



Discussion Guide for Behavioral Health: **Circle of Security Parent Education Model (COS-P)**

Accompanies the Circle of Security Lesson Video

Circle of Security is an intervention designed for families with children younger than six years old in high-risk populations, such as children of teen parents, or irritable babies and their caregivers.

OVERVIEW

The Circle of Security Parent Education Model (COS-P) is a relationship-based early intervention to enhance security of attachment between parents and young children. The intervention is derived from attachment and object relations theories and shares features of interaction guidance, child-parent psychotherapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy. The Circle of Security graphic provides a guide to help parents become a secure base and a safe haven for their children. It is a learning tool for parents and caregivers to identify, understand, and support their children's attachment and exploratory needs.

The goals of the COS-P intervention are to increase:

- security of attachment of the child to the parent
- parent's ability to read child's cues
- empathy in the parent for the child
- parent's capacity to self-reflect
- parent's capacity to pause, reflect, and choose security-promoting caregiving behaviors
- parent's capacity to regulate stressful emotional states
- parent's ability to recognize ruptures in the relationship and facilitate repairs
- parent's ability to provide comfort when their child is in distress

Decreasing negative attributions of the parent regarding the child's motivations is also a goal.

NEED FOR COS-P INTERVENTION

Longitudinal findings have shown that a secure attachment can serve as a protective factor against the negative impact of early adversity. More lasting changes result when parents develop specific relationship capacities rather than learning techniques to manage behaviors. Interventions aimed at promoting a secure attachment may prevent later maladaptive outcomes from developing among children in high-risk situations. A secure attachment is associated with social competence with peers and teachers, improved impulse control, and decreased likelihood of conduct disorders, anxiety, depression, and other psychiatric and legal problems.

POPULATION SERVED

Circle of Security is an intervention designed for families with children younger than six years old in high-risk populations, such as children enrolled in Early Head Start, children of teen parents, or irritable babies and their caregivers.



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The COS-P model teaches parents the following concepts about attachment:

- When children feel safe, their exploratory system or innate curiosity is activated and they need support (either verbally or non-verbally) for exploration.
- As they are exploring, sometimes they need their parents to watch over them, sometimes they need help, and sometimes they need their parents to enjoy with them.
- When they have explored long enough, (or if they get tired or anxious, or find themselves in an unsafe situation) they need their parents to welcome them back. When they return, they need their parents to comfort, protect, delight in, and/or organize their feelings.
- When the attachment system is terminated, children are ready to start the circle again.

The COS-P protocol presents Circle of Security content in eight chapters using a manual for the provider, handouts for the parents, and a DVD that explains and shows examples of all concepts presented. Providers cover the material at one chapter per meeting for eight sessions. Each chapter can be completed in 90 minutes in a group context, in individual counseling, or in a home visitation setting. Each chapter on the DVD provides the theory and examples of parents interacting with their children and reflecting on the material. There are designated places to stop and engage parents in reflective dialogue regarding what has just been presented. A series of reflective questions are suggested in the manual for each designated pause.

To date, the COS-P DVD has been translated into: Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Romanian, and Mandarin. In addition, translation into French is almost complete, and an updated version of the DVD will include closed captioning.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau Child Welfare Information Gateway lists Circle of Security as an Evidence-Based/Evidence Informed Program. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare rates the Circle of Security intervention as Promising Research Evidence (Level 3) in the topic areas of: Home Visiting for Child Well-Being, Infant and Toddler Mental Health, and Parent Training.

PROGRAM AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The COS-P program can be provided by those with an undergraduate degree and in the field of providing parent education. Training is available for social workers, marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, home visitors, family support workers, outreach workers, behavior support specialists, and anyone providing parenting education and/or counseling to parents of young children. A four day seminar trains professionals to use an eight chapter DVD to educate parents and caregivers. The program presents video examples of secure and problematic parent/child interaction in the zero to five age range, healthy options in caregiving, and animated graphics designed to clarify principles central to COS. Full attendance of the training is a requirement for obtaining the DVD.

A ten-day intensive training (consisting of a one day general introduction to COS and nine days of in-depth training) is designed for licensed clinicians who are interested in assessment and treatment planning based upon the Circle of Security approach. Learning is focused on a systematic approach to evaluating parental states of mind, identifying precise strengths and linchpin difficulties in parent/child interactions, and creating specific treatment plans tailored to the unique themes of each parent/child dyad.

For more information on available trainings, contact info@circleofsecurity.org.



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Circle of Security
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