, couples, and families. Replacing ways of living that do not work well with ways of living that work, and giving people more control over their lives, are common goals of behavior and cognitive behavior therapy.

HOW TO GET HELP: If you are looking for help, either for yourself or someone else, you may be tempted to call someone who advertises in a local publication or who comes up from a search of the Internet. You may, or may not, find a competent therapist in this manner. It is wise to check on the credentials of a psychotherapist. It is expected that competent therapists hold advanced academic degrees and training. They should be listed as members of professional organizations, such as the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies or the American Psychological Association. Of course, they should be licensed to practice in your state. You can find competent specialists who are affiliated with local universities or mental health facilities or who are listed on the websites of professional organizations. You may, of course, visit our website (www.abct.org) and click on "Find a CBT Therapist."

The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) is an interdisciplinary organization committed to the advancement of a scientific approach to the understanding and amelioration of problems of the human condition. These aims are achieved through the investigation and application of behavioral, cognitive, and other evidence-based principles to assessment, prevention, and treatment.