



Circle of Security Parenting

**Bea Anderson, Glasgow Infant & Family Team (NSPCC)
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Overview

- * **What is Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P)?**
- * **Development and theoretical underpinnings**
- * **Content and delivery**
- * **Applications of COS-P**
- * **Evidence base**
- * **Training**

What is COS-P?

- * 8 chapter caregiver psychoeducation/reflection programme
- * Developed by Glen Cooper, Kent Hoffman & Bert Powell in Spokane, WA.
- * Promotes more secure attachment by increasing caregiver capacity to meet child's needs.
- * Provides caregiver with experience of secure base/safe haven.
- * Universal/preventive or preliminary work for high risk families



“He’s just doing that to get attention.”

Theory of Change

* WHY?

- * Reflective/empathic responses → child security/less distress
- * Reduced negative attribution → better capacity to use caregiver
- * Caregiver increased awareness → regulated, available, responsive

* HOW?

- * Simple attachment 'roadmap'
- * Education + video review + reflective prompts and discussion
- * Builds reflective skills and empathy
- * Short term: learn to identify needs/respond
- * Long-term: promote security through recognition/repair of ruptures

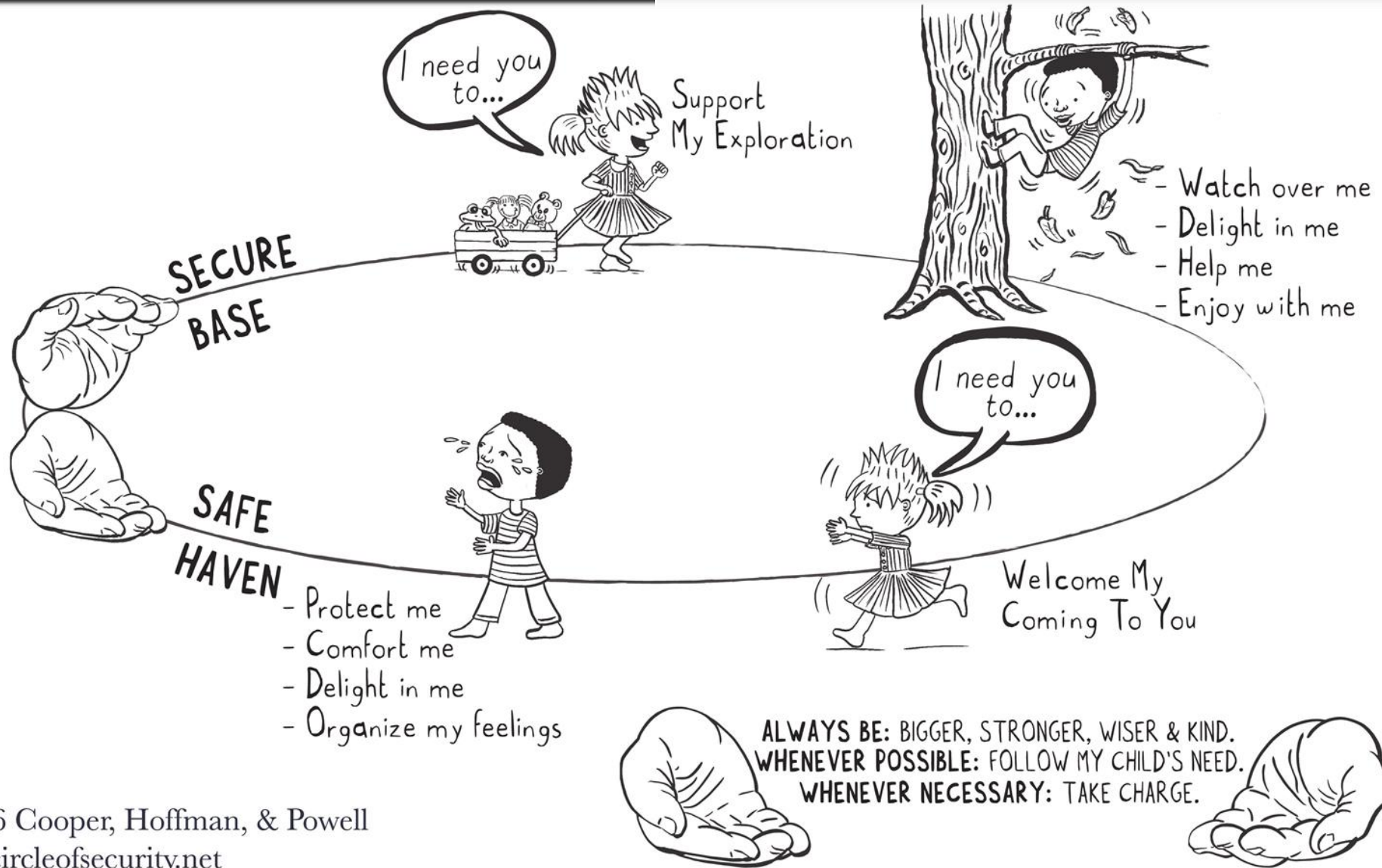
Development & Theoretical Underpinnings

- * Family systems, object relations and esp. attachment theories
- * Bringing coherence to universal concerns: struggles with disconnection and emotional regulation.
- * Pilot clinical approach with parents in local home visiting prog. and prog. for homeless/street-dependent parents → refinement.
- * 1998 – 20wk clinical group protocol (now ‘COS Intensive’ model)
- * 2007 – 8wk (group) reflection program (‘COS Parenting’)

Content & Delivery

- * **Key principles:**
 - * **Critical importance of attachment relationships**
 - * **Attachment relationships are amenable to change**
 - * **Lasting change comes through capacities, not techniques**
 - * **Universality of struggles as parents; aim for 'good enough'**
 - * **All caregivers want best for children; shame/blame 'dead end street'**

All the way around the Circle



Key Concepts

- * Being with
- * Shark music
- * Cues and miscues
- * Rupture and repair



Clinical Applications

- * **Highly versatile**
 - * **Mode of delivery: Individuals, couples, groups**
 - * **Use with caregivers (birth, foster, kinship)**
 - * **Universal to specialist applications**
 - * **Pace and depth flexible (e.g. addition of family footage)**
- * **Modelling: integrity, compassion, being with, boundaries**
- * **Can be helpful precursor to more intensive interventions**

Systems Applications

- * **Use of COSP in context of multi-agency partnership**
- * **Shared language around attachment and relationships**
- * **Contributes to formulation around relationship needs**
 - * **E.g. cues/miscues, caregiver's struggles**
- * **Can clarify objectives**
 - * **What changes to support for child, caregiver, relationship**

Evidence Base

- * **EI Foundation rates COS-P 2+ (promising) for evidence**
 - * Cassidy et al. (2017) RCT – improved maternal response, improved child inhibitory control
 - * International small-scale studies showing range of impacts mainly on caregiver measures e.g. attributions, confidence, mentalising. One study showed reduction in staff negative judgements.
- * **COS-P evidence base growing**
 - * Current international RCTs, e.g. Anna Freud with women in perinatal mental health services

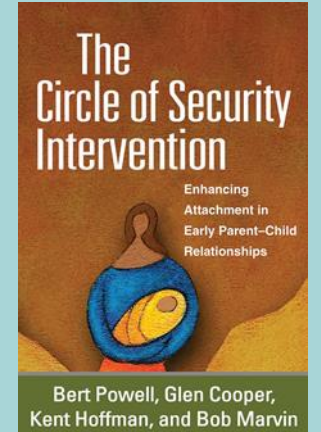
Training

- * Can be delivered by diverse practitioners
- * Four-day training in COS-P (in person/online)
- * No examination
- * Training manual + DVD + online resources
- * No supervision required; opt-in 'fidelity coaching' available
- * EI foundation rates '1' (low) for cost

Further Reading

<https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/>

**Powell, B., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K. & Marvin, B. (2016)
The Circle of Security Intervention; Enhancing
Attachment in Early Parent-Child Relationships. The
Guilford Press.**



**Hoffman, K., Cooper, G., Powell, B. & Benton, C. (2016)
Raising a Secure Child: How Circle of Security Parenting
Can Help You Nurture Your Child's Attachment,
Emotional Resilience, and Freedom to Explore. The
Guilford Press.**

