

# PREVENTING CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE:

## COMBINED PARENT-CHILD COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CPC-CBT)

Kristin Dean, Ph.D. & Michele Moser, Ph.D.

Tennessee Centers of Excellence



Strengthening Tennessee Families

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**Melissa Runyon, PhD**  
**CPC-CBT Developer**

**KENTUCKY**

**Centers of  
Excellence for  
Children in State  
Custody**

**TENNESSEE**





# CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE PREVALENCE RATES



In 2014, surveys suggested that 37% of children in US were exposed to corporal punishment (Finkelhor, 2019)

World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) indicate that 25 – 50% of children worldwide have experienced child physical abuse (CPA)

Six out of every 10 children reportedly experience some form of CPA in their lifetime (UNICEF, 2014)

52% of the Child Maltreatment Types substantiated in TN in 2022 were for physical abuse out of 6924 victims. (Child Welfare Outcomes, US Department of Health and Human Services)

# RESEARCH: IMPORTANCE OF CAREGIVER

It is necessary to include the caregiver in the mental health treatment of trauma-impacted children to promote optimal emotional and behavioral outcomes for children



# QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH CAREGIVER

Positive Childhood  
Experiences



Improved Mental  
Health Outcomes  
and Relationships  
in Adulthood

Adverse Childhood  
Experiences

# THIS IS NOT NEW INFORMATION



Supportive adult is a major protective factor contributing to children's resiliency and ability to cope with stressors  
(Cowen & Work, 1988)

The number one predictor of a child overcoming the impact of trauma/abuse is a supportive caregiver  
(Mannarino & Cohen, 1981)

# CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT FOR OPTIMAL OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Early research examining Trauma-Focused CBT demonstrated the importance of caregiver involvement and caregiver support for optimal outcomes for trauma-impacted youth (Deblinger et al., 1996; Cohen & Mannarino, 1996)

3 treatment groups: child alone, parent alone, child & parent (Deblinger et al. 1996)

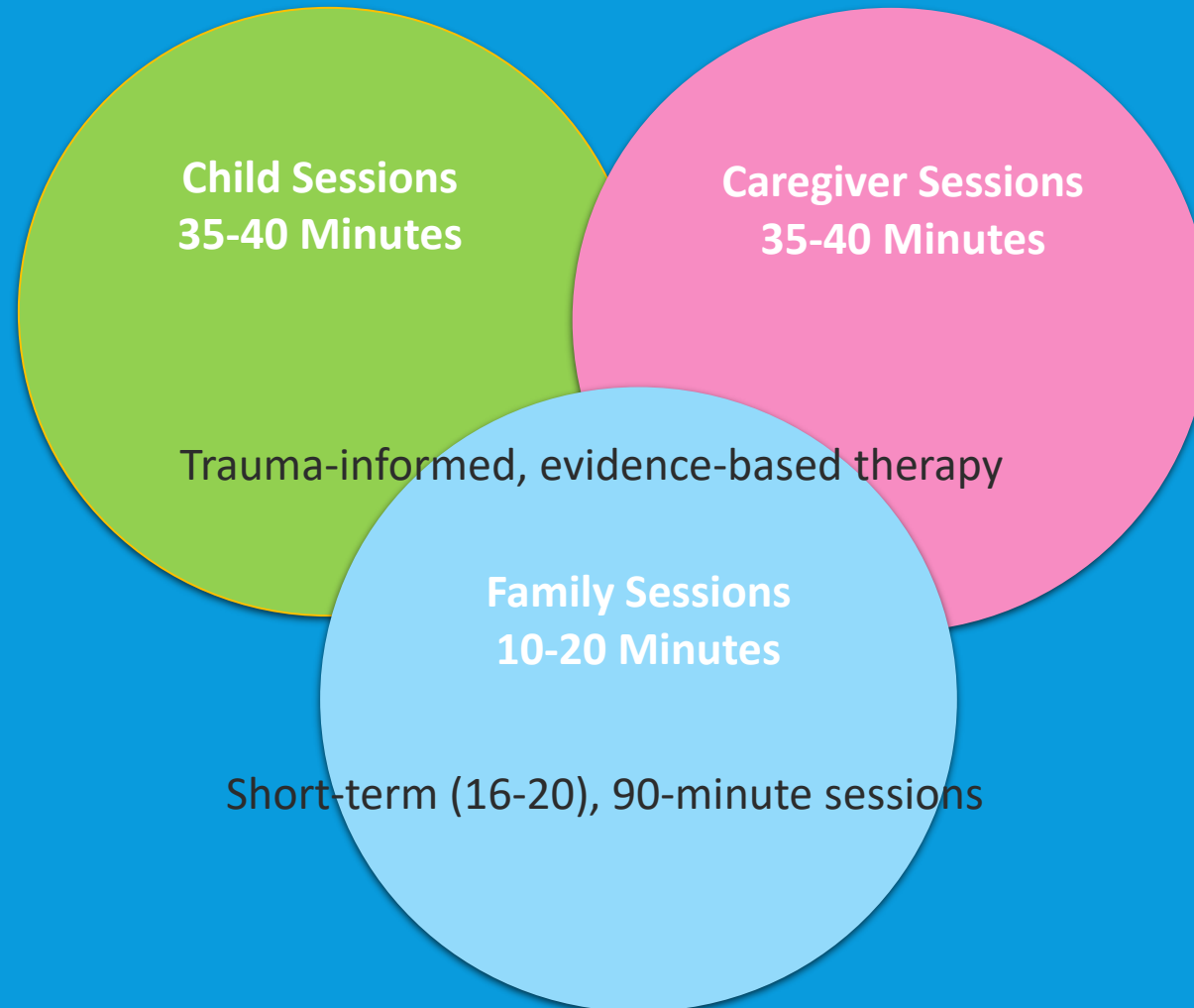
- Child alone - significant improvements in PTSD symptoms
- Parental involvement in treatment was critical to the significant improvements seen with respect to behavior problems, child depression, and parenting practices

# CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT SPECIFIC TO CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE

- A study examining Combined Parent-Child CBT evaluated the added benefit of including the child who is physically abused in the at-risk or abusive parent's treatment
- Greater reductions in children's PTSD symptoms and improvements in positive parenting skills when both the child and parent were involved in treatment compared to treating the parent alone



# COMBINED PARENT-CHILD COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY



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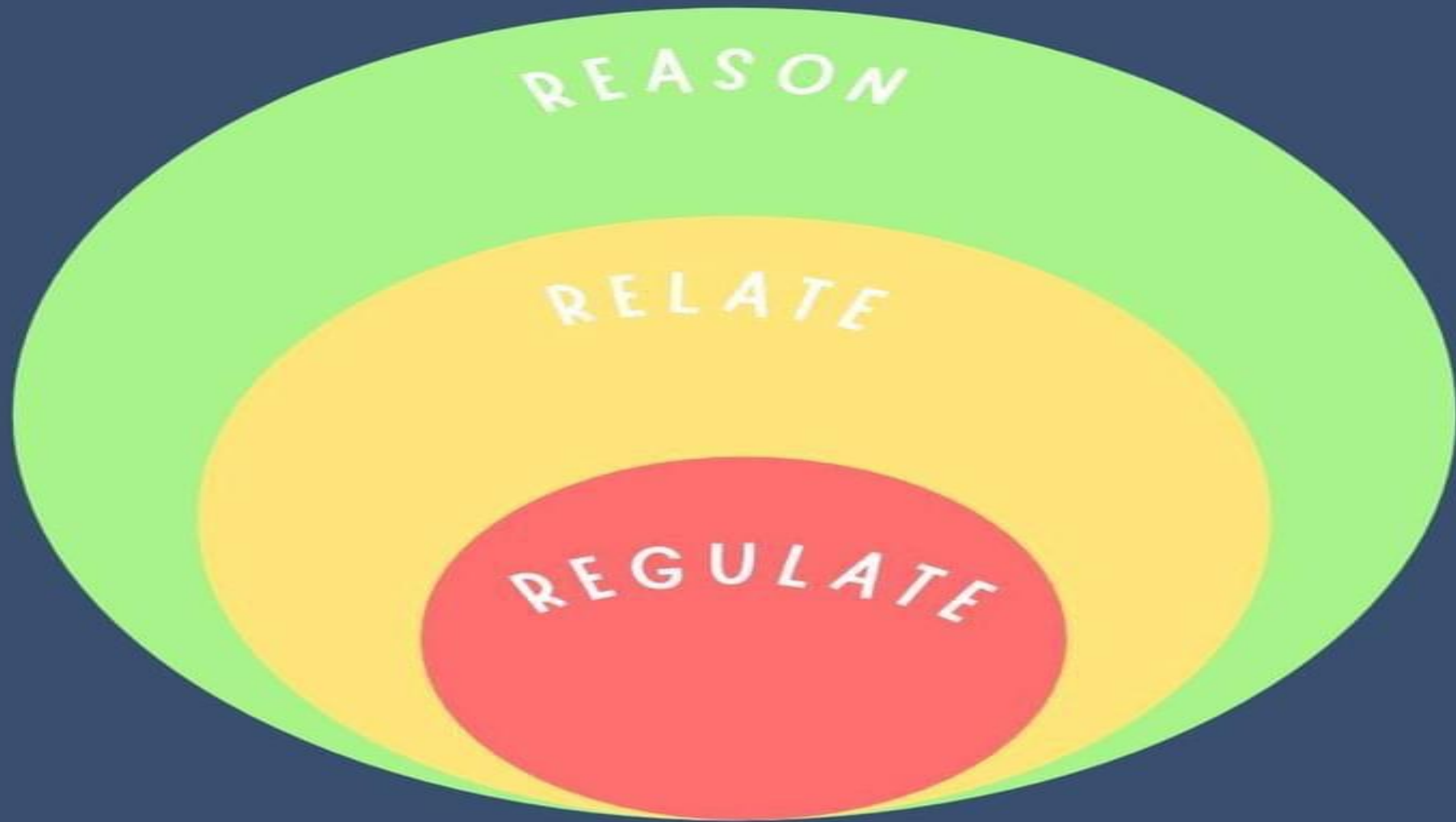
Physical Safety  
first!

Psychological  
Safety





# DR PERRY'S 3 STEPS EXPLAINED



REGULATE

1

Use soothing language

Safe space

Allow them time

Use quiet tones

Make sure they're comfortable

Ensure they're with a trusted adult

They can't learn or reflect in  
fight/flight mode, so their  
psychological stress responses  
need to be calmed first.

WHY?

?



RELATE

2

**Calm, sensitive dialogue**  
**Acknowledge how they feel**

**Connect with them**

**Share your own experiences of that  
emotion**

**This connection will help them  
produce oxytocin, which will calm  
their nervous system.**

WHY?

?





REASON

3

Teach them the language of emotions  
Talk about regulation techniques  
Remind them about safe places and  
people

Now they are calm, they are in a  
mindset to learn – which will mean  
next time they feel this emotion  
they will have helpful strategies to  
rely on.

WHY?

?



# WHY IS PARENTAL EMPATHY A KEY FACTOR IN PARENTING?

Empathy changes how we act

Research indicates that parents who empathize with their children are less likely to use any type of physical discipline/physical abuse

(Bi & Keller, 2019; Rodriguez, 2013)

Emotional empathy in the context of the parent-child relationship appears to be particularly important

Enhancing parental empathy can promote safety

# WHERE DO CAREGIVERS LEARN TO EMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS?

Often, not from their biological caregivers

- Label and acknowledge emotions
- Model empathic behavior by demonstrating an understanding of how others might feel in specific situations
- Practice putting themselves in “another’s situation”
- In children, encourage kind, compassionate behavior



# PHASES OF TREATMENT

1

Phase 1:  
Engagement

2

Phase 2:  
Coping skills

3

Phase 3:  
Family safety  
planning

4

Phase 4:  
Clarification

# PHASE 1: ENGAGEMENT



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# DISCLOSURE OF THE REFERRAL INCIDENT





# DISCLOSURE OF THE REFERRAL INCIDENT



# WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT THE PARENT?

- How much responsibility does the parent take for their abusive behavior?
- What degree of remorse does parent have for their actions?
- Do they have any recognition or empathy for impact of their actions on the child?
- Was the parent aware of the escalation in intensity of their emotions?
- What are some of the beliefs and cognitive distortions the parent has about their child and the child's behavior?
- Does the parent have developmentally appropriate expectations for the child?

# LET'S PRACTICE!

Role play with partner

- One therapist, one parent
- Pick one event of parental verbal or physical abuse / coercive parenting

“Tell me about [the event]”

- Before
- During
- After

Elicit thoughts, feelings, behavior

- What were you doing? What was your child doing?
- How were you feeling? How would you rate that feeling (1-10)?
- What were you thinking?



# PSYCHOEDUCATION ABOUT ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

- Psychoeducation about trauma, impact of trauma, and trauma reactions
- Psychoeducation about child maltreatment, emotional abuse, physical abuse and violence
- Psychoeducation about the impact of child physical abuse and violence on children's emotional and behavioral functioning as well as the relationship with the caregiver

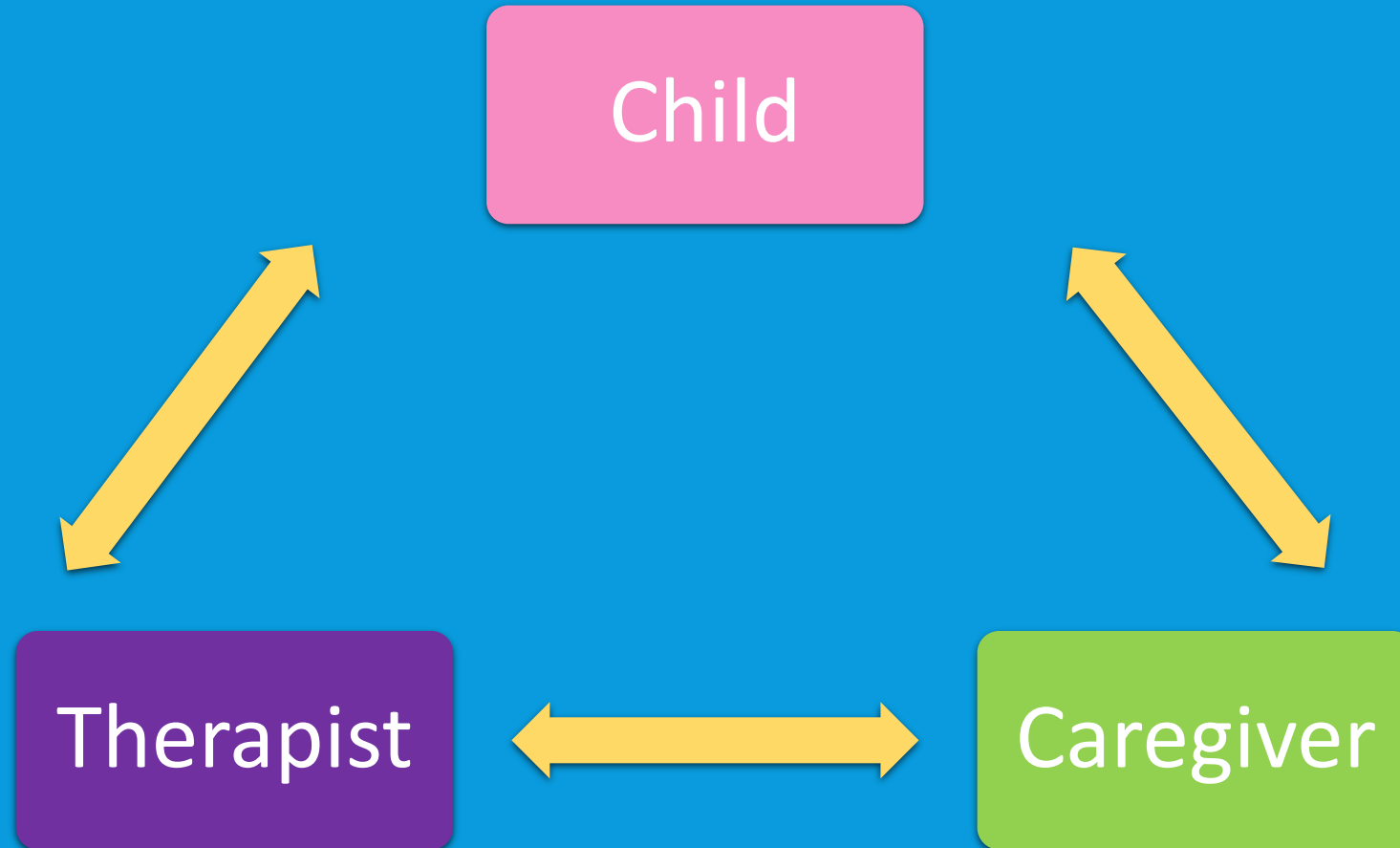
*Process begins by asking the caregiver to talk about any abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) or violence that they or their child have been exposed to in their community or home*



# RESPONDING TO PARENT'S HISTORY OF ABUSE TO BUILD EMPATHY DURING PSYCHOEDUCATION COMPONENT



# CIRCLE OF EMPATHY



# PROMOTE LONG-TERM SAFETY, TRAUMA-INFORMED PARENTING, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT OF CHILDREN

Direct relationship between lack parental empathy and use of physical discipline

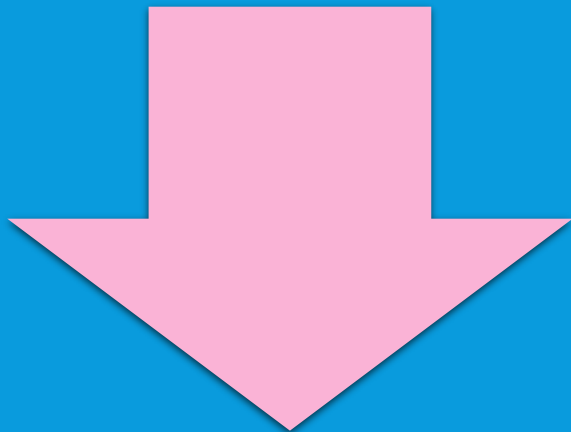
Correlation between lack of parental empathy and child physical abuse



# CONCLUSION



Parental empathy for  
child



Use of physical  
discipline/risk for  
physical abuse



**ENHANCING A CHILD'S SAFETY  
INVOLVES MUCH MORE THAN  
HOLDING A PARENT  
ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR  
ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR!**

# ENGLISH, JAPANESE, FINNISH AND CZECH TRANSLATIONS OF THE MANUAL





For Information about CPC-CBT:

Dr. Melissa Runyon

MelissaRunyonPhd@gmail.com

Website: <http://melissarunyon.com/cpc-cbt>

Tennessee Centers of Excellence Best Practices:

Dr. Kris Dean at [kdean@utmck.edu](mailto:kdean@utmck.edu)

Dr. Michele Moser at [moser@etsu.edu](mailto:moser@etsu.edu)

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