



ALEXA, CAN I PUT MY KID IN TIME-OUT?:

Evidence-Based Parenting in the Social Media Age

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Introductions

- We are psychologists, researchers, and trainers with the Center on Child Abuse and Neglect at University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
- Once children ... now parents!



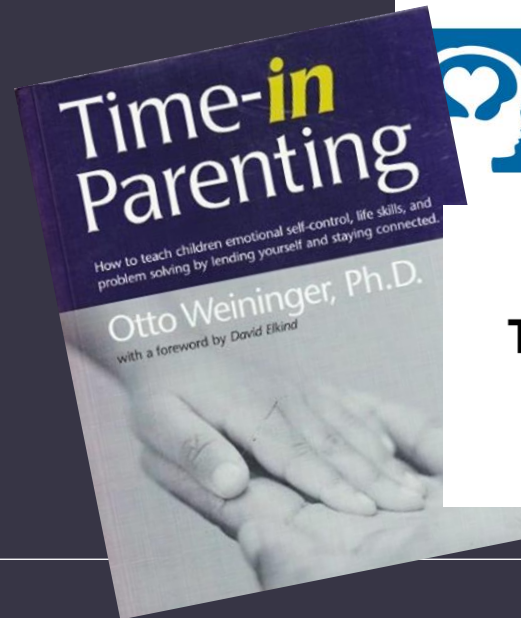
Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will improve their competence and performance by being able to:

- *Recognize* some of the latest buzz words in parenting practices presented in social media, and *examine* how social media impacts parenting
- *Compare* different parenting approaches with attention to those grounded in evidence-informed practice
- *Recognize* possible sources of child's behavior, *formulate* how parents can select a parenting approach to match, and *feel prepared* when parents object evidence-informed parenting practices

Parenting approaches we've encountered...

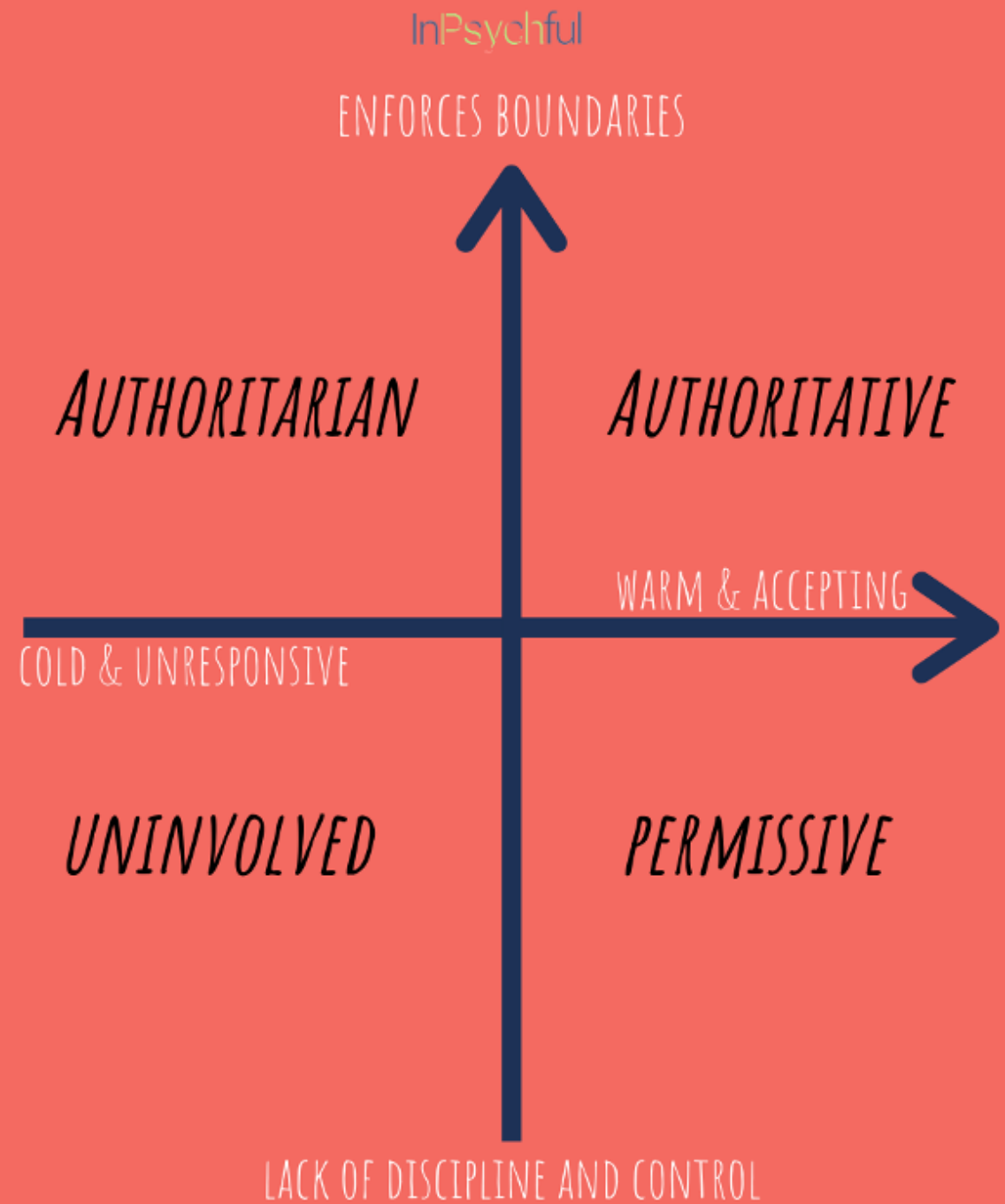
- Gentle Parenting
- Nurturing Parenting
- Positive Parenting
- Conscious Discipline
- Time-In (technique)
- Time-Out (technique)
- Authoritative
- Authoritarian
- Permissive or neglectful
- ...and the list goes on!





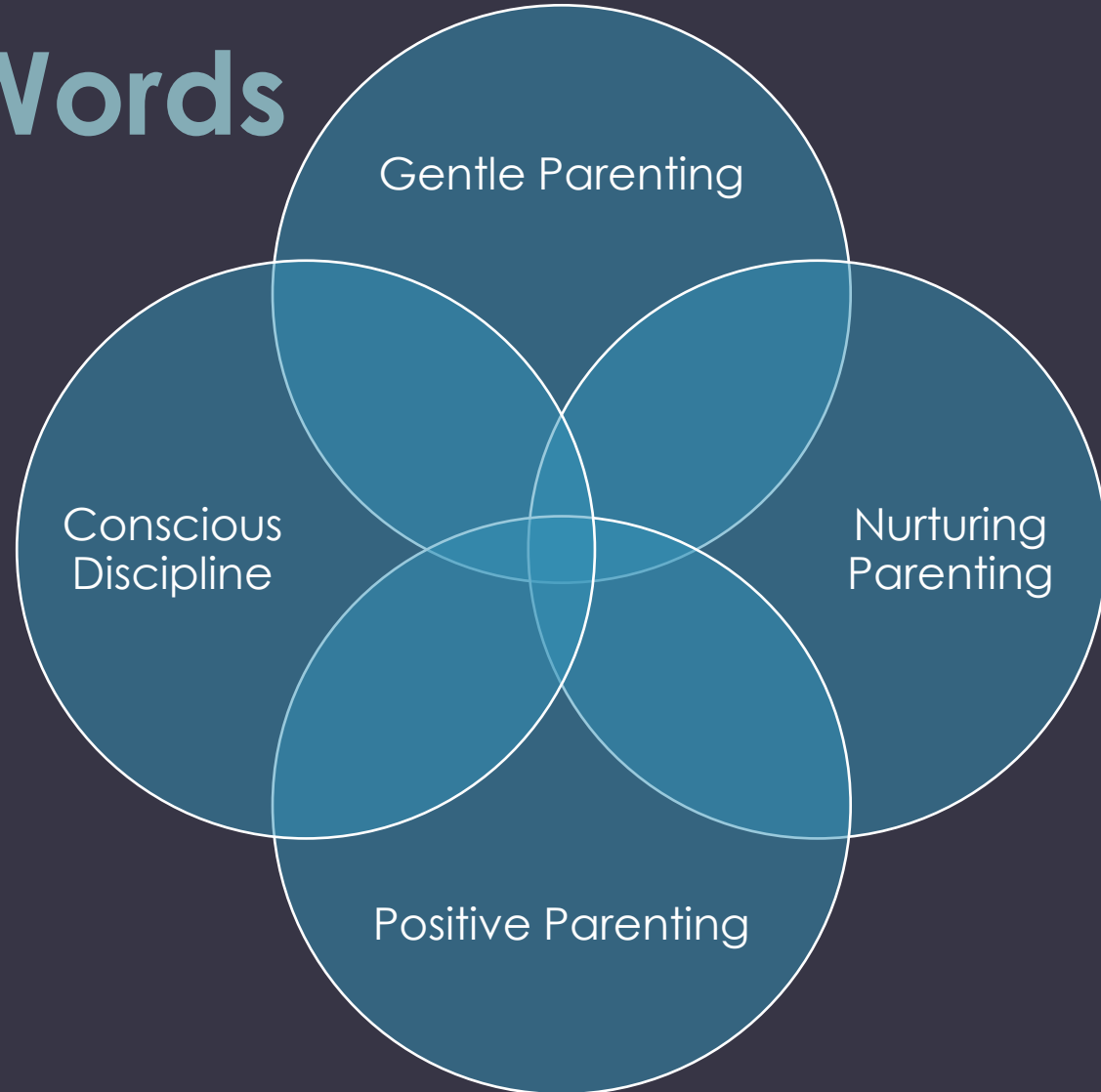
**What do you
call this?**

Parenting: The OGs



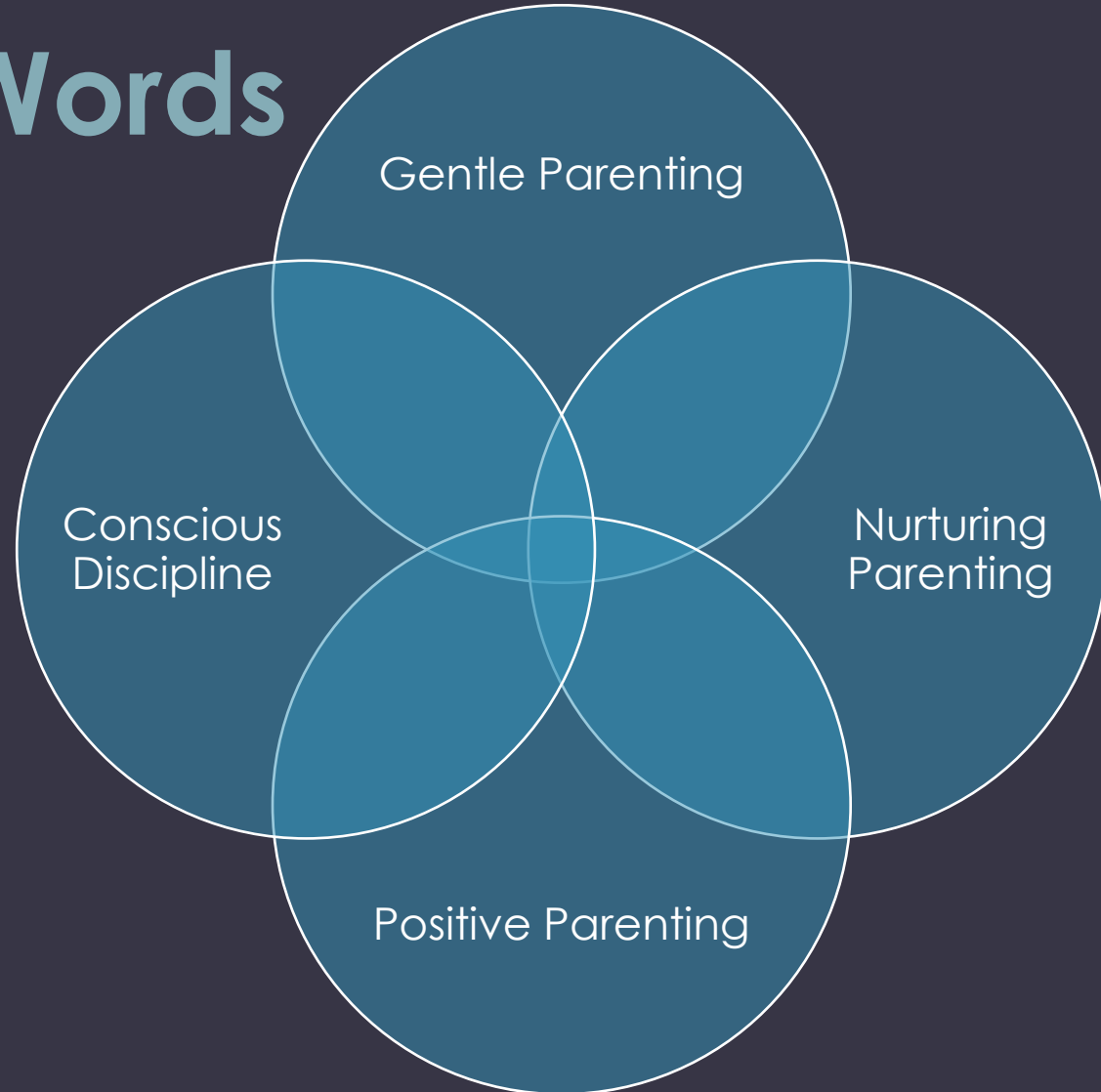
Parenting: Buzz Words

- Gentle Parenting
 - A bit of a catchall
 - British child care expert put a name to this parenting style through books/websites
 - Tenets:
 - Empathy
 - Respect
 - Understanding
 - Boundaries
 - Discourages certain practices



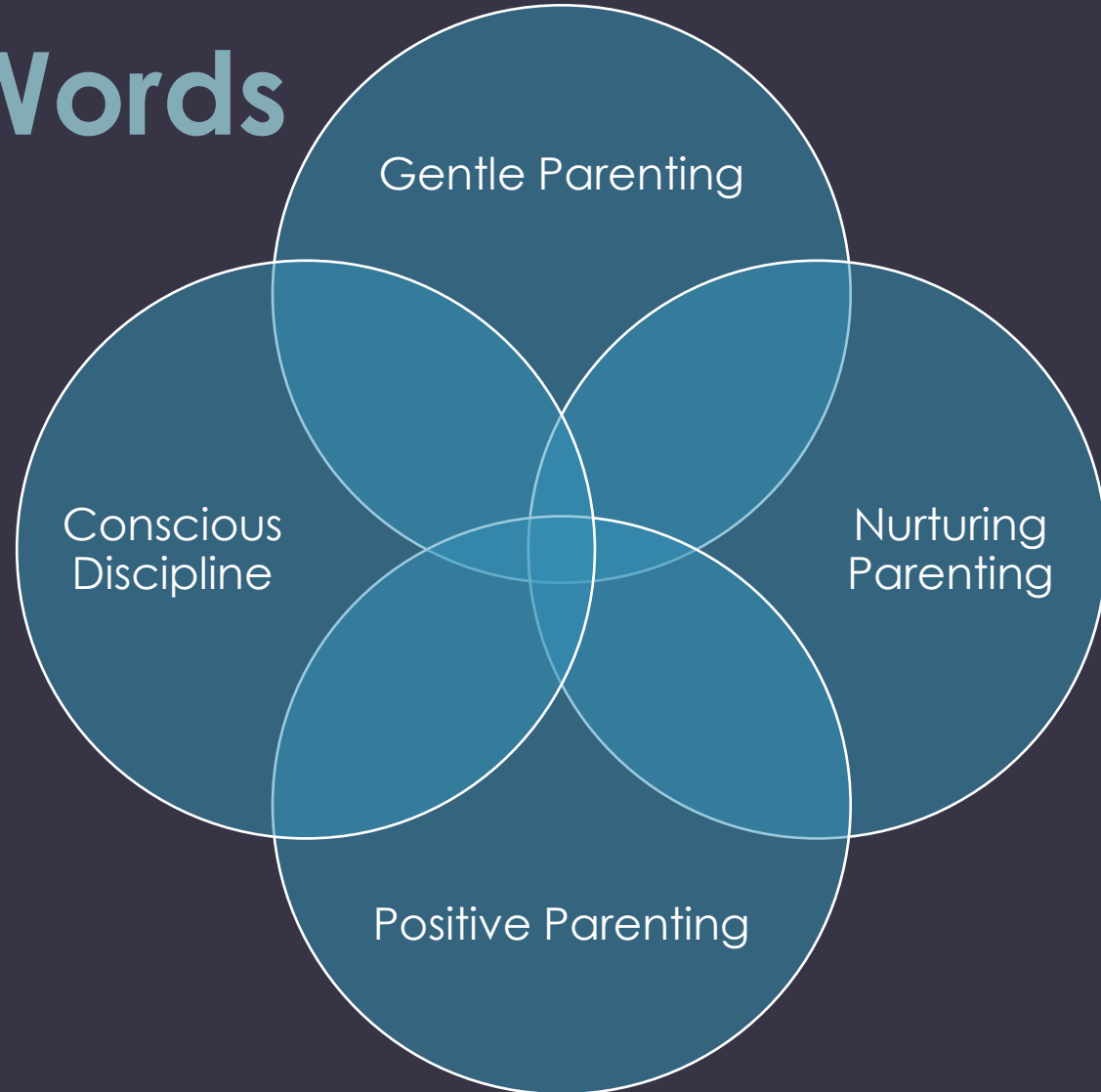
Parenting: Buzz Words

- Nurturing Parenting
 - Recognized home visiting program to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect
 - Also used by lay parents on social media who support similar values
 - Empathy, self-worth, self-awareness, empowerment, disciplining with dignity



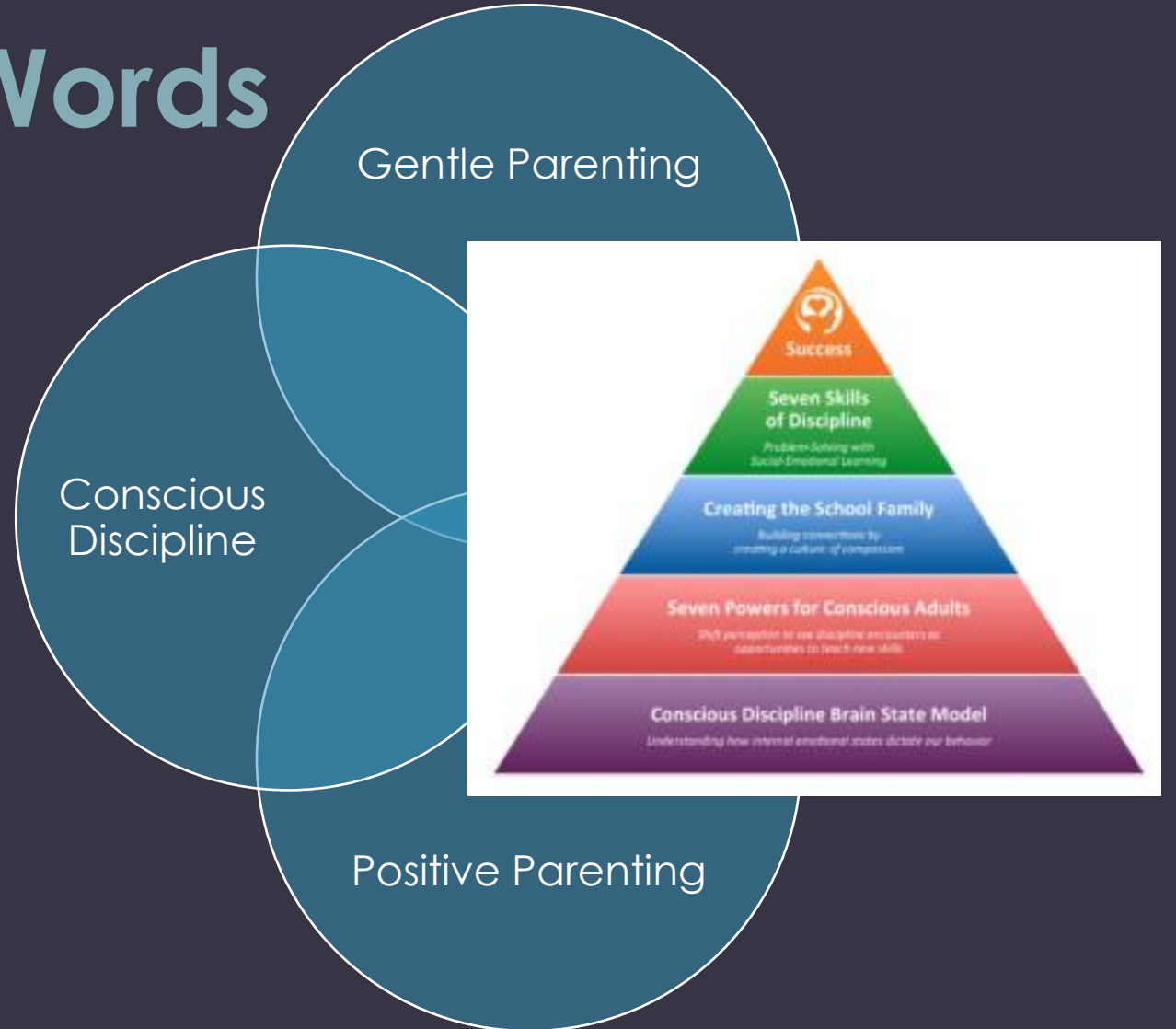
Parenting: Buzz Words

- Positive Parenting
 - General term / catchall
 - “Positive parenting is the continual relationship of a parent and a child that includes caring, teaching, leading, communicating, and providing for the needs of a child consistently and unconditionally”
(Seay et al., 2014, p. 207)



Parenting: Buzz Words

- Conscious Discipline
 - Coined by Becky Bailey, PhD (for use by school teachers)
 - Also used by lay parents on social media who support similar values
 - Self-control
 - Compassion
 - Shared power
 - Internal motivation



Time-In

- Caregiver stays with the child until the child calms down
 - Attention remains with child
- May be ideal for dysregulation from feeling overwhelmed in the moment & when caregiver is able to remain calm (i.e., co-regulation)
- Likely not ideal for active defiance in response to a limit/expectation or those with difficult parent-child relationship patterns

TIME-IN	TIME-OUT
✓ Encourages self-regulation through co-regulation	* Attempts only to change a behavior
✓ Maintains connection to caregiver	* Removes presence of caregiver
✓ Helps lower stress-levels	* Increases a child's stress
✓ Respects the child and their development	* Shame-based punishment

REACHFORMONTESSORI.COM

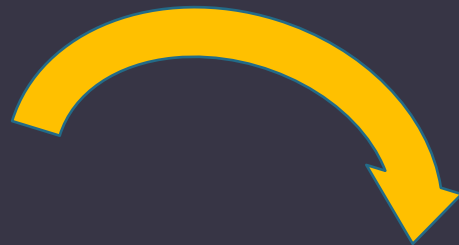
Time-Out



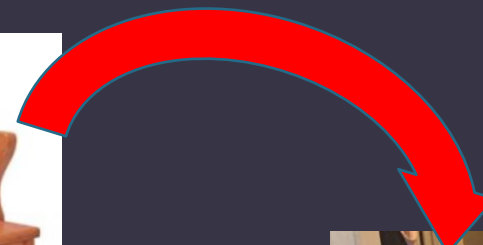
PCIT Time-Out Sequence



Play
Scenario



Time-Out
Chair



Time-Out Room

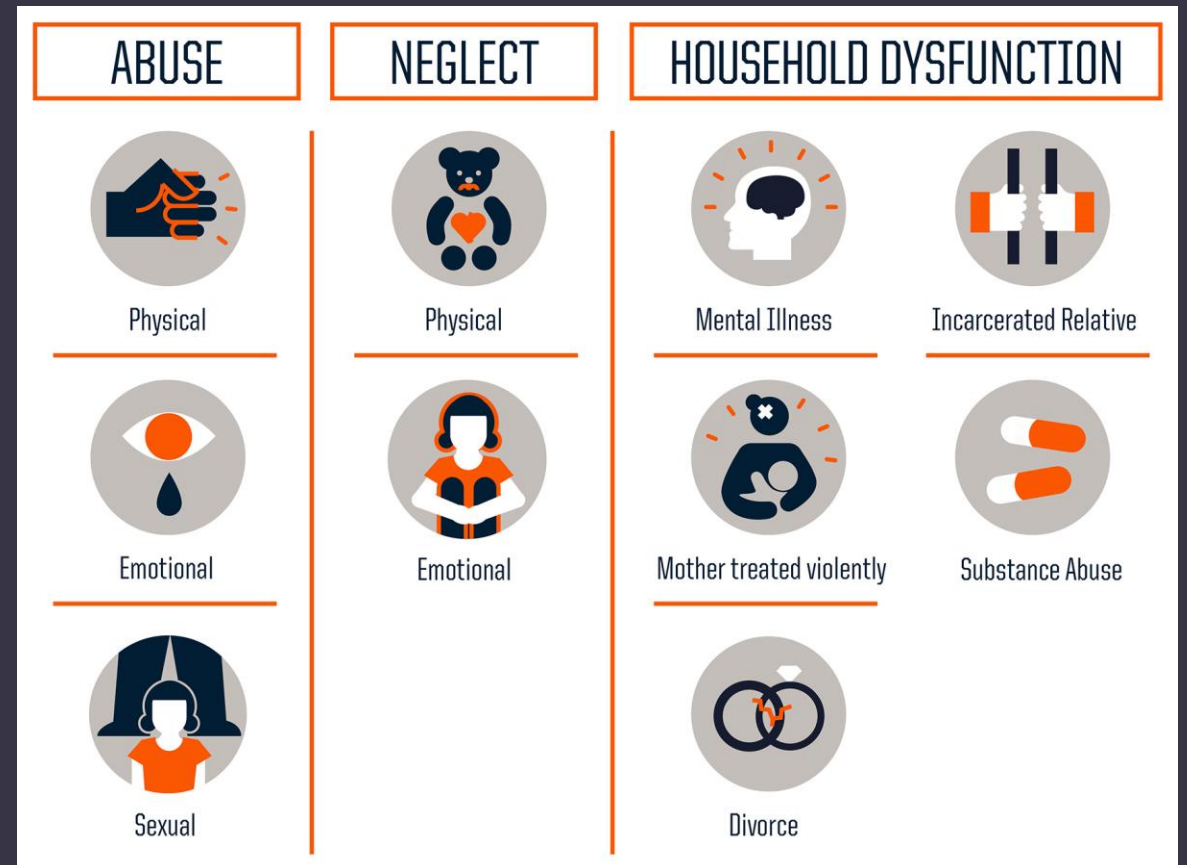


3 min + 5 sec
silence

1 min + 5 sec
silence

Let's make things even more complicated...

- When you add in the unique circumstances of children who have experienced adverse events, parenting and discipline can become even more complicated



Trauma vs. Difficult Experiences

- Many will go through difficult experiences in childhood
- Inter-related factors impact how youth respond to these experiences

**Sexual
abuse**

Divorce

**Loss of a
grandparent**

**State
testing**

**Popsicle
flavor ran
out**

Ideally...

- Match **approach** to the **child's behavior/needs**
 - What is the need, function, or reason behind the behavior?
 - How would we classify the behavior?

Oppositional behavior

Behavior is due to
child not getting
their way

vs.

emotional regulation problem

Child is upset and
response is out of
proportion to the
situation

vs.

trauma reaction

Child is having a
trauma response /
trigger



Child Behavior

Behavior is due to child not getting their way



Oppositional behavior:
Goal-directed approach

Discipline,
natural/logical
consequences, loss of
privileges, time-out

Child is upset and
response is out of
proportion to the
situation



Emotional dysregulation

Quiet/calm corner,
time-in, joint
regulation/coping skills

Child is having a
trauma response /
trigger



Trauma reaction

Joint regulation/
coping skills; seeking
counseling

What would you do if:

- You get a call from school that your 8-year-old is sick and needs to be picked up. You put your toddler in the car and go to the school. On the car ride home, your toddler kicks and throws things at their sibling.
- You realize that when you got the call to pick up your older child, it was almost your toddler's naptime. Because you had to go to the school, you missed giving your younger child a snack and nap.

Important Considerations

- What is the developmental level of child?
- Is the behavior harmful?
- What is the goal of the caregiver (and DHS)?
- Can caregiver calmly respond?

What would you do if:

- One gloomy Monday morning your 6-year-old child says they do not want to go to school. Your child is crossing their arms, stomping their feet, crying, and refusing to put on their shoes. You ask why they don't want to go to school, but they aren't able to formulate any words as to what they are thinking or feeling.
- *Context:* The child was previously involved in a major tornado. There was a storm over the weekend and the tornado sirens went off.
- *Consider:* On this gloomy Monday morning, what is the child thinking and feeling that is leading to her behavior? What is the need, function, or reason behind the behavior?

Important Considerations: Trauma

- Do parents know the difference between a...
 - **Trauma reminder** (i.e., a fight-flight-freeze response to something that reminds the child of their trauma experience) vs.
 - **Trauma-impacted behavior** (i.e., after trauma, there may be a general increase in externalizing behaviors in youth, but it's not that the child is *constantly* having trauma-reminders, it's that their thoughts, feelings, & connected behaviors are globally impacted)

Consider referring to trauma-focused assessment

How do we know which approach(es) to suggest?

- Some practices have research associated with them, and some don't
- All have convincing rationales and testimonials from parents about why they work and why other techniques are not beneficial
- Balance between research-supported practices and what caregivers have found helpful based on their experiences*
 - New/repackaged name ... no sweat!
 - Always recommend matching parenting approach to the development and needs of the child

* Not solely based on what they see on social media, as this isn't the best reflection of *real life* & may not be representative of all families

Parenting in the Age of Social Media

Millennials (DOB: 1981-96)

- Childhood w/ computers, internet, cell phones; rise of social media
- Having fewer or no kids
- More free and varied in parenting approach

Gen Z (DOB: 1997+)

- Internet, cell (smart) phones, digital media are ever-present
- Activist-oriented



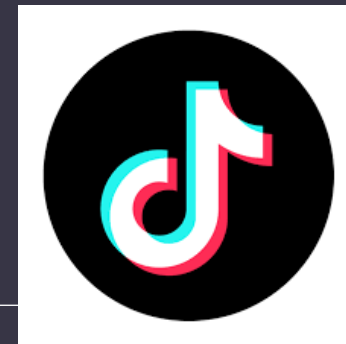
Parenting in the Age of Social Media

- In this age of social media, caregivers are able to gain advice and guidance on parenting and discipline from a variety of sources, across multiple platforms
- Caregivers may have a favorite source and go-to practice



Where did it go Mom
@wherediditgomom

5 Ways to Handle Toddler Tantrums:
-You can't
-It's useless
-Don't bother
-Look at pictures from a year ago when they didn't act like this and remember the good times
-Scream with them



Social Media Often Shows Us Perfection, Not Reality





Objections to Time-Out

Increases
emotion
dysregulation

Doesn't teach
emotion
regulation

Turns into a
wrestling
match

A lesson in
rejection

(Re)traumatizes

It doesn't work
for my child

Isolates when
support is
needed

It's too hard to
implement



2014

IDEAS • PARENTING

'Time-Outs' Are Hurting Your Child



2019

Are Time-Outs Harmful to Kids? The Latest Research Says Otherwise

Time-Out: What does research say?

- *What is it?* Brief removal of attention to misbehavior and other reinforcers
- With the right technique...
 - Really effective for reducing oppositionality and non-compliance, though not ideal for every child or situation
 - Promotes self-led emotion regulation
 - Builds autonomy
 - Does not cause harm
- Child's age and developmental level must be considered
- **Effective when a warm, loving relationship has been established**

Time-Out: What does research say?

- New research published in 2024 surveyed 942 young adults (across two studies) on their retrospective reports of their childhood experiences of time-out, adversity, caregivers' parenting style, parental attachment, and current mental health outcomes
- Vast majority of young adults reported their caregivers used time-out
 - Implementation varied significantly, not always in an evidence-based way
- Results showed that the more time-out was **appropriately implemented**,
 - the less likely to have an avoidant attachment
 - the more likely to have better mental health outcomes and better emotion regulation
 - No harmful effects for those with childhood adversity (i.e., was not traumatizing, no negative impacts)

Xu, Tully, & Dadds (2024)

When a caregiver opposes a strategy...

- If a caregiver challenges a concept from an evidence-based approach, *stop and listen* to what they are saying.
 - Ask them to talk about their understanding of the technique
 - Have they tried it? If so, how did it go?
 - Ask them about their concerns with the concept
 - Did they hear about it/see a video about it?
 - Have them describe what they would do as an alternative
- Sometimes they oppose something (like Time Out), but then describe a method they heard about that is basically the same but called something else. If this happens, reinforce the skills that are known to be effective. Don't worry so much about what they are calling it.

When a caregiver opposes a strategy...

- Where do they go for parenting advice and tips? Who do they trust for this information?
 - If they like using videos and internet resources, are they open to looking at some sites that we have found to be helpful?
- If they mention a resource or post or video, ask to watch/read it with them
 - Discuss what they liked about that approach/advice
 - How realistic is the video?
 - Help them recognize that what is shown on social media is usually not reality . So, the clip of a parent using an approach and the child miraculously changing their mood and behavior may not be what happens when they use the same approach in the same situation
 - Have they tried this with their children? How did it go?

Objections to Praise

It's like
bragging

It can lower self-
esteem

Leads children
to be motivated
by external
reasons

How to Respond:

- Adults are sending messages to kids all the time about what we like and don't like through our behavior and body language, not just through our words. Labeled praise is a way to be more direct and intentional about what we want children to know about what we think about their behavior.
- Giving false praise, like saying something is great when the child knows it isn't, isn't helpful. Instead, praise the child's effort at working on it or not giving up.
- **Research says** that praise has been associated with better academic performance (Gunderson et al., 2018), increased intrinsic (internal) motivation to be kind and helpful (Dahl et al., 2017; Ulber, Hamann, & Tomasello, 2016), and enhanced social competence (Shinohara et al., 2010).
- Praise is one of the main principles of positive parenting and is a central part of most evidence-based parenting programs (Hahlweg et al., 2010; Leijten et al., 2018).

Think about how it feels if your boss or co-worker or customer praises you or tells you something they appreciate about your work or that you did a good job. It boosts your motivation to continue your effort.

Objections to Rewards

It's like a bribe

It can stifle
creativity

Leads children
to be motivated
by external
reasons

How to Respond:

- You don't use this with all behaviors. You are targeting a new or difficult behavior, and having an extra incentive can help get the new habit started.
- When you pair labeled praise with the reward, you can then phase out the tangible reward and the praise is what motivates them.
- Research says that rewards can help give them a sense of pride with their accomplishments (Cruz and Cullinan, 2001) and lead to positive behavior change (Luerson, et al., 2012).

General Goals When Caregivers Oppose



Validate concerns



Gather information



Define what the strategy is and what it is not



Tie positive outcomes to concerns



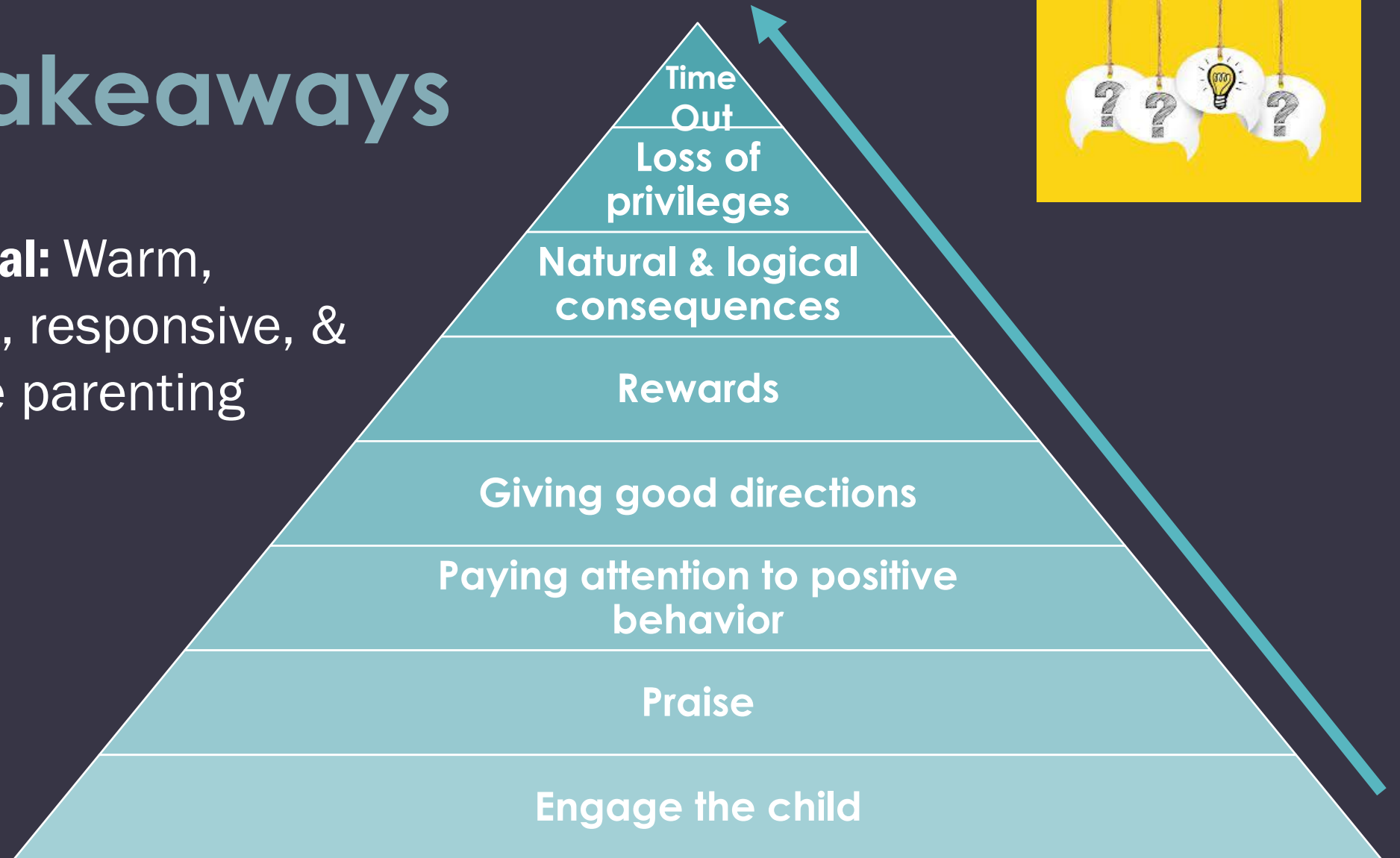
Emphasize outcome monitoring, or refer to a provider



Equip with responses for others and resources

Key Takeaways

- **Foundational:** Warm, consistent, responsive, & supportive parenting



Evidence-Backed Online Sources



helpingfamielsthive

Follow

Message



538 posts

119K followers

1,224 following

Parenting and Child Behavior

- 🌟 Drs. Jenna Elgin & Shanna Alvarez
- 😊 Research-backed positive parenting tools
- 👨👩👧👦 Parenting course for kids 2-10
- 💻 Sign up for our FREE workshop 1

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Message



623 posts

117K followers

1,624 following

Dr. Cara Goodwin | Parenting
Psychologist

- 🧠 Child psychologist (PhD)
 - 📖 Best-selling author
 - 👨👩👧👦 Mother to 3 children
 - 😊 Translating recent scientific research into information that parents can use
- www.parentingtranslator.com/insta



THANK YOU!