Great Expectations in Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

The importance of positive expectations

How to build hope

What gets in the way

For Trainees & Curious Others

Note. The term parents is used to refer to caregivers.

Engagement Starts with Baby Steps...
The things that bring about change — homework, attendance, emotional investment, and use of skills in everyday life — depend on parents first coming back and giving PCIT a shot.

...But Many Families Are Lost Early On
Unfortunately, many families don't make it to this point. 24% of families leave after the intake and teach sessions and don't come back for coaching.¹

Engaging Parents from the Start Is a Must

Research tells us engagement is influenced by 3 big things: the therapeutic relationship, beliefs, and external circumstances.² Early on, one of the key players is outcome expectations.³

Outcome Expectations:
Beliefs about the likelihood of treatment leading to change

Expectations Influence How Treatment Unfolds

Parents with low expectations after the intake session are 49% less likely to come back.⁴ If they stay, they are more likely to see treatment as demanding and not that relevant.⁵

If people think treatment can help, they are more likely to show up⁶, do their homework⁷, use the skills at home⁸, and improve more.⁹
What Leads to Low Expectations
An exploration into the rocky road leading to PCIT

Parents Don’t Always Arrive Assuming PCIT Will Work
Unfortunately, parents can come to PCIT deflated, defeated, and demoralized with low expectations.

For a parent to think PCIT will work, they need to believe in: 1) PCIT, 2) themselves as agents of change, and 3) you. All of this can be compromised by the rocky road that led to PCIT.

The Road to Low Expectations

Negative Reactions
Stares, whispers, judgmental comments, and complaints can further intensify bad feelings, and confirm beliefs about failing as a parent.11

Failed Discipline Attempts
For many parents, whatever they do, it doesn’t seem to make a difference. They take action but there’s no consistent reaction. This can lead to feeling helpless and like an ineffective parent.11

Not Getting Far
Parents may have searched for help with no success. Professionals unequipped with the right training, or unable to offer guidance can lead parents to wonder if their child can be helped.11

Rejection
If schools or daycares have asked the family to leave, parents can feel others have given up on them and can’t handle their child.11

The air has been sucked out over the years.10