

An Optimistic Approach to Helping  
Students with Challenging  
Behavior

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### Predicting Later Problems

- Not severity of disability
  - Not severity of behavior problem
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Predicting Later Problems

- Best Predictor?
- Parental pessimism

### How you see yourself as a parent

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <u>Pessimistic Thoughts</u>         | <u>Optimistic Thoughts</u>                               |
| • <i>I cannot control my child.</i> | • <i>I am usually able to handle problem situations.</i> |
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How you think others see you as a parent/teacher

<u>Pessimistic Thought</u>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u>
• <i>When this child misbehaves, people see me as a bad parent.</i>	• <i>I believe I am a good parent.</i>

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**

<u>Pessimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>I think that other people judge my child when he/she is misbehaving</i></li> </ul>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Most parents have times when their child misbehaves.</i></li> </ul>
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**How you see your child's ability control his/her behavior**

<u>Pessimistic Thoughts</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My child is not capable of behaving better.</i></li> <li><i>My child's behavior is related to the disability.</i></li> </ul>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My child is capable of behaving better.</i></li> </ul>
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**How you view the problem situation**

<u>Pessimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>All of these situations are always a major problem.</i></li> </ul>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>This particular incident was a problem.</i></li> </ul>
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**How you view the future**

<u>Pessimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Things will never get better or will get worse.</i></li> </ul>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Things can and will get better.</i></li> </ul>
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**Who is responsible for a problem situation (Child)**

<u>Pessimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My child is doing this on purpose.</i></li> </ul>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>My child is not intentionally being disruptive.</i></li> </ul>
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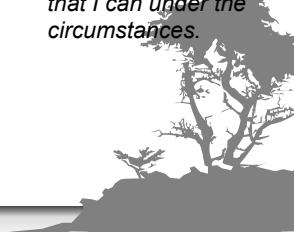
**Who is responsible for a problem situation (Others)**

<u>Pessimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>If only others would follow my suggestions correctly, my child would be better behaved.</i></li> </ul>	<u>Optimistic Thought</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Everyone is doing their best under the circumstances.</i></li> </ul>
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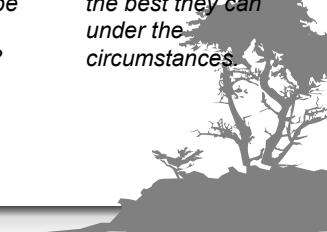
### Who is responsible for a problem situation (Self)

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

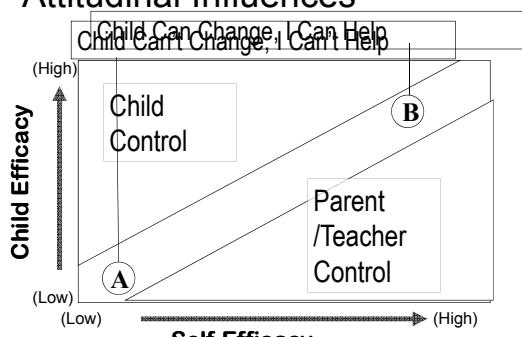


### Who should be responsible for the problem situation

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



### Attitudinal Influences



### Optimistic Parenting

- Standard protocol
- 8 weeks
- 90 minutes per individual session
- Standardized measures
- Observational measures



### Optimistic Parenting

- 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

Situation	Beliefs	Consequences
What happened? (success or difficulty)	What did you think and feel?	What happened as a result? (actions)
When my son sat down for dinner, he started whining and crying. (difficulty)	I thought "We will never have a normal dinner" and felt defeated, thinking that meals will always be a problem.	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?)

## 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



JOER Consequences.wmv

## Recognizing Consequences

- Parenting “in the moment”



## Distraction

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



## Distraction



CRNG Distraction Example

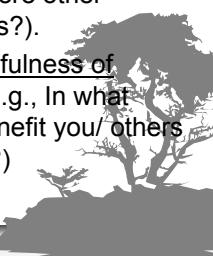
## Disputation - *A strategy for challenging beliefs*

- 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?)



## Disputing Negative Beliefs



CRNG Disputation.wmv

## 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.”)



## Substituting Positive Thoughts

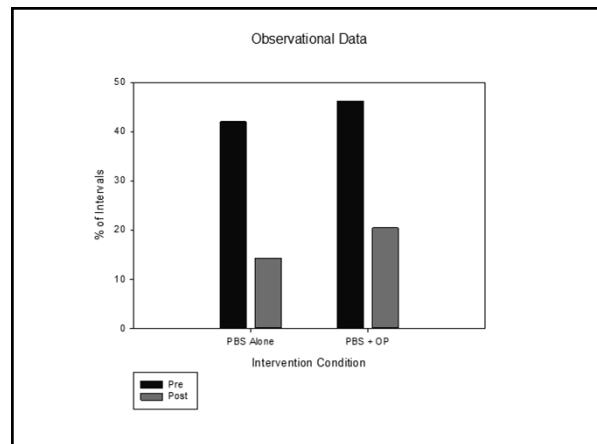
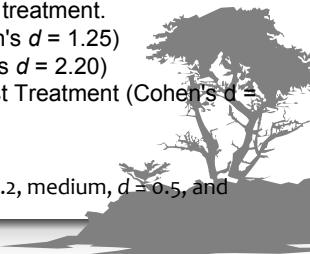


RASA Substitution.wmv

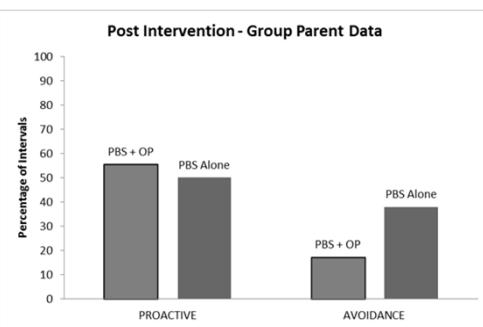
## Child Outcomes

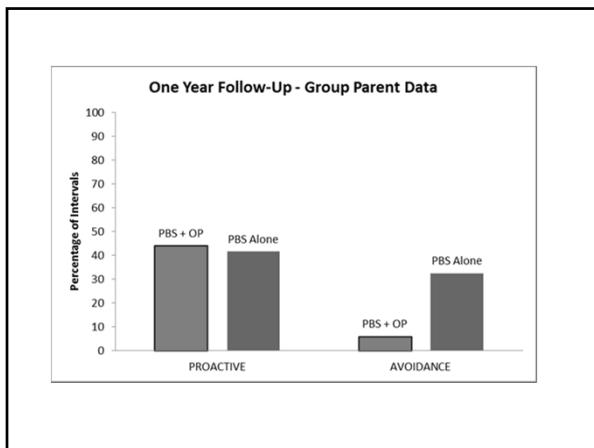
- A two-way repeated measures ANOVA on the SIB-R GMI scores - significant differences between pre and post treatment.
- PBS Alone - (Cohen's  $d = 1.25$ )
- PBS + OP - (Cohen's  $d = 2.20$ )
- OP Versus PBS Post Treatment (Cohen's  $d = 0.94$ )

Effect Sizes - small,  $d = 0.2$ , medium,  $d = 0.5$ , and large,  $d = 0.8$



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





### Pre-Intervention

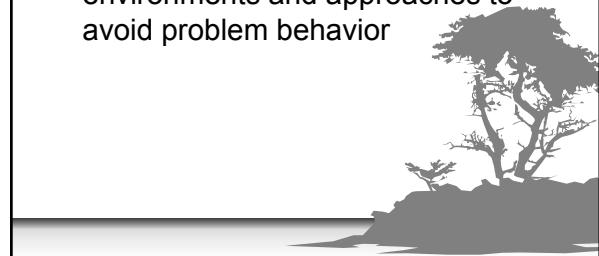


### Pre-Intervention



### The Concession Process

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



## Optimistic Parenting

- 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

Durand, V. M., Hieneman, M., Clarke, S., Wang, M., & Rinaldi, M. (2013). Positive family intervention for severe challenging behavior I: A multi-site randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 15(3), 133-143.

## Summary of Results

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

## Summary of Results

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

## 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.

