



## Goal and Objectives

- **Goal**
  - To provide information that will increase observational skills of responsive parent-child interaction while conducting a home visit.
- **Objectives:**
  - To share why the first three years of a child's life are so critical to building a healthy relationship with caregivers.
  - Illustrate how the parent-child attachment can be supported during home visits by using the Circle of Security.

## What Attributes Are We Looking for When We Go Into a Home?

- Basic needs being met  
shelter, food, transportation, income
- Safe environment  
cleanliness, lead, mold, hazards
- Medical concerns  
diabetes, hypertension, preterm labor

## Other Potential Concerns

- Chronic or toxic stress
- Violence – domestic or environmental
- Inadequate supports and resources
- Past trauma
- Substance use
- Mental illness
- Household with many people living there

## Is There a Basic Need We Overlook?

- We are “hard-wired” to need to be in secure relationships
- Development depends heavily upon the child's ability to form a strong relationship with at least one primary caregiver
- Relationships support the flourishing or withering of a child

## Bowlby's Attachment Theory

- Attachment is:
  - a psychological connectedness that occurs between humans
  - lasts for a long period of time
  - is what keeps a baby connected to his mother
- Strong attachment to a caregiver provides a necessary sense of security and foundation.
- Without an attached relationship in place, a great deal of developmental energy is expended in the search for stability and security.

## Let's Review How Relationships Develop



## Templates

- The brain creates templates or blue prints of experiences against which all future experiences are matched.
- Set of associations and memories form the child's brain about to what to expect from relationships.
- Children carry these templates into all future relational interactions.



## Templates

- Home with attuned, attentive caregivers
  - Template is that relationships are safe, predictable and source of comfort and pleasure

## Templates

- Home with domestic violence or caregiver preoccupied and chaotically neglectful
  - Template is that relationships are unpredictable and source of fear, chaos, pain, and loss

## Experiences

- Things we see, touch, hear, smell and taste
- What you recognize as safe and comfortable has only become so through your experiences
- The same theory applies to feelings of fear or threat

## When Relationships Are in Jeopardy

- Affects pregnancy and unborn child
  - Toxic stress affects developing brain and organs of fetus
  - Baby at risk to be premature and underweight
  - Baby more likely to experience developmental delays and metabolic diseases later in life
  - Baby is born with potential for regulation problems
  - Often results in attachment problems for both

### What Does an Unhealthy Parent-Child Relationship Look Like?

- Mother is depressed
- Parent has flat affect
- Does not respond to baby's needs appropriately
- No "serve and return"
- Interaction with baby is harsh or distant
- Constant fear and threats

### Fear, Uncertainty, and Inconsistent Care

- Affects brain development of the infant and young child
  - Brain undeveloped yet plastic
  - If unfavorable conditions – neurodevelopment is negatively affected
  - Chronic fear response can lead to adaptive changes in emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning to promote survival

### Fear, Uncertainty, and Inconsistent Care

- Affects the baby/child's ability to interact with the environment
- Heightened stress and fear response creates maladaptive persistence of fear state
- Impacts the child's ability to self regulate
- Can cause infant/child to be
  - Hypervigilant
  - Hypersensitive
  - Withdrawn

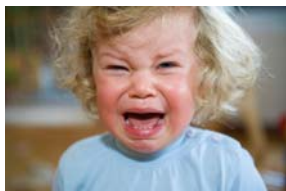
### Hypervigilant Child

- Increased muscle tone
- Wide-eyed expression
- Anxious
- Displays behavioral impulsivity
- Focuses on threat-related cues (usually non-verbal)



### Hypersensitive Child

- Cries a lot
- Inconsolable
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Skill regression
- Unable to comfort or calm self
- Easily distracted or frustrated
- Hyperactive



### Withdrawn Child

- Very "good" baby
- Shut down and tuned out
- Flat affect, no range of emotions
- Rejects/avoids being touched or held
- Does not play with others
- No reciprocal smile response
- Indifferent to others
- Poor eye contact, no tracking



### Clues That the Family May be Experiencing Stress

- Missed appointments
- Parent with mental health or substance use problems
- Parent under influence during visit
- Communal or overcrowded household
- Unsecured weapons in the house
- Instability related to housing, electricity, food

### What Does a Healthy Parent-Child Relationship Look Like?

- Provides a safe and peaceful environment
- Parents talk to the baby with gentle tone of voice
- Touches with soothing hands
- Plays with the baby
- Engages in “serve and return”
- Responds to baby's needs

### Other Parent-Child Interactions to Observe

- Is there mutual delight in their interaction?
- How do parent and child recover from distressing situations?
- During home visit does the child look to the parent for comfort and reassurance?
- Does the parent respond to distress appropriately?
- Is the parent able to support the child's emotional needs?

### Other Parent-Child Interactions to Observe (Continued)

- Is the parent able to read child's cues and respond appropriately?
- Does mother respond to continuous crying by infant or toddler?
- How does the parent seem to be doing emotionally?
- Does she seem happy with her baby? Overly stressed? Angry?

### Critical or Sensitive Period

- During the first three years of life
  - human brain develops to 90% of adult size
  - majority of systems and structures responsible for all future emotional, behavioral, social and physiological functioning are created
- These are critical periods during which bonding experiences must be present for the brain systems responsible for attachment to develop normally.

### Are Attachment Problems Always a Result of Maltreatment?

- Majority of attachment problems are likely due to parental ignorance about development rather than abuse.
- Many parents have not been educated about the critical nature of the experiences of the first three years of life.
- Individuals with insecure attachment can form and maintain relationships.

### Self Reflection

- What were my own early childhood experiences?
- Have I developed healthy relationships and am I able help others?
- Who do I know in a healthy relationship?
- Who can I talk with to help with my relationships?
- Why am I in the helping profession?

### So What Can We Do?

- Our professional training provides a foundation for what we can do to help
- Reflective supervision/practice
- Awareness of our own “baggage” is important

### Self Reflection

- Ask yourself:
  - Do I see the strengths of this family?
  - What is my role in helping this family?
  - Am I willing to go beyond my traditional role?
  - How do I build a relationship?
  - What tools do I have to help the family?

### How Can a Home Visitor Help Build Better Relationships?

- By using your observation skills
- Sharing with a parent the often unseen but obvious circle
- Showing patience and compassion
- Sharing the concept of the Circle of Security (COS)

### Disclaimer

- Not a Circle of Security training – just a very brief overview
- After attending this webinar you may want to attend a Circle of Security training

### My Testimony

- The concept of Circle of Security changed my professional outlook on working with families
- Helps with compassion fatigue
- Relationships impact your health
- Relationships between home visitors and parents are essential for change in a family

## Introduction to Circle of Security

- Circle of Security Parenting is a relationship-based parenting program developed by Kent Hoffman, Glenn Cooper, and Bert Powell.
- Program is based on:
  - five decades of research about how security is supported (and not supported)
  - key principles regarding specific themes that seem essential for security in relationships

## Circle of Security Clip “Good Enough”



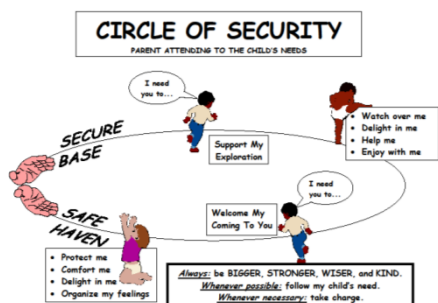
## Circle of Security Clip “Good Enough”



## CIRCLE OF SECURITY® PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS



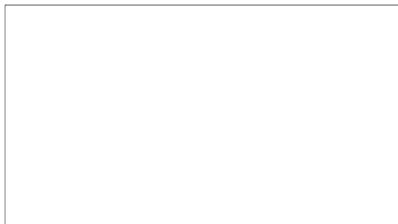
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## Circle of Security Clip “Be With”

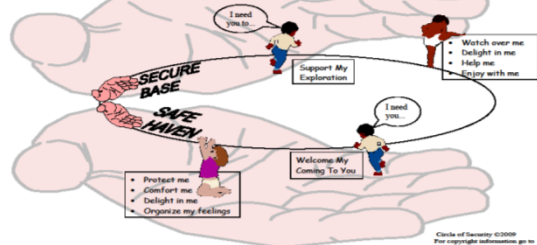


## Circle of Security Clip "Be With"



## CIRCLE OF SECURITY®

PARENT BEING HELD WHILE HOLDING THE CHILD

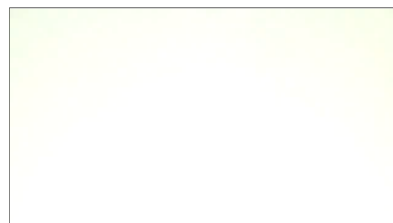


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## Circle of Security Clip "Connections"

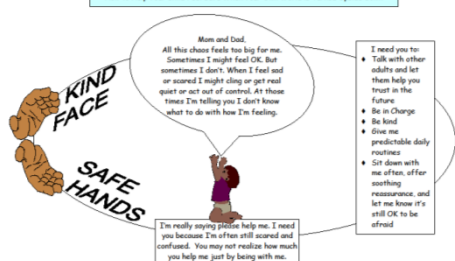


## Circle of Security Clip "Connections"



## CIRCLE OF TRUST

How to Help Your Child Feel Safe When Your Own World is Turned Upside Down



The Circle of Trust applies to children of all ages  
See: [www.circleoftrust.org](http://www.circleoftrust.org)  
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## Paradigm Shift for Home Visitor

### Change is difficult

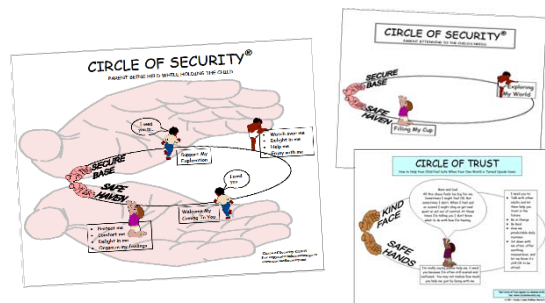
- Changing from being behavior-focused to relationship-based
- Observing relationships in a different way
- Understanding how stress affects relationships
- Understanding how stress affects development
- Developing relationships with parents

## Paradigm Shift for Parents

- Understanding that people parent their children the way they were parented
- Providing parents with healthy ways to communicate
- Teaching parents to understand their emotions
- Encouraging self reflection

## Download the Circle of Security Resources at:

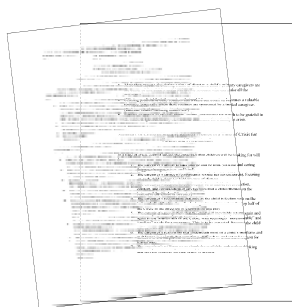
<http://circleofsecurity.net/>



## Circle of Security Resources

### Additional handouts for parents.

1. For more resources go to: <http://circleofsecurity.net/>
2. Near the top find "For Professionals" and choose "Handouts"
3. Then, read and adhere to the stipulations by clicking "I Agree" near the bottom.



## Summary

- We are "hard-wired" for relationships.
- Our past experiences often shape our relationships.
- Our relationships can affect our health.
- Relationships are either healthy or unhealthy.
- There are tools available to help you to develop healthy relationships.

## Summary

- Circle of Security is a relationship-based parenting program.
- The circle has always been in plain site.
- The circle teaches parents to understand their emotions.
- The circle gives parents healthy tools to use to improve their relationships.

## Check it Out!

- A more in depth video about Circle of Security conducted by Dr. Neil Boris, child psychiatrist, will be available in late April.
- Go to [www.cpeip.fsu.edu/mma](http://www.cpeip.fsu.edu/mma) to view.



## **Any Questions?**

## **Resources**

- Child Trauma Academy
- The Amazing Human Brain and Human Development
- Attachment Theory John Bowlby
- Circle of Security International Facilitator Manual by Cooper, Hoffman, & Powell