

Attachment Based Group Work with Asylum Seekers

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Why this was an identified need

- Responding to referral information and client presentations
- Parenting issues were presenting in individual and children's counselling (2015)
- Increase in referrals of mothers with parenting difficulties (2016)
- Link to research

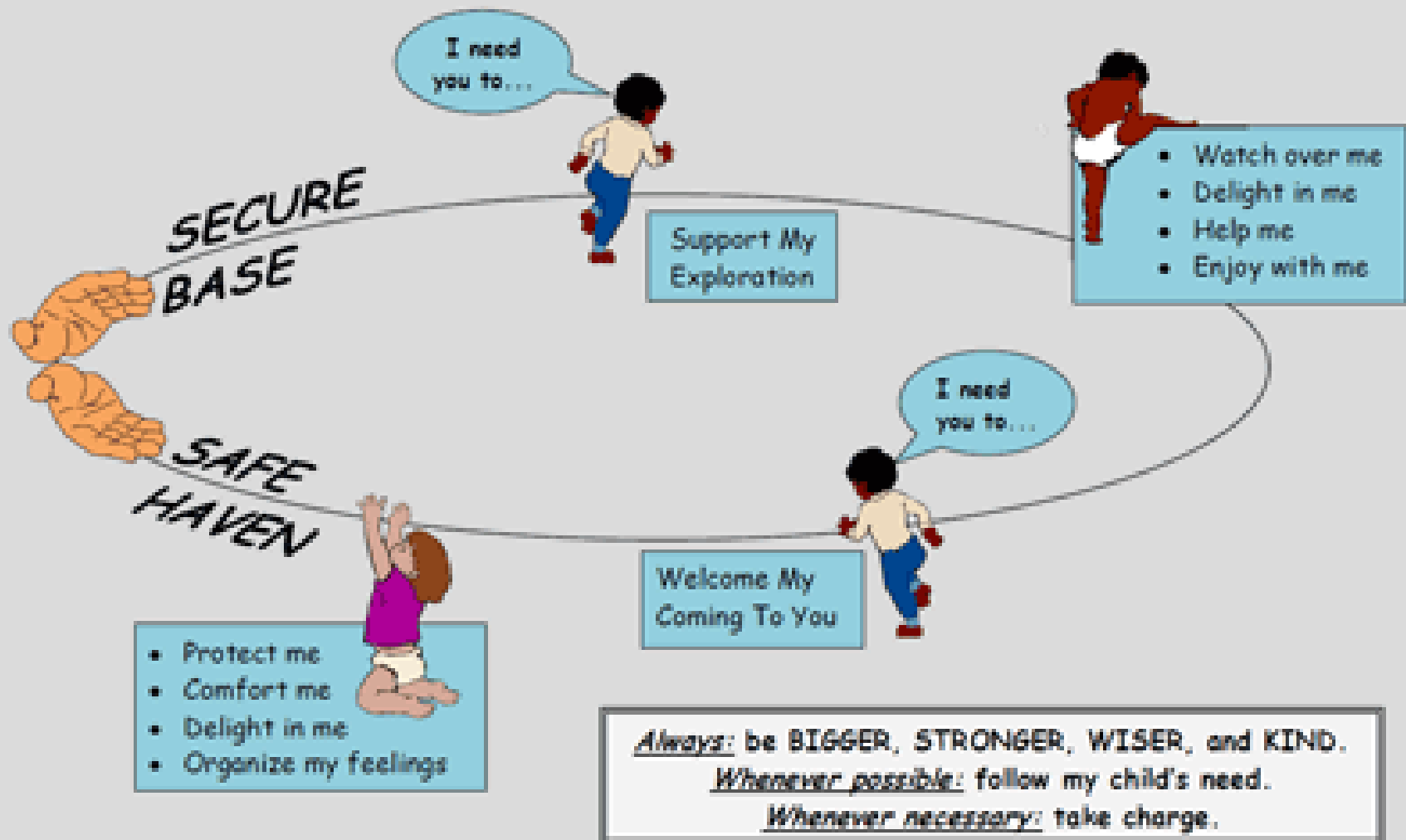
Circle of Security

www.circleofsecurity.net

- Developed by Glen Cooper, Kent Hoffman and Bert Powell in the US
- Relationship based early intervention program designed to enhance attachment security between parent and child
- Helps parents and carers to identify their children's emotional needs and respond in an emotionally available way

CIRCLE OF SECURITY[®]

PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS



2015 Group with Tamil Speaking Parents

- The first group was conducted as a trial to explore the effectiveness for asylum seeker parents
- Co-facilitated by a presenter from Kyabra who had experience in Circle of Security and a QPASTT counsellor
- It was a closed group consisting of mothers and fathers, that ran for 6 weeks

Evaluation

- Limitations – conducted by the QPASTT counsellor from the group, evaluations conducted in groups
- *“I found it useful to develop a balance between being too lenient and to strict and how to remain loving”*
- *“Before the group when our children were crying I would tell them ‘just stop crying now’ but now I stop and try to analyse the situation, think about what is upsetting them and try to find a solution”*
- *“We now have a shared understanding of how to deal with a situation. We are confident that the other will deal with it in a way that we agree with”*

Recommendations

- Location
- Transport
- Interpreter
- Translated materials
- Childcare
- Food, and
- QPASTT counsellor

2015 Group with Farsi Speaking Parents

- Current clients or parents of clients
- Mix of couples and individual parents
- Facilitator continued, new interpreter and location
- Feedback from group members
- Positive influence of group, and of Circle of Security model
- Evaluations: strongest response in area of meeting new friends and sharing parenting life experiences/learning from one another

2016 Group with Farsi Speaking Mothers

- Current clients and waitlist clients, Nauru focus, mothers only (with symptoms of poor attachment, grief, depression, severe posttraumatic stress)
- Facilitator, interpreter and location continued
- Feedback from previous groups helped shape this group
- Feedback from group members/Facilitators observations

Feedback

- Pre-evaluations:

"I can't make a good connection with my child so I decided to attend this course"

"For improve being as a parent"

- Post-evaluations:

"I learned how to attend to my child's needs and also how to organise her feeling"

"When we know children's need better we manage to get along with them better"

"Now I know my daughter's needs"

'I used to think my child wanted hug only for attention but now I know she need their feeling organised by wanting to be hugged'

"Yes, I have become more patient and try to meet my daughter's needs"

Limitations and Challenges

- Facilitators not being from the same cultural background as participants
- Childcare provided by a cultural support worker not necessarily trained in childcare
- Difficulty to attend group without support (taxis were provided each week)
- Possible suspicion by participants of services, including potential suspicion of any research process
- Unknown relationships between the participants and cultural judgements
- Working with clients not known to the service in a therapeutic group setting
- Instability/uncertainty of participants life in Australia
- Working with participants possible fear of return to Nauru
- Funding limitations

Strengths and Opportunities

- Experienced facilitators with familiarity in working with asylum seekers and/or the Circle of Security
- Experienced interpreters who could engage the participants
- QPASTT resources to run the group effectively
- Running a succession of groups, collecting feedback and using this to plan subsequent groups
- Opportunity for participants new to QPASTT to build trust in QPASTT and be supported prior to commencing counselling
- Group work offers normalising of experiences and a shared understanding of the challenges faced
- Opportunity for participants to develop positive supportive relationships with others within their community

Future Recommendations

- Engaging participants in individual counselling
- Follow up sessions or ongoing informal parenting support group
- Future groups with the partners of previous participants
- Funding for group work with asylum seekers
- Future research in the effectiveness of attachment based groups for asylum seekers - including longitudinal research

“Now I know children need to be hugged”