



Center for Cognitive and Behavioral Therapy (CCBT) and  
Central Ohio Primary Care (COPC):  
**Total Care through Co-Location**®



**Adapted Treatment Protocol for COVID19-Related Parenting and Family Functioning:  
A Holistic Model and Clinical Health Application of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy to  
Parenting and Family Adaptation during Pandemics<sup>1</sup>**

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**Over-arching Rules: \*Be Genuine and \*Express Empathy**

**Emphasize Compliance with Public Health Interventions (e.g., Stay Home, Social Distancing, Frequent Handwashing, Elimination of Face Touching)**

***Session 1: Assessment***

- Assessment of Anxiety and Depression Symptoms
  - Give the SCARED and Johns Hopkins Depression Checklist
  - Follow-up with Open-ended Questions to Identify Children's Stress and Behavioral Problems that Appeared after COVID19 Led to Disruptions to Daily
    - ⇒ Categorize Behaviors as Regressions to Earlier Developmental Stage, Aggression (e.g., temper tantrums, physical aggression toward object or people, yelling or screaming at others), Anxiety (e.g., increased clinginess, behavioral or verbal expressions of anxiety), or Depression (e.g., irritability, crying, social withdrawal).
      - Regressions:
      - Aggression:
      - Anxiety:
        - Note Particularly Developmental Issues Regarding Illnesses (e.g., Can Catch COVID19 Magically, Over-Responsibility for Others Having COVID19, Fears of Friends/Loved Ones Dying, Fears of COVID19 Invisible Monsters)
    - Depression:
      - ⇒ Ask for Severity Rating (0-10) of the Overall Symptom Cluster

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<sup>1</sup> Some of this protocol is based on the work of Skillings & Arnold's (2016) Holistic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy model of Biopsychosocial CBT for Integrated Care.

- Identify Antecedents using “Triggers” Language to Each Type of Behavior
  - ⇒ Categorize Triggers (e.g., social interactions, car, bedroom)
- Identify Times Most Likely for Symptoms
  - ⇒ Use Times of Day to Assess Specific Antecedent Activities (e.g., Task Demands) or Earlier Learned Discriminate or Delta Stimuli
- Identify Consequences (Environment’s Response to Symptom Behaviors (e.g., negative attention, positive attention, elimination of demands)
  - ⇒ Types of Negative Attention
  - ⇒ Types of Positive Attention
  - ⇒ Demands Eliminated
  - ⇒ Tangible Rewards
- Hypothesize Functions of Symptom Behaviors
  - ⇒ Using an ABC Analysis, Determine Two Functional Factors
    - What Stimuli Control the Behaviors (What are the Behaviors a Function of)
      - Determine Both  $S^D$  and  $S^{\Delta}$
    - What Operants are Motivating the Behaviors (What are the Functions of the Behaviors)
      - Escape
      - Attention
      - Tangible Objects
      - Sensory Stimulation
    - Contextualize the Stimulus Control and Behavioral Motivators by COVID19 School Closures, Parental Work-from-Home, and Disruptions to Normative Individual and Family Routines by Social Distancing
  - ⇒ Feedback on Functional Analysis
    - Provide Hypothesized Behavioral Functions to Family
    - Ask Family to Describe Cultural or Ethnic Factors that are a Part of their Family Identity
    - Ask Family to Provide Feedback about Inferred Functions and any Cultural or Ethnic Identity Factors that Impact on those Modifying those Functions
  - ⇒ Assessment of Family Systems Issues Affecting Children’s Stress
    - Modifications to Roles, Structures, Resources, and Communication Processes
    - Role Strain (Conflicts between Roles While in Social Isolation and Stay-Home)
    - Impact of Family’s Perception of COVID19 Risks and Impacts on Adaption (e.g., Double ABC-X)
    - Successful Family Adaptions to COVID19
    - Inferred Family Systems Issues as Context for Children’s Stress and Disruptive Behavioral Reactions
- Assessment of Social Resources and Stressors

- Technology Use to Access
  - ⇒ Social Contact for Children
  - ⇒ Educational Instruction and Contact with Teachers
  - ⇒ Structured Technology-based Play Dates
  - ⇒ Use of Online Gaming to Access Contact with Others in Virtual Worlds
- Access of Public Spaces While Practicing Social Distancing (e.g., parks, neighborhoods)
  - ⇒ Assess How Parents Inform Children about Social Distancing and Need for Masks or other Protective Gear (If not Done, Provide Psychoeducational Intervention Immediately)
  - ⇒ Access to Carry-out Food as Normative Outing
- Assessment of Health Issues (based on CDC, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6913e2>) in addition to standard health history
  - Interview for Diagnoses of Typical and Known Childhood Health Disorders Related to Increased Risks of Severity or Morbidity from COVID19 and Effectively (E)/not Effectively Managed (NE)
    - ⇒ Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) E/NE
      - Assess if in/not in Diabetes Distress
    - ⇒ Asthma and Allergies Affecting Breathing
      - Type and Treatment (e.g. Asthma/Nebulizer)
    - ⇒ Immunocompromised
      - Type and Treatment
    - ⇒ Neurologic/Neurodevelopmental (Particularly Those with Known Medical Impact on Cardiovascular or Pulmonary Systems)
      - Type and Treatment
    - ⇒ Other Chronic Disorders (Highlight gastrointestinal disorder; cancer or history of cancer; hematologic disorder; obesity; musculoskeletal disorders)
      - Disorder/Course of Disease (repeat if necessary)
    - ⇒ Permission to Contact Pediatrician or Family Physician for Risk Assessment for Hospitalization or ICU (see next item)
- Assessment of Access to Healthcare, COVID19 Protective Habits and Knowledge
  - Identify Primary Care Physician
    - ⇒ Last Seen
    - ⇒ Available for telehealth
  - Has 30 day or more supply of any medications
  - Health Habits Include
    - ⇒ Family's Frequent Hand Washing (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Parent's Enforcement of Social Distancing (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Parent's and Children's Essential Travel Only (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Parents Can Provide List of Most Relevant COVID19 Symptoms
      - Fever (yes/no)
      - Shortness of breath (yes/no)

- Dry Cough (yes/no)
- Family and Childhood Stressors Related to COVID19
  - Any Family Member was Exposed to COVID19 Risk Factors (yes/no)—If yes:
    - ⇒ Exposure to Individual with Confirmed COVID19 (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Exposure to Individual with COVID19 Symptoms (Not Confirmed) (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Travel to Hot Spot Areas in US (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Travel to Hot Spot Areas Abroad (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Known Associate or Family Member with Confirmed Case (yes/no)
    - ⇒ Known Associate or Family Member in Hospital for COVID19 (yes/no)
      - ICU (yes/no)
      - Respirator (yes/no)
      - Deceased due to COVID19 (yes/no; if yes consider complicated bereavement or worsening of depression)
  - Working from Home (yes/no)
  - Children not in School (yes/no)
  - Parental Job Reduction or Loss (yes/no)
  - Family Financial Problems (yes/no)
  - Parental Anxiety (yes/no; if yes consider referral for CBT of COVID19 Anxiety Treatment Protocol)
- Diagnoses (Ensure Consistent with Assessment Results)
- Motivational Interviewing
  - Asking Permission to Discuss Treatment Planning with Parents
  - Open Ended Questions about What's Most Important to Family Life (Family's Values)
  - Open Ended Questions about how Treating Behavioral Issues Could Help Achieving What's Most Important
  - Open Ended Questions about how Treating Behavioral Issues Could Have Costs Like Initial Increase in Stress or Use of Parent's Time
  - Open Ended Questions to Express Willingness to Try Treatment for Behavioral Problems Related to the Pandemic
    - ⇒ If Ready to Change, Do Treatment Plan
    - ⇒ If not Ready to Change, Ask Permission to Consult (If Yes, Consult and Use Tips Sheets)
- Treatment Planning
  - Review Protocols Below and Obtain Agreement and Decision to Change
- Review Parents' Satisfaction with Session
- Ask Parents for Any Questions
- Schedule Next Session if Yes to Treatment

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**Emphasize Compliance with Public Health Interventions (e.g., Stay Home, Social Distancing, Frequent Handwashing, Elimination of Face Touching)**

***Session 2: Orientation to Parent Management Training, Emotional Regulation Intervention, Family Adaptation and Parental Stress***

- Motivational Interviewing Strategy
  - Open Ended Question about Status
  - Request Permission to Set Agenda
- Discussion of Stress from Pandemic on Families, Parenting and Children (be empathic and accepting)
  - Discussion of Behavioral Problems and Childhood Emotional Regulation as Functions of Stress, Anxiety, and Strain on Families
    - ⇒ Behavior Problems as a Function of Learned Triggers
    - ⇒ Behavior Problems Serve Functions (Identified in Assessment)
    - ⇒ Emotional Regulation Problems Result from
      - Excessive Stress and Anxiety in Children
      - Excessive Stress and Anxiety in Parents
      - Disruptions to Everyday Routines
      - Strain of Multiples Roles while at Home
      - Insufficient Skills in Children to Cope Effectively
      - EMPHASIZE THE SITUATIONAL ASPECTS OF COVID19 TO DISPELL EXAGGERATED GUILT AND HOPELESSNESS
- Review of Adaptation of Parent Management Training to COVID19 Pandemic
  - Strategies in Research Shown to
    - ⇒ Improve Children's Behaviors
    - ⇒ Improve Parent-Child Relationship
  - Goals:
    - ⇒ Modify Parenting from Don't-Dos Behavioral Cessation to Do-Dos: Positive Opposites
    - ⇒ Teach Parents to Think of Children's Behaviors instead of Children's Intentions
    - ⇒ Increase Children's Doing What They are Told, When They are Told
    - ⇒ Improve Homework Completion
    - ⇒ Help Parents Use Skills when Anxious
  - Treatment will Include Parental Practical Skills with Homework between Sessions
- Review of Emotional Regulation Intervention
  - Review of Emotional Regulation Neurology

- ⇒ Flooding of System when Feeling Threatened
- ⇒ Learned Response in Children
- ⇒ Changes Come from Teaching Safe Problem Solving (Resiliency Approach)
- Skills include
  - ⇒ Creating New Framework for Thinking within Parents
  - ⇒ Teaching Emotional Language
  - ⇒ Using Parent-Child Relationship through Empathy
  - ⇒ Teaching Problem Solving (Actions) to Manage Emotions (Reactions)
    - Survival Function (Run or Fight)
    - Excitement Function (Roller Coaster)
    - Necessity of Anxiety as a Motivator of Action
- Parental Anxiety during StayHome Orders Related to COVID19
  - Learned Anxiety Response to Situations Associated with Negative Behaviors
    - ⇒ Role of Associational Learning that Builds Triggers to Parental Anxiety
    - ⇒ Role of Occasional Behavioral De-escalation as a Reward for Authoritarian Parenting
  - Role of COVID19 and Changes to Roles and Routines in Families as Increased Stressors
  - Heightened On-Guard Status during Pandemic Creates Higher Steady Anxious State in Parents
  - Skills to Manage Stress
    - ⇒ Identify Ideas that Challenge Parental Competency
    - ⇒ Employ a Practice-of-Skills Plans for New Parenting (Overlearning)
    - ⇒ Develop Alternative Ideas to Expecting Bad Things to Happen
    - ⇒ Create Affirming Statement about Parental Competency
- Managing Family Changes in the Face of COVID19
  - Role of Communication as the Cornerstone of Adaptation to Pandemic
    - ⇒ The Intent-Impact Discrepancy in the Face of Pandemics
    - ⇒ Communication Repair to Survive the Pandemic
    - ⇒ Arguments as Opportunities to Grow Intimacy
    - ⇒ Turning Toward and Unpacking Hidden Meanings of COVID19 Fears
    - ⇒ Softened Starts and Emotional Acceptance of Fears of COVID19
    - ⇒ COVID19-Based Triggers to Arguments rather than Partner Character Causal Inferences
  - Using Communication to Adapt Family to Pandemic-Caused Changes
    - ⇒ Redefine Roles and Functions through Mutual Agreement and Compromise
      - New Parenting/Teacher Roles and Functions
      - New Worker/Parent Roles and Functions
      - New Friend/Family Member Roles and Functions
      - New Adult Offspring/Parental Roles and Functions
      - New Citizen Roles and Functions
      - New Home-based Public Health Worker Roles and Functions

- ⇒ Reallocation of Resources
  - Time
  - Energy
  - Money
  - Space in the House
- ⇒ Redesign of Family Routines
  - How is Where and When in the House
  - School Time Redesign during the Pandemic
  - Work Routines Redesign
  - Daily Schedule Redesign
- ⇒ **Flexibility** in Roles, Functions, Resource Use, and Routines: The New Normal during the Pandemic
- Ask Parent to/for
  - Teach-Back and Review Areas of Misunderstanding
  - Feedback about Usefulness and Feeling Understood
  - List how Personal Values (What Matters Most) Fit with Interventions
    - ⇒ Parenting
    - ⇒ Parental Anxiety Management
    - ⇒ Family Adaption Goals
- Ask Parent to Make Next Appointment

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***Module 1: Application of Parent Management Training<sup>2</sup>***

- Motivational Interviewing Strategy
  - Open Ended Question about Status
  - Request Permission to Set Agenda
- Watching Behaviors not Intention
  - Orient Parents to the Impact of COVID-19 Fears and Related Mitigation Efforts will Have on Behaviors
  - How to Operationally Define a Behavior: Describe it from a Movie
  - Counting How Many or How Long
  - Teaching Parents to Understand the Inferred Functions from the Assessment
  - Helping Parents Understand the A-B-Cs of Problem Behaviors
- Positive Opposites
  - If Your Child Did What You Wanted, Rather than Stopped What You Don't Want, That's the Positive Opposite
  - How to Create Positive Opposite Options
    - ⇒ Task Completion
    - ⇒ Compliance with Redirection
    - ⇒ Social Situations and Social Skills
- How to Give Directions for Positive Opposites and Reward Them
  - Politeness
  - Clarity
  - At-the-child's Eye Level
  - Teach Back by Child
  - The Rule of Two
    - ⇒ Use of Ignoring and Withholding Praise for Non-Compliance after Two Prompts
    - ⇒ Use of Praise for Doing what Directed to Do if not Within 30-60 Seconds of Second Prompt
    - ⇒ Withhold any Tangible Rewards if not Performed Within 30-60 Seconds
      - Reminder from Parent to Child: "Thank you for doing XX, look at you doing XX. But, I can't give you (sticker) because you didn't do XX when I

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<sup>2</sup> See Kazdin (1997)



told you to do it. But I'm sure you can earn (sticker) again later when you're told to do other things and do it when I tell you to do it."

- How to Reward Every Step (if necessary) of the Behavioral Chain through Praise
  - ⇒ Use of Style of Praise Tailored to Children's Needs
  - ⇒ Use of "Describe the Correct Behavior" Strategy to Provide Praise
- Using Stickers as an Additional Reward for Behavioral Success
- Using Planned Ignoring
  - Breaking the Attention Reward for Problem Behaviors
  - Nerves of Steel
  - Making the Ignoring Plan
  - Implementing the Ignoring Plan
  - Rewarding Positive Behaviors if they Start
- School Work: It's All Homework Right Now
  - Setting up a Study Schedule
  - Creating a School Desk at Home (Duct Tape Study Carrell)
  - Learning to Schedule Home-based Recess and Lunch
  - Rewarding for School Work Completion
  - Ending the Home School Day Using an Auditory Cue
- Assign Parent Homeworks
  - Using "Dry Run" Practices
  - Keeping Track of Successes
  - Creating a Comprehensive Try-it Plan
- Ask Parent to/for
  - Teach-Back and Review Areas of Misunderstanding
  - Feedback about Usefulness and Feeling Understood
  - Mutually Decide How Many Sessions to Implement Parent Management and Divide Up Reviews and New Homeworks over \_\_\_ Sessions
  - Set Up Next Meeting

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***Module 2: Application of Teaching Emotional Regulation Skills<sup>3</sup>***

- Goal: To Help Children Manage their Emotions During the COVID19 Pandemic
  - Review of Emotional Regulation Neurology
    - ⇒ Increased Likelihood of Flooding of Emotional Systems when Feeling Threatened and Increased in Vigilance Due to COVID-19 Pandemic
    - ⇒ Impact of Ongoing Health Fears during Pandemic on Increased Emotional Arousal and Hypervigilance in Children
    - ⇒ Learned Response in Children of Emotional Outbursts under Certain Conditions
    - ⇒ Identification of the Function of those Outbursts to Shape Parents' Next Steps
    - ⇒ Behavioral Regulation Develops, in part, from Teaching Safe Problem Solving (Resiliency Approach)
  - New Framework to Think about Children's Outbursts
    - ⇒ Shifting from Offended by Behaviors to Opportunity to Teach Skills
    - ⇒ Understanding Self-talk about Children's Fears of Infection and Confusion by Changes to Daily Routines
    - ⇒ "This is a chance to teach XXXX new skills to help handle emotions and frustration during such a scary time."
    - ⇒ "I know you're afraid of catching the virus, but our family is keeping away from others and washing our hands often. We are doing all the things the experts are telling us to do. Being afraid makes sense, but not too afraid."
  - Teaching Emotional Language
    - ⇒ Creating List of Words (if possible, with pictures) for Emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, fear, sadness, loneliness)
    - ⇒ Reflecting to Children Inference about Feelings and Using Emotional Words to Help Cognitively Process Emotions
    - ⇒ "Looks like you feel XXXX, does that sound right?"
  - Using Parent-Child Relationship through Empathy
    - ⇒ Empathizing through "I" Statements
    - ⇒ "I remember when I XXXX, if felt the same way."
  - Teaching Problem Solving (Actions) to Manage Emotions (Reactions)
    - ⇒ Goal is to Build Resiliency to Replace Melt Downs

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<sup>3</sup> See Gottman (1998); no endorsement by The Gottman Institute should be implied.

- ⇒ Identify Problem that Led to Emotional Outburst
- ⇒ Talk to Children about Problem (not Outburst): “Looks like XXXX is upsetting. Let’s see what’s wrong.”
- ⇒ Create Simple Solution and Give it a Try
- ⇒ Evaluate Success, if the Solution is not Effective, Create Second Solution and Give it a Try
- ⇒ Reward with Praise for Trying Solve Problem
- ⇒ Repeat Until Successful
- Assign Parent Homeworks
  - Using “Dry Run” Practices
  - Keeping Track of Successes
- Ask Parent to/for
  - Teach-Back and Review Areas of Misunderstanding
  - Feedback about Usefulness and Feeling Understood
  - Mutually Decide How Many Sessions to Implement Emotional Regulation Skills and Divide Up Reviews of Protocol and New Homeworks over \_\_ Sessions
  - Set Up Next Meeting

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***Module 3: Managing Parental Anxiety about Behavioral Outbursts<sup>4</sup>***

- Parental Anxiety during StayHome Orders Related to COVID19
  - Learned Anxiety Response to Situations Associated with Negative Behaviors
    - ⇒ Role of Associational Learning that Builds Triggers to Parental Anxiety
      - Situations in the Past with Large Outbursts become Associated with Anticipatory Anxiety from Parents
    - ⇒ Role of Occasional Behavioral De-escalation as a Reward for Authoritarian Parenting
      - When Parents Continue to Use Authoritarian Parenting in Feared Situations, Occasional Elimination of Outburst (even if accidental) Rewards Continued Use of Authoritarian Parenting in those Situations
  - Role of COVID19 and Changes to Family Roles and Routines in Families Increases Stressors and Likelihood of Parental Use of Authoritarian Parenting
  - Heightened On-Guard Status during Pandemic Creates Higher Steady Anxious State in Parents
  - Skills to Manage Stress
    - ⇒ Identify Ideas that Challenge Parental Competency<sup>5</sup>
    - ⇒ Employ a Practice-of-Skills Plans for New Parenting (Overlearning) in Triggering Situations
    - ⇒ Develop Alternative Ideas to Expecting Bad Things to Happen
      - Practice Alternative Ideas to Unhealthy Ideas During Practice of Skills
    - ⇒ Create Affirming Statement about Parental Competency and Notice Successes
- Assign Parent Homeworks
  - Using “Dry Run” Practices
  - Keeping Track of Successes
- Ask Parent to/for
  - Teach-Back and Review Areas of Misunderstanding
  - Feedback about Usefulness and Feeling Understood
  - Set Up Next Meeting

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<sup>4</sup> See Nowak and Heinrichs (2008)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/documents/c-change/parenting-sense-of-competence-scale.pdf>

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***Module 4: Promoting Family Adaptation during COVID-19 Pandemic***

- **Managing Family Changes in the Face of COVID19 (Remember to Ask Permission for Each Suggested Change Topic, and Ask Open-ended Questions to Promote Patient-Centered Motivation to Change)**
  - Role of Communication as the Cornerstone of Adaptation to Pandemic<sup>6</sup>
    - ⇒ The Intent-Impact Discrepancy in the Face of Pandemic-Related Increases in Stress and Social Conflicts
    - ⇒ Communication Repair to Survive the Pandemic
      - Educate Parent that the World Health Organization Emphasizes Communication as Key to Defeating Pandemics
    - ⇒ Arguments as Opportunities to Grow Intimacy<sup>7</sup>: Using “After the Fight”
      - Meta-level Discussions about the Arguments
      - Developing Deeper Learning about Both People from the Argument
    - ⇒ Turning Toward (When You’re Upset) and Unpacking Hidden Meanings (Asking the Other Person what the Argument is a Reminds them about) of COVID19 Fears
    - ⇒ Softened Starts and Emotional Acceptance of Fears of COVID19
      - Empathic Start-ups
      - Correction of Intent or Impact of Communication Strategies
      - Statements of Responsibility for Role in Argument
      - Statements of Understandability of Fear under COVID19 Stress Situations
    - ⇒ COVID19-Based Triggers to Arguments rather than Partner Character Causal Inferences
      - Noticing Characterological Inferences about Cause of Fight
      - Reorientation to Stressor Causes of Argument
      - Making Forgiving Statements
  - Using Communication to Adapt Family to Pandemic-Caused Changes
    - ⇒ Redefine Roles and Functions through Mutual Agreement and Compromise: Identifying Multiple Roles Due to COVID19

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<sup>6</sup> Some strategies are based upon Gottman’s methods described in <https://www.norton.com/books/The-Marriage-Clinic/> and <https://www.researchpress.com/books/386/couples-guide-communication>

<sup>7</sup> <http://danwile.com/lacpa15.doc>

- New Parenting/Teacher Roles and Functions
- New Worker/Parent Roles and Functions
- New Friend/Family Member Roles and Functions
- New Adult Offspring/Parental Roles and Functions
- New Citizen Roles and Functions
- New Home-based Public Health Worker Roles and Functions
- ⇒ Reallocation of Resources
  - Making Mutual Choices about How to Build a Team
  - Use of Metaphor of Circling Wagons, Just Don't Shoot Inward
  - Create Plans on Specific Ways to Reallocate Resources and Build a Team
    - Time
    - Energy
    - Money
    - Space in the House
- ⇒ Redesign of Family Routines: Working to Create the 10 Things 10,000 Times Approach to Family Functioning During Pandemic
  - What Happens "Where and When" in the House
  - School-Time Redesign during the Pandemic
  - Work Routines Redesign
  - Daily Schedule Redesign
- **Flexibility in Roles, Functions, Resource Use, and Routines: The New**
- Ask Permission to Assign Family Homeworks, then Assign if Permitted (If Not, Go Back to MI Strategies)
  - Using "Dry Run" Practices
  - Keeping Track of Successes
- Ask Family Members to/for
  - Teach-Back and Review Areas of Misunderstanding
  - Feedback about Usefulness and Feeling Understood
  - Set Up Next Meeting
    - ⇒ Make Next Appointment

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***Final Session: Termination and Maintaining Gains***

- Review of Progress Using Open-ended Questions
- Review of **Parent Management Training** Skills
- Review of **Building Emotional Regulation** Skills
- Review of **Parental Stress and Sense of Competence** Skills
- Review of **Family Adaption** Skills
- Identification of Areas that can be Useful in the Future
- How to Follow-up with Provider
- Reminder to Follow All Guidance and Directives from Federal and State Authorities During the COVID19 Pandemic
- Ask for Feedback about Treatment and Final Session