**Evidence-Based Psychotherapy - PCIT**

Hello! Welcome to another episode of evidence-based psychotherapy on the Byte-sized brain podcast. My name is Dr. Ashmita Banerjee and I am a child and adolescent psychiatry fellow at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Today, we are going to talk about a unique form of therapy called parent-child interaction therapy or PCIT.

So, to begin, PCIT is a form of therapy for both a parent and a child together. This makes it different from individual therapy with children and from group therapy with parents or children.

Let’s talk about challenges that PCIT can help with. PCIT is designed for young children, usually up to the age of 8 years, with behavioral problems. These problems can include tantrums, not listening to parents or other adults, aggressive behaviors or destructive behaviors. PCIT focuses on the relationship between children and parents so that parents can help their children better manage their strong emotions and behaviors.

So, how exactly is PCIT done? This involves a coaching-based model during which you and your child are in a playroom interacting and playing with each other. The therapist sits in an observation room with a one-way mirror into your room. Parents wear an ear-piece through which the therapist coaches the interaction between the parent and child and helps parents manage their child’s behaviors.

Let’s talk about the 2 main parts of PCIT. The first part is child-directed interaction or play (called CDI). During this phase, parents build on their observation and listening skills and learn how to boost positive interactions with their child and build on their good behaviors. This helps parents feel good about their parenting skills and children feel calmer and more secure. Once parents can do this well, also called achieving mastery, they can move on to the second phase. The second part is parent-directed interaction or play (also called PDI). During this phase, parents learn how to give effective commands to children to get them to listen, and manage behaviors if children don’t listen. This involves building a strong and consistent set of consequences that reliably happen when a child does not listen to an effective command. One such consequence is a time-out.

You may ask: aren’t time outs bad for my child? Actually, that is a myth. When used appropriately, time outs are a safe option to set age-appropriate limits and let children know that there are consistent consequences for misbehavior. This consistency is really important to get children to listen to parents.

So, how long does PCIT last? PCIT usually lasts 12-20 sessions but some people need less and some can need more. It depends on parents achieving mastery in each of the CDI and PDI sections and feeling that children have made lasting behavioral improvements at home too.

If you feel that PCIT may be right for you or your child, you can find more information at the PCIT international website [www.pcit.org](http://www.pcit.org). For those in Iowa and neighboring states, you can also find more information including a list of therapists at <https://pcit.lab.uiowa.edu/>.

Thank you for listening and have a great day!