

# Treating Child Sexual Concerns with PCIT

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# Step One: Define Normal

- Children naturally display sexualized behavior, and sexual exploration is healthy (Deal with it!).



- SBP must be considered within the context of normative sexual development



# Prevalence of SBP

- Difficult to ascertain: No epidemiological studies.
- Current study ( $n = 1,189$  at-risk children):
  - 168 displayed clinical non-intrusive SBP (14.1%)
  - 77 displayed intrusive SBP (6.9%)
  - Total: 21% of children with SBP



# Stability of SBP

- Levesque, et al, 2012:
  - 43% of children with SBP continue to display SBP 12 months later
  - 1-year stability estimates of other externalizing problems typically around 50%



# The Role of Sexual Abuse

- About 1/3 of sexually abused children demonstrate concerning sexual behavior (Kendall-Tackett, et al., 1993).
- However, in studies of children with SBP:
  - 38% had CSA Hx (Silovsky & Niec, 2002)
  - 48% had CSA Hx (Bonner, et al., 1999)
  - 22% had CSA Hx (Current study)



# A Developmental Approach

- The idea is that SBPs are another form of externalizing behavior problems (e.g., aggression, defiance), and should have similar pathways
- Significant factors identified :
  - Impulse control
  - Emotion regulation
  - Social skills



# A Sociocultural Approach

- Social learning appears VERY influential
- Consider the family context:
  - Expressed sexuality in the home
  - Availability of pornography and other sexual materials
  - Observations of sexual behavior
  - But then, what's the family's attitude toward talking about sex WITH the children?
- The larger social context:
  - Very open and impossible to shield children
  - They WILL learn things. What's the response?



# Evidence-Based Approach

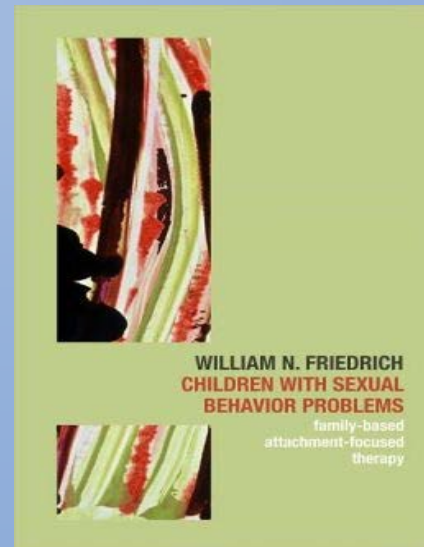
- St. Amand, Bard, & Silovsky (2008):
  - Identified 11 studies examining SBP
    - 7 were focused on CSA/PTS-related SBP
    - 4 were focused on SBP as primary outcome (all group)
  - Analysis of specific techniques showed greatest impact for:
    - Parental behavior management skills\*
    - Rules about sexual behavior
    - Parental sex education (developmental norms)
    - Parental abuse prevention skills
    - Child self-control skills





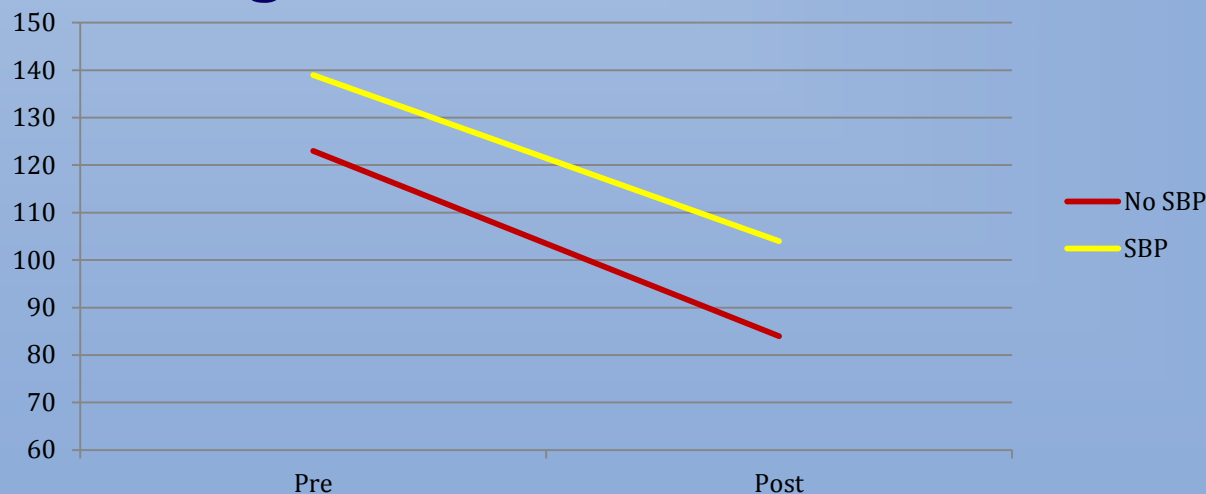
# PCIT

- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy
  - No RCTs, but...
  - PCIT includes a heavy dose of parenting skills and other techniques can be integrated.
  - Friedrich (2007) provides a manual for using PCIT for SBP



# A Study of PCIT for Sexual Concerns

- Allen, Timmer, & Urquiza: 45 kids with externalizing problems & SC, 142 kids with externalizing problems only.
- Only 36% of children with SC remained clinically significant for SC at post-treatment
- Externalizing Sx:



# Allen, Berliner, & Shenk (2015)

- Phase 1: Behavior Management
  - Assess parental monitoring
  - Examine family sexuality and risk factors
  - Provide psychoeducation to the caregivers, eliminate risk factors in home, and increase monitoring.
  - Establish sexual behavior rules and automatic consequences for breaking those rules (use logical consequences and removal of privileges, no timeout... yet)
  - 3-4 sessions
  - Proceed with PCIT



# You Can Do It PCITers!

- Treat it like a behavioral problem, if it is a behavioral problem.

