

PROBLEM-SOLVING-INTERACTION COMMUNICATION-AFFECT RATING-ENGAGEMENT CODING SYSTEM (PS-I CARE)

The PS-I CARE (Webster-Stratton, King, & Hollinsworth, 1991b) was developed to code marital conflict management skills from the videotapes of marital problem-solving discussions in the clinic. The coding system consisted of three components: collaborative problem-solving, affect and communication style. The collaborative problem-solving includes: (a) problem definition (agreement about problem), (b) solution generation and (c) evaluation, agreement and planning about solutions.

After coding these problem-solving items, the coders rate couples' collaboration skills. The collaboration scale ranged from "low collaboration" (1) (abrasive, dismissive, stonewalling, blaming) to "high collaboration" (5) (cooperative, mutually reinforcing, joint ownership of problem, accepts responsibility, defines problem). A high score on this scale indicates a high degree of effective problem-solving. A high score also indicates positive affect and a responsive attitude toward the problem-solving process. Intraclass correlations coefficients as a measure of interrater reliability for the collaboration summary scores for mothers and fathers were satisfactory (.64).

The communication style and affect components were developed as a derivative of a global rapid marital coding system (RCISS) and the detailed Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF) developed by Gottman (Gottman, McCoy, Coan & Collier, 1996). We revised and adapted these coding systems in order to develop a system that would be able to detect some of the more subtle aspects of positive and negative communication styles. The communication system included 15 communication skills leading to two summary scores, one for total positive communication (5 items) (e.g., validate, express positive feelings praise/appreciate, make positive request, humor) and one for total negative communication (10 items) (e.g., coerce/threaten, escalate/negative affect, masked meanness deny responsibility, ignore/no acknowledgement, withdraw/retreat, disagree-closed, fault finding, complain/whine, command/moralize). Only the negative communication variable was used as an indicator of negative conflict management style in this study.