

Case Study – Learning How to Use Parent Management Training Tools

“Parent” Copy

Anna is an 11 year-old Caucasian female presenting for therapy with her father and step-mother. She was recently evaluated by a pediatric neuropsychologist who diagnosed her with ADHD, Combined Type. Recommendations included parent management training and a medication evaluation. At the time of intake for therapy, Anna had not received a medication evaluation.

Family

Anna lives with her biological father, step-mother (refers to as mom), 17 year-old step-sister, 13 year-old sister, 9 year-old half-sister, 18 month-old half-brother, and step-mother’s parents. All three of her sisters are receiving mental health services for various internalizing problems including anxiety, depression, and borderline personality disorder traits. As treatment continued with Anna’s siblings, it became clear that her parents would benefit from parent management training skills.

Anna’s Behavior

Anna’s parents reported many concerns about her behavior at the time of intake. They said that she had difficulty completing tasks, such as chores, due to distraction. She was also quite impulsive (eating non-food items and beginning craft projects only to become distracted). She frequently argued with her parents and “talked back.” Anna often does not follow directions. Finally, she annoys family members because she is silly and obnoxious, not recognizing when she should stop goofing off.

Role Plays

-**Father:** childish, boisterous, thinks everything is a joke, no filter, often negative

-**Step-mother:** depressed, overwhelmed with all of her children and little support from her husband, a bit of a doormat, often nitpicky with children’s behavior, has the poorest relationship with Anna of all of the children.

Session 1 – ABCs of Behavior

At the beginning of the encounter, the therapist checked in with Anna's parents about how things have been going this week. Her step-mother reported that Anna has not completed all of her chores that she was assigned during the last week. It is summer break and she has been watching television all day.

Father – been gone all week working long hours. “Had a talk” with Anna in the car on the way to the appointment. Thinks that everything is solved now. His wife just needs to “add some bite to her bark.”

Step-mother – created a very complex chore chart with complicated rewards system at the beginning of the summer. It worked for 3 days. She insists on continuing to use it. She is focused on taking care of her 18 month-old, taking care of the family's horses, doing many loads of laundry, and cooking for the family. “Anna is 11 years old. She should be able to do 5 chores by herself. Her 9 year-old sister can do it in 15 minutes!”

Session 2 – Special Time

Both parents

- Activities that Anna enjoys: playing a game, baking, grooming horses, horseback ride, quiet time in her room before bedtime, watch a favorite TV show together, baking, playing Minecraft, swimming at the Y, shopping!!
- Anna would benefit from time with both parents. She is a “daddy's girl” and needs positive time with him, but also needs to improve her relationship with her step-mother.
- Best time of day for the family – after 18 month-old is put down for the night. Dad sometimes isn't home yet.
- Barriers to put up –
 - Won't want to spend time with step-mom.
 - Dad is often gone until very late.
 - How will this address her not doing chores?
 - She's just so negative to be around. This sounds unpleasant.

Session 3 – Praise

- Father is critical and negative. “Teases” Anna a lot, but not in a kind way.
- Both parents are weary and easily frustrated by their children. They are overwhelmed and find themselves correcting the children all of the time. Interactions are much more negative than positive.
- Possible target behaviors to praise:
 - Following directions
 - Completing tasks
 - Helping with something without being asked
 - Playing well with siblings

Session 4 – Active Ignoring

Anna is overly goofy and obnoxious when many things are happening in the home. She will talk in goofy voices and won't stop no matter what the parents do. This is extremely irritating for her step-mother. Father tends to join in to Anna's goofiness, while step-mother becomes more and more upset with both of them until she blows up.

Session 5 – Giving Effective Instructions

Father – tends to ask Anna to do things rather than tell her. Will try to tease her into doing something until he becomes angry and yells at her. His outbursts scare Anna and often cause tears.

Step-mother – I just don't understand why she doesn't do what I tell her to do. She is 11, she *should* know how to do laundry. All of the other girls can help move laundry around and finish the task. She also *should* know how to clean her room and keep it reasonably neat.

Session 6 – Rewards

- **Step-mother** - Have a complex reward system in place with charts and many different tasks on it. Step-mother created it, no one understands it. She is adamant about keeping it going despite the lack of improvement with behavior.
 - **Father** - doesn't buy in and thinks her charts are ridiculous. Frequently threatens to take rewards away. Anna almost always loses her rewards before actually receiving them.
 - **Barriers to put up**
 - Family doesn't have any extra money to spend on rewards.
 - Feels like I'm bribing my child.
 - **Possible target behaviors:**
 - Following directions 1st time
 - Completing chores
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Session 7 – Time Out/Removing Privileges

- Anna is a bit old for the use of timeout, but similar principles can be used for the removal of privileges.
- Potential ideas for behavior that would lead to removal of privileges:
 - Cursing
 - Physical aggression toward family member
 - Repeated disobedience
 - Intentionally breaking rules
- Potential privileges to remove
 - Electronics
 - Horse rides
 - Favorite activity like scrapbooking
 - Later weekend bedtime

Case Study – Learning How to Use Parent Management Training Tools

“Therapist/PCP” Copy

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Things to consider:

- *Introduce and teach ABCs of behavior.*
 - *Use not completing chores as the example and elicit ABCs*
 - *Problem solve about what Antecedents and Consequences should be changed in the future.*
 - *Agree on a plan for moving forward.*
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Session 2 – Special Time

Both parents

- Activities that Anna enjoys: playing a game, baking, grooming horses, horseback ride, quiet time in her room before bedtime, watch a favorite TV show together, baking, playing Minecraft, swimming at the Y, shopping!!
- Anna would benefit from time with both parents. She is a “daddy's girl” and needs positive time with him, but also needs to improve her relationship with her step-mother.
- Best time of day for the family – after 18 month-old is put down for the night. Dad sometimes isn't home yet.

Things to consider:

- *Generate list of fun activities – keep it simple, cheap, and doable in 5-10 min*
 - *Assign each day for 5 min with each parent*
 - *Address barriers that are raised and leave them with a complete plan*
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Session 3 – Praise

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- Both parents are weary and easily frustrated by their children. They are overwhelmed and find themselves correcting the children all of the time. Interactions are much more negative than positive.

- Possible target behaviors to praise:
 - Following directions
 - Completing tasks
 - Helping with something without being asked
 - Playing well with siblings

Things to consider:

- *Teach praise – immediate, specific, and consistent*
- *Identify a target behavior that they would like to see more of and identify specific praise phrases they can use.*

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Session 4 – Active Ignoring

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Things to consider:

- *Goofy behavior as the target behavior – dad will have to do the ignore as well*
- *Teach the steps. Prepare them that it will get worse before it gets better.*

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Session 5 – Giving Effective Instructions

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Step-mother – I just don't understand why she doesn't do what I tell her to do. She is 11, she *should* know how to do laundry. All of the other girls can help move laundry around and finish the task. She also *should* know how to clean her room and keep it reasonably neat.

Things to consider:

- *Reflect back that although mother thinks child should know how to do tasks, she obviously doesn't and it is their job to teach her.*
- *Teach giving effective instructions. Focus on breaking down tasks, calm voice, statements not questions.*

Session 6 – Rewards

- **Step-mother** - Have a complex reward system in place with charts and many different tasks on it. Step-mother created it, no one understands it. She is adamant about keeping it going despite the lack of improvement with behavior.
- **Father** - doesn't buy in and thinks her charts are ridiculous. Frequently threatens to take rewards away. Anna almost always loses her rewards before actually receiving them.
- **Possible target behaviors:**
 - Following directions 1st time
 - Completing chores

Things to consider:

- *Simplify reward chart – one target behavior and one prize*
- *Make distinction between rewarding and bribing – child is working hard to change behavior. Adults are unlikely to go to their job without compensation. Rewards are a normal part of life.*
- *Generate ideas for rewards that don't cost money.*
- *Make sure Anna can earn a reward within the first 2-3 days of starting the system.*

Session 7 – Time Out/Removing Privileges

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Things to consider:

- *Keep it simple. Start with only 1-2 target behaviors that will result in loss of privileges.*
- *Keep the loss of privileges moderate – not too long. Longer duration does not actually indicate more effective.*