

Attachment

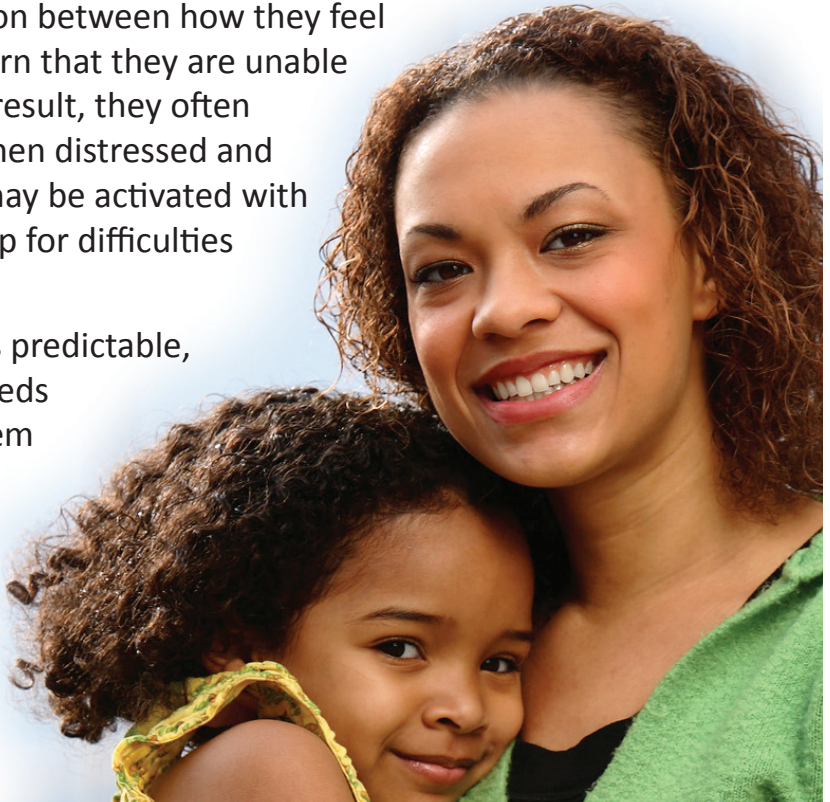


What is Attachment?

Attachment is, “A deep and enduring bond that connects one person to another across time and space.”¹

Why is Attachment Important?

- Interactions with others in the first few years of life form the building blocks that determine our outlook and understanding of how the world works and how we fit into it.
- Attachment:
 - Is a basic human need.
 - Provides a sense of predictability, safety, security and protection.
 - Serves as the foundation for care, comfort, stimulation and interaction.
- Children’s first attachments influence their view of the world, the quality of their future relationships, and the decisions they make about what they need to do in order to thrive or survive. It affects how they eventually parent their own children. It’s never too late to learn new ways to relate to the world and the people around us, but our earliest interactions always matter.
- Without attachment, infants may fail to thrive and may even die.
- When the care children receive is erratic they learn that their feelings are unreliable predictors of caregiver responses to their need for comfort and safety, resulting in difficulty making a coherent connection between how they feel and how caregivers respond. They learn that they are unable to rely on or trust their feelings. As a result, they often become difficult to settle and calm when distressed and their flight-flight-or freeze response may be activated with very little provocation, setting them up for difficulties throughout their lives.
- Children who experience the world as predictable, supportive and responsive to their needs develop the foundation that helps them learn and reach their intellectual potential.



¹ Simply Psychology. “Attachment Theory.” Accessed Aug. 31, 2015. 222.simplypsychology.org/attachment.html

What Can Be Done?

Build connection with children by:

Being positive

- offer encouragement
- celebrate successes
- laugh together

Having fun together

- sing
- be silly
- play together, following the child's lead
- talk to children about what you are doing and what they are experiencing

Using touch and eye contact

- massage
- play peek-a-boo
- snuggles, hugs and affectionate touch

Responding to children's needs consistently

- comfort children when they are upset
- feed children when they are hungry
- notice children's signals that say, "I am done" or "I need more" and meet that need



MORE INFORMATION



Understanding Attachment and the Development of Beliefs article

Adapted from presentation by Penny Davis, MA, based on training materials by Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District; Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Care Education Program; Attachment Parenting Class



Circle of Security Video

Reading this in print? Go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w-pz8m0BFM8>



Circle of Security Tool and Instructions



Rebuilding the Foundation for Children with Insecure Attachments or Trauma

by Jody McVittie, M.D.

Adapted from Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC), Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development (CEMHC).



Social Emotional Tips for Families with Infants

From ECMHC, CEMHC.



Social Emotional Tips for Families with Toddlers

From ECMHC, CEMHC.



Circle of Security International

Reading this in print? Go to:
www.circleofsecurity.net



Some Starters for Giving Positive Feedback and Encouragement

From the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.



Understanding Attachment and the Development of Beliefs

Adapted from presentation by Penny Davis, MA, based on training materials, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Care Education Program "Attachment Parenting"



Beginning at birth, through the attachment relationship with a primary caregiver, infants start making decisions about who they are, what the world is like and what place they have in it, what caregivers are like, and what they need to do in order to thrive or survive. These decisions form a blueprint in their brain for how to navigate life, and become the lens through which they view the world. All future relationships are affected by this blueprint.

When children's physical and emotional needs are met consistently, it builds a strong and healthy attachment between children and their caregivers. The dance that occurs between a sensitive, responsive caregiver and a child who clearly signals his/her needs forms a blueprint in that child's brain based on trust and security. This child sees his/her world as predictable and consistent, trusts that his/her needs will be met and that caregivers understand how he/she feels. These internal beliefs provide the foundation for a successful future at school, at work and in forming healthy relationships.

Some things that can get in the way of building secure, healthy attachments include caregiver addictions or mental health issues, abuse and/or neglect, and caregivers who did not develop secure attachments themselves or are very young or developmentally incapable of providing consistent care. When infants' needs are met inconsistently or perhaps not at all, a blueprint is formed in their brain based on mistrust and insecurity. These children grow up viewing the world as unpre-

dictable and inconsistent, caregivers as disinterested and unsympathetic, and as a result they become incapable of trusting that their needs will be met. Lacking the strong, stable foundation of secure attachment, children cannot go on to build the skills they need in order to be successful in school and in forming and maintaining relationships.

The foundation built in the brain through the relationship with primary caregivers, beginning at birth, determines how successful individuals will be in reaching their intellectual potential. The four basic building blocks that form this foundation are:

1. causal thinking
2. basic trust
3. conscience development
4. the ability to delay gratification

Causal Thinking

Causal thinking is the ability to understand cause and effect. When children's needs are met consistently, they learn that expressing a need (A) leads to the need being met (B), which helps them feel better (C). When A leads to B leads to C over and over again, children decide that the world is consistent and predictable. Some things for which we depend on causal thinking include math, spelling, organizational skills, problem solving skills, and the ability to follow directions. When we reach school-age, without causal thinking, we may not understand that two plus two will always equal four, and

so we may answer that simple math problem differently each time we encounter it. If our brain has decided that the world is not predictable, why would math be? One of the most widely used discipline methods in our society is consequences. Without causal thinking, consequences make no sense, because we don't have the ability to think through "if I do ___(this)___, ___(that)___ will happen". Later on, when we decide to go to college, the entrance requirements may be so overwhelming that we might give up because we don't have the ability to problem solve the order in which things need to be done or to think through what comes next. Lack of a strong causal thinking building block creates difficulties in life.

Basic Trust

The basic trust building block is built through the belief that our needs will be met and consequently the ability to develop a relationship with our caregiver that is based on unconditional positive regard. When we have the knowledge that we will be loved no matter what, it helps us feel safe to express ourselves, explore, and make the mistakes in life that are necessary for learning. Without basic trust, all future relationships are more difficult.

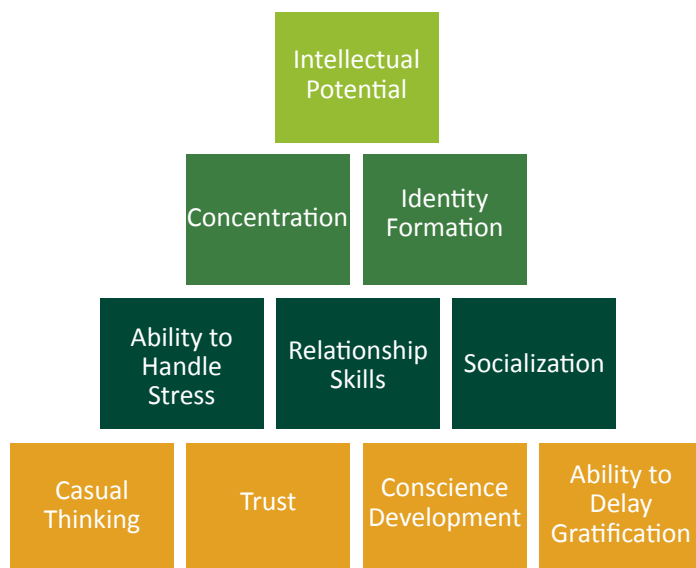
Conscience Development

Conscience development is built by developing a sense of empathy, or the ability to feel what others feel, to put oneself in another's shoes. When a caregiver is responsive to children's needs and sensitive to their feelings, they learn that others understand them, that their feelings are real and legitimate. The ability to empathize leads us to develop a sense of right and wrong. We are able to understand what it feels like for another person if we are not kind to them. Without this ability, it is difficult to understand why we should not hurt others.

Delayed Gratification

Delayed gratification is the ability to wait, to be patient. When children know their needs will be met and that caregivers understand how they feel, they are able to learn how to wait. Without a strong delayed gratification building block, we may just take what we want when we want it, because our brain has decided that if we don't, we may never get what we need.

Attachment Building Blocks



These four building blocks provide a firm foundation on which to build. Causal thinking allows for development of intellectual potential. Identity formation comes from basic trust. In order to build socialization and relationship skills, we need conscience development and delayed gratification. If the foundation is weak or non-existent, it is very difficult or impossible to move on to develop other skills.

As a result of the decisions our brains make in relationship to our early caregivers, we end up with an internalized belief system that looks like this:

- I feel _____.
- Caregivers are _____.
- The world is _____.
- I am _____.

This becomes the lens through which we view the world.

The good news is that weak foundations can be strengthened or rebuilt for children through connection with kind, caring and compassionate adults. The younger we are the easier it is to rebuild our foundation. For ideas about what you can do to begin rebuilding the foundation for children, please see *Rebuilding the Foundation for Children with Insecure Attachments* or *Trauma in the Attachment* section.



Rebuilding the Foundation for Children with Insecure Attachments or Trauma

Adapted from "Building Resiliency: Working with Students Exposed to Trauma," by Jody McVittie, M.D.

Causal Thinking

- "What" and "how" questions
- Limited Choices
- Focusing on solutions (Consequences don't make sense without causal thinking)

Basic Trust

- Routines (including family meetings)
- Consistency and reliability in the relationship
- Relationships based on dignity and respect (firm and kind)
- Listening to their story

Conscience Development

- "What" and "how" questions
- Family meetings
- Gradual building of empathy (being listened to, feeling felt)
- Respecting differences

Ability to Delay Gratification

- Routines
- Consistency
- Relationships built on dignity and respect (firm and kind)
- Family meetings
- Mistakes are opportunities to learn



Ability to Handle Stress and Concentration

- De-escalation tools (modeled, taught, expected)
- Teaching children about their own brain (brain in the palm of the hand)
- Using "I" statements
- Learning language for emotions
- Space for "chilling out" (Positive time out or "chill down time")
- Family meeting to be heard and validated, and to recognize that others have similar feelings
- Mistakes are opportunities to learn

Relationship Skills and Socialization

- Adult relationships based on dignity and respect (firm and kind)
- Family meetings
- Problem solving
- Opportunities for play and practice making mistakes
- Mistakes are opportunities to learn

Identity Formation and Intellectual Potential

- Household jobs and responsibility
- Being able to contribute in meaningful ways
- Using "I" statements and learning language for emotions
- Opportunities to practice during play
- Learning how to make amends and fix mistakes instead of "paying for them"
- "It seems like you feel _____ because _____."



Circle of Security Illustrations

How Do I Use These Tools?

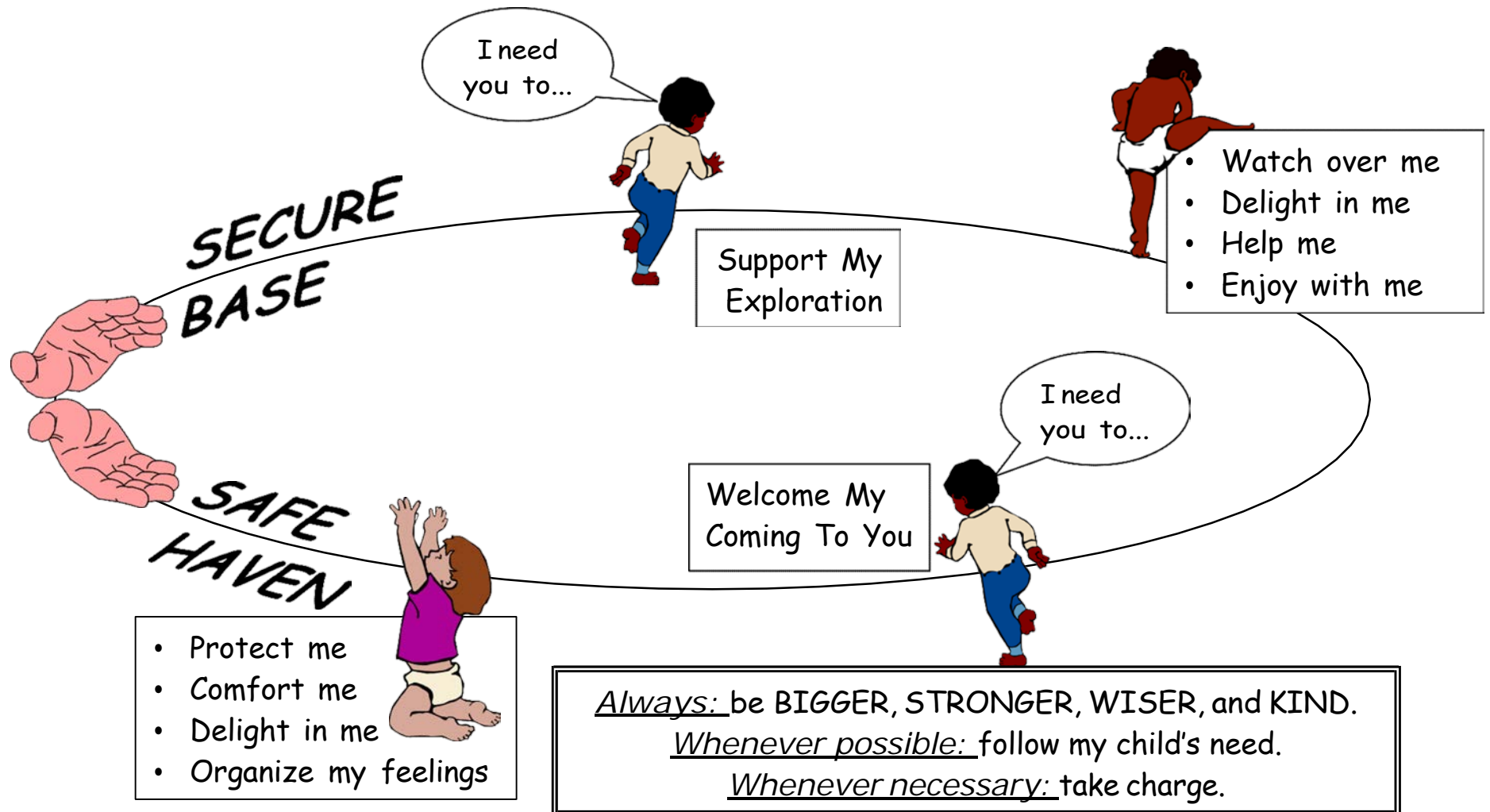
Physical and emotional safety is important to all of us, adults and children alike, and is necessary in order to thrive. In the Circle of Security caregivers provide a “secure base” that encourages and allows children to explore the world while being watched over and delighted in. Caregivers also provide a “safe haven” for children to come back to when they need comfort, protection, or help to manage their emotions.

The following illustrations explain the various circles that occur between caregivers and children as defined by Circle of Security International.



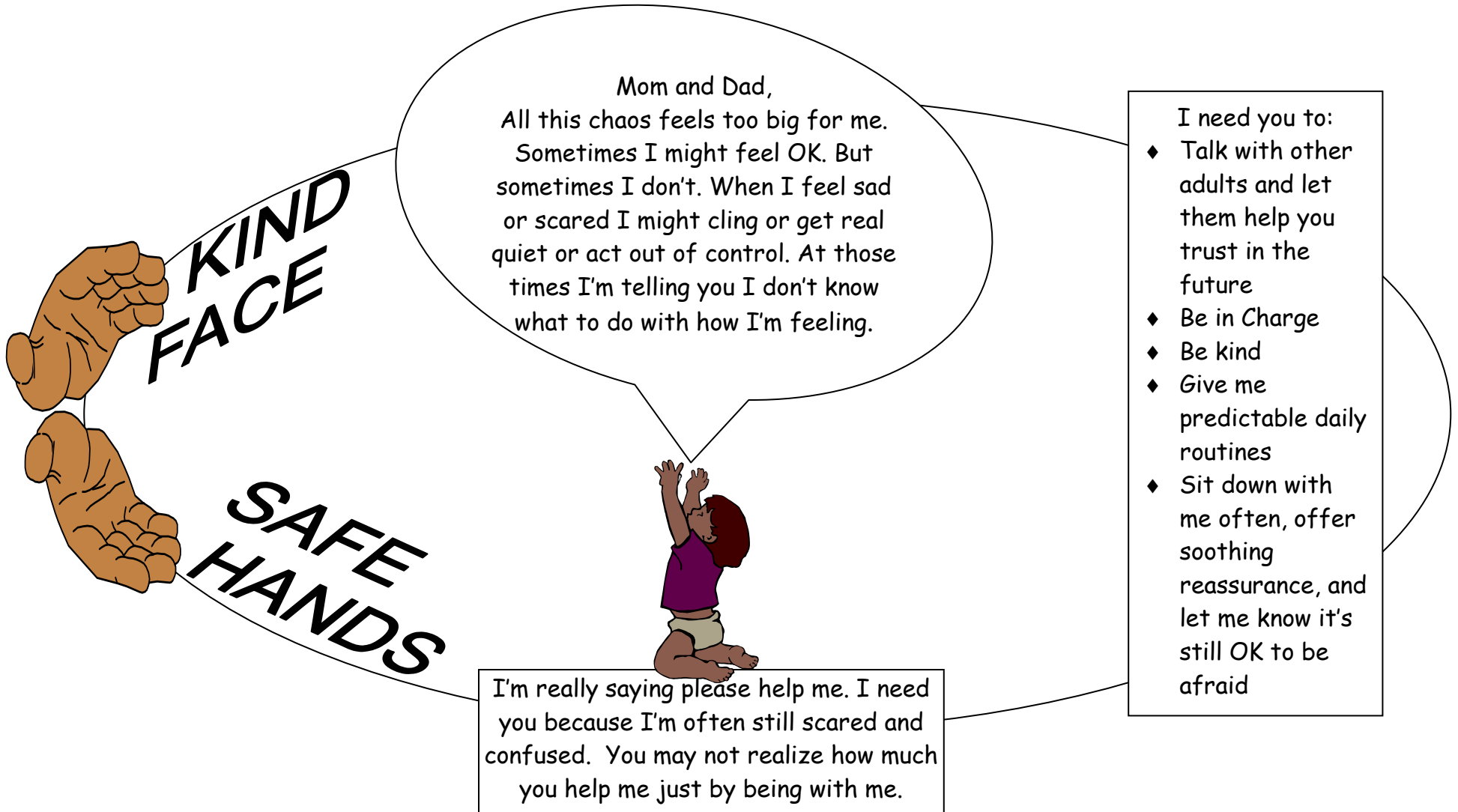
CIRCLE OF SECURITY

PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS



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.circleofsecurity.org



5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Infant's** Social Emotional Health During



Dressing

- 1** Talk about what you are doing.
"Mila, Daddy is going to put your shirt on now."
- 2** Practice patience.
"David, this shirt is hard for mommy to get over your head, I am going to try a different way."
- 3** Leave extra time.
"It will be time to go to child care soon, let's get you ready Sasha."
- 4** Offer positive words.
"Ellen you wiggled your foot into the sock. Way to go!"
- 5** Have fun.
"We got your shirt on Dedrea, let's clap your hands!"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Together, you and your infant can make dressing a special time for connecting. When you show patience and use gentle words, your infant learns from you how to be kind and patient. When you talk positively about what you are doing together your child learns that you like taking care of them, *"Daddy is going to dress you in warm clothes today for our walk, it's chilly outside."*





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Infant's** Social Emotional Health During



Meal Time

- 1** Hold your baby while feeding.
"I am going to feed you now Brayden. Mommy is going to find a comfortable spot for us."
- 2** Look in their eyes and connect.
"I see you looking at me Gabe, I love looking at you too."
- 3** Talk and sing to your baby while feeding.
"You like the orange carrots Calvin, I see that smile!"
- 4** Consider breastfeeding.
"Let's find a cozy spot for mommy to feed you Jeremiah."
- 5** Notice signs from your baby that say, "I am done" or "I need more."
"Kara you are turning your head away, I think you are all done eating."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

You and your baby can connect during mealtimes through cooing, singing and looking at each other. Babies love your face and voice. You help them to feel safe when you speak gently. When you know what your baby needs and react, for example by feeding them, it sends a message to your baby that their needs are important.





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Infant's** Social Emotional Health During



Play Time

- 1** Follow their interests.
"Lily, I see you bouncing to the music, let's dance together!"
- 2** Talk about what you see.
"Sal, look at those big, red apples! Do you want to hold one for me?"
- 3** Sing and read.
"That's it David, snuggle in and let's look at this story together."
- 4** Offer encouragement.
"Helena, you almost rolled over, come on big girl, let's try again!"
- 5** Have fun and laugh together.
"Daddy loves your giggles, Talia!"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Infants are wired to learn and connect with people they love. Playing with your baby every day builds your parent-child bond. When you sing, read and talk with your baby and look into their eyes, it helps their brain to grow.





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Infant's** Social Emotional Health During



Rest Time

- 1** Create a routine.
"Time to take a bath Gia and then we'll get ready for your nap."
- 2** Use routines across settings.
"Let's pack your favorite book and blanket for Ms. Joslyn to use with you at child care today Jayden."
- 3** Leave time for transitioning.
"We have had fun playing Hanna, let's go for our walk before bed time."
- 4** Take care of the basics.
"Justin, let's change your diaper before you rest."
- 5** Take time to refuel.
"Nina, daddy has to take a break too so we can play again later."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Infants, need time each day to rest. Just like us! Gentle routines—doing the same thing every day, will help your infant know what to expect and will help them ease into resting. Planning ahead to meet your infants needs each day will make it easier for them and for you, *"Sara, we will be out with your grandmother today, I will pack some extra diapers for you and snacks for us."*





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Infant's**
Social Emotional Health During



Diapering

- 1** Create a routine.
"Hi Derry, you had a good nap! Let's check your diaper."
- 2** Know the signs.
"Eli, I see you pulling on your diaper, do you need to be changed?"
- 3** Take time to Connect.
"Look at that big smile Henry! You make mommy smile too!"
- 4** Offer choices.
"Kia do you want the red ball or the bear to hold while daddy changes you?"
- 5** Practice patience.
"I know you don't like to be changed but we need to take good care of you. Mommy is almost done."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Diapering is an everyday routine that creates an opportunity for connecting with your infant. When you coo, babble and talk with your infant it sends a message that they are important. They love your voice and face! Creating a simple routine for diapering—doing some things the same every day, can help your infant know what to expect and will make the experience smoother for each of you, *"Daddy is going to change your diaper and sing our song and then we will go play with our toys!"*





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's** Social Emotional Health During



Dressing

- 1** Let them help.
"Mika, hold your arms up high, while I pull your shirt over your head!"
- 2** Offer choices.
"Josef, do you want to put your shirt on first or your pants?"
- 3** Practice patience.
"Anna, these socks are tough to get on! Let's take a few deep breaths and try again."
- 4** Leave extra time.
"William, we are going to child care soon, let's go see what you want to wear today."
- 5** Offer positive words.
"Nice going Elena! You got your shoe on your foot!"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Together, you and your toddler can make dressing a special time for connecting. Toddlers like to show that they can do it—"All by myself!" When you offer choices and show patience they learn that you value their efforts. This will help them to keep trying and eventually learn to dress themselves. Toddlers look to you for encouragement. Let them know their efforts matter, "*Tamika, you pulled your pants up! You are doing new things, daddy is proud of you.*"





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's**
Social Emotional Health During



Meal Time

- 1** Let them help.
"Hey Talia, I bet you could hold your spoon!"
- 2** Offer choices.
"Derek, do you want the red cup or the blue cup?"
- 3** Eat together.
"Daddy likes his rice; do you like your rice Jayden?"
- 4** Know when your child is hungry.
"Maria, I see you frowning and you are getting frustrated, let's have a snack that is good for our body."
- 5** Be a role model for healthy eating.
"Dana, let's share this banana."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Meal time offers an opportunity to connect and learn with your toddler. Take time to talk about the day together. Offering choices lets toddlers feel in control. Noticing cues that let you know your toddler is hungry or full—fussing, crying, etc. helps them feel understood.





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's**
Social Emotional Health During



Play Time

- 1** Join in!
"Ashton, Mommy, will run with you, let's go!"
- 2** Stay close by.
"Michael, I am right here, I see you playing with trucks."
- 3** Talk about what you see.
"Mia, you are jumping up and down with a big smile! You are excited."
- 4** Show her how to do new things.
"Dalia, you can hold the bowl with this hand and then stir!"
- 5** Have fun and laugh together.
"Brady, that's so silly, you make me laugh!"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Toddlers love to learn. Your toddler learns by looking, touching and interacting with things around them. When you join in and encourage learning through play, it supports your child's brain to grow—getting them ready for school and life! So, take time to have fun every day.





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's** Social Emotional Health During



Rest Time

- 1** Create a routine.
"Abia, In ten minutes we're going to read a book and then it's time for bed."
- 2** Use routines across settings.
"Eden, don't forget your cuddle bear for grandma's house so you can have it at nap time."
- 3** Offer choices.
"Keri, what pajamas do you want to wear tonight?"
- 4** Take care of the basics.
"Justin, let's change your diaper before you rest."
- 5** Take time to refuel.
"Neal, Daddy has to take a break too so we can play again later."

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Toddlers, need time each day to rest. Just like us! Gentle routines—doing the same thing every day, will help your toddler know what to expect and will help them ease into resting, *"Shana, it's time to pick out your stories for nap time."*





5 Simple Tips

To Support Your **Toddler's**
Social Emotional Health During



Diapering and Toileting

- 1** Create a routine.
"Li, let's sit on the potty and then we can wash our hands."
- 2** Know the signs.
"Tamesha, I see you pulling on your diaper, do you need to be changed?"
- 3** Offer choices.
"Grace, do you want to talk with Daddy while you are on the potty or be by yourself?"
- 4** Follow your child's lead.
"Marcelo, you are upset right now, let's try again later."
- 5** Prepare for toileting.
"Angela, do you want to read Once Upon a Potty?"

You Are Your Child's First Teacher!

Your child looks to you for support and guidance as they take on new challenges. As your toddler moves from diapers to using the potty they need your patience and support as there may be many accidents along the way. Each child moves at their own pace and when you read their cues and find ways to support them, this stage can be less frustrating for everyone, *"Shana nice job pulling up your pants! Thanks for trying, let's go wash our hands."*



Some Starters for Giving Positive Feedback and Encouragement

- “You do a dynamite job of...”
- “You have really learned how to...”
- “You must feel proud of yourself for...”
- “Excellent idea for...”
- “You’ve done a wonderful job at...”
- “See how _____ has improved in...”
- “You have worked so hard...”
- “Look how well s/he did at...”
- “That’s a resourceful way of...”
- “WOW!! What a fabulous job you’ve done of...”
- “That’s a cool way to ...”
- “I’m so appreciative that you...”
- “It really pleases me when you...”
- “You’ve really grown up because you...”
- “You are a real problem solver for...”
- “Brilliant thinking for...”
- “Give me an EXTRA HUGE high five for...”
- “Class, I have an announcement! Let’s all give a hip, hip hooray to _____ for _____”
- “I really appreciate the way all of you have your eye on the story and are listening so carefully. It’s like you have eye-ball glue!!!”



Your favorites here...

- “
- “
- “
- “

