



*Circle of Security:
An Attachment Based Intervention*

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Circle of Security

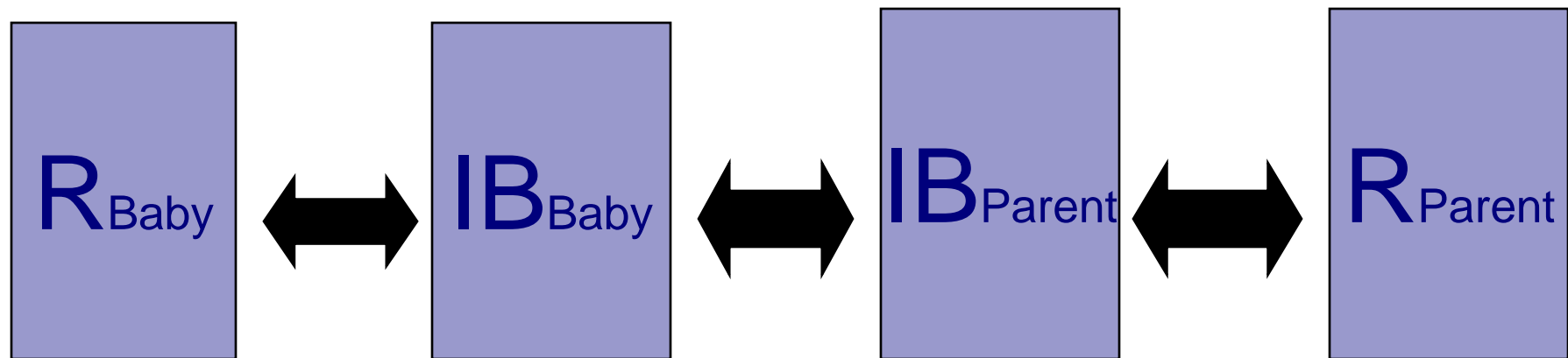
- Relationship based intervention designed to change child's behavior through changes in parent's behavior
- Developed by Bert Powell, Kent Hoffman, Glen Cooper, and Bob Marvin
- Derived from attachment and object relations theories
- Shares features of
 - Interaction guidance
 - Child parent psychotherapy
 - CBT



COS: An Intervention

- Consistent with attachment theory and research
- Caregiver has greater degrees of freedom for initiating dyadic change
- Focuses on both the caregiver's Internal Working Models of self and child **and** on his/her caregiving behavior
- Uses either group or individual therapy models

Components of Infant-Parent Relationship



Adapted from Bruschiweiler–Stern and Stern, 1989



Basics of COS Protocol

- Pre-intervention videotaped, structured assessment to inform treatment goals
- Group-based parent education and psychotherapy lasting ~20-weeks using videotaped intervention
- Goals of video review are to:
 - increase sensitivity to the child's cues
 - increase self-other reflective capacity
 - explore new representations and interaction patterns

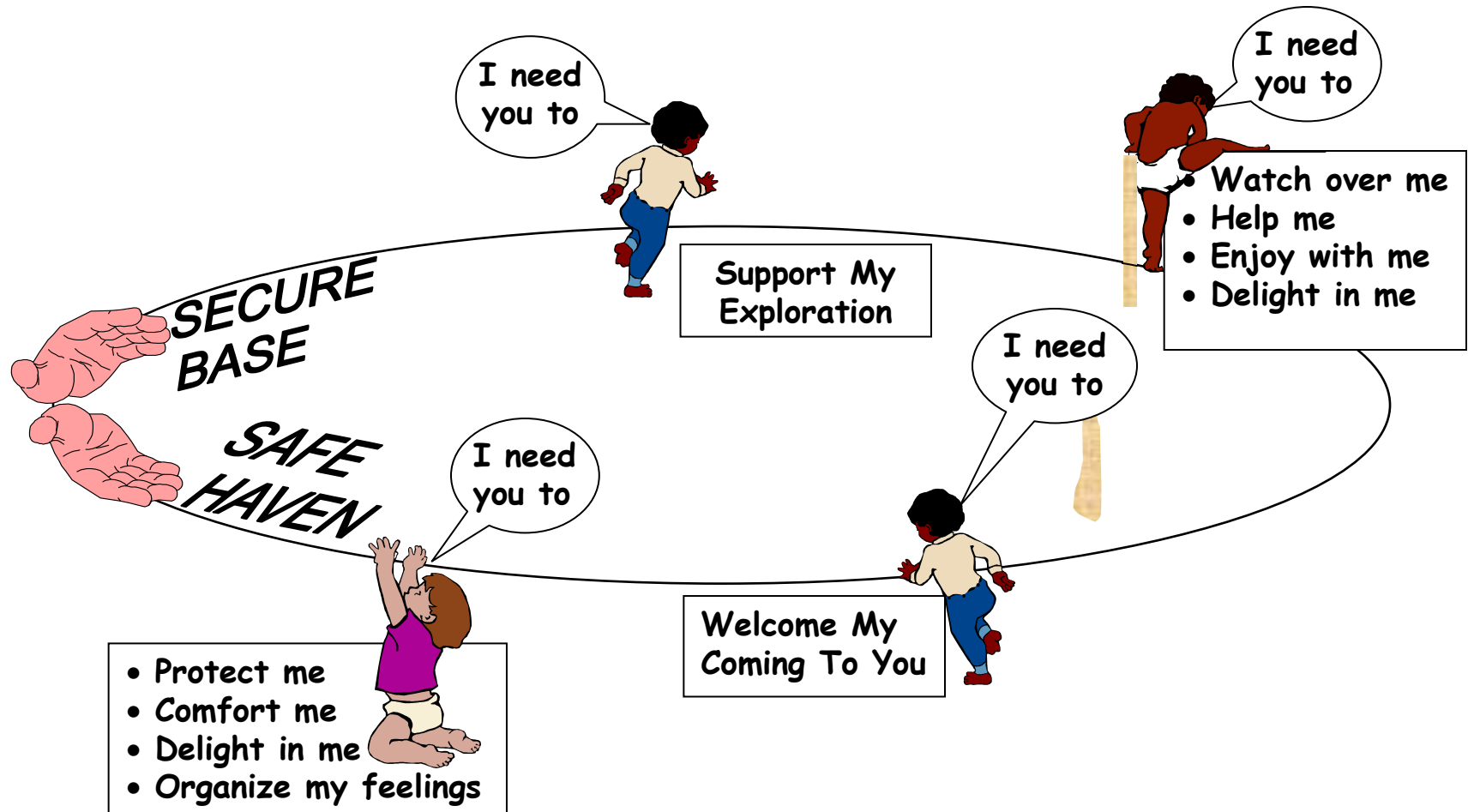



Circle of Security Graphic

- A guide for the therapist to negotiate becoming a secure base and safe haven for the caregiver.
- Learning tool for caregivers to see, understand and support their children's attachment and exploratory needs.
- Allows the clinician to assess caregiver/child dyad.
- Treatment plan is tailored to address particular dyad's strengths and struggles on the Circle of Security.

Circle of Security

Parent Attending to the Child's Needs





(Almost)
Everything I Need to Know
About Being a Parent
in
25 Words or less

- *Always*: be **BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND.**
 - *Whenever possible*: follow your child's need.
 - *Whenever necessary*: take charge.



Assessment

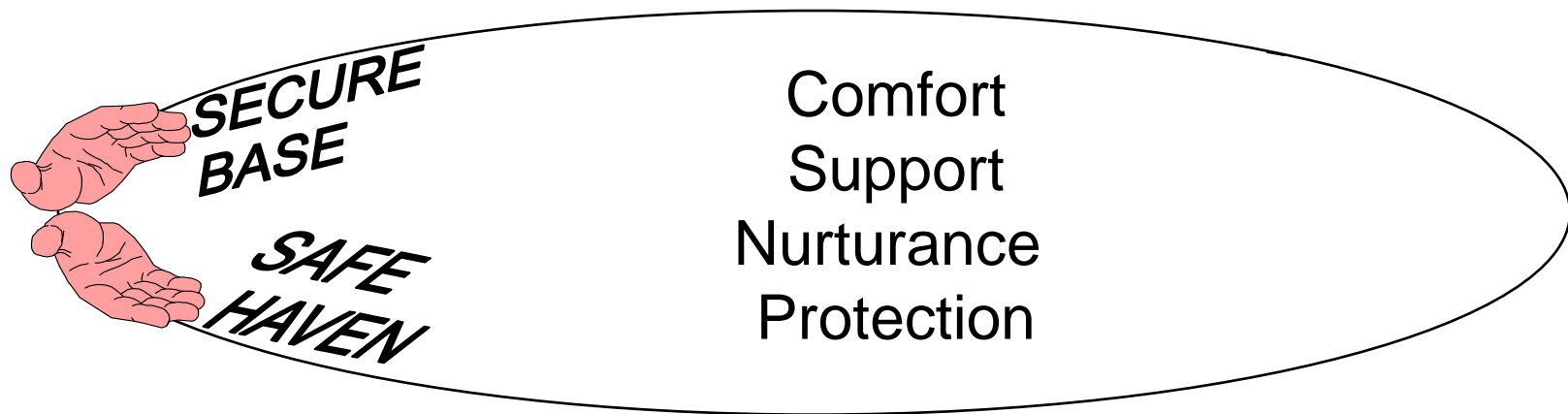
■ Research

- SSP plus read a book (5 min) and clean up toys (3 min)
 - Coded using Ainsworth or MacArthur system
 - Caregiver behavior coding system
- COSI
 - 5 questions about SSP
 - 20 questions about perceptions of child
 - 6 questions about family of origins

■ Clinical

- Child's attachment and exploratory behaviors
- Parent's behaviors responding to child's needs
- Parent's perceptions, meaning of child and parent behavior

Circle of Security: Hands




ability to maintain a position of bigger, stronger, wiser and kind



Top of the Circle: Facilitating Exploration

- Watch over me
- Help me
- Enjoy with me
- Delight in me

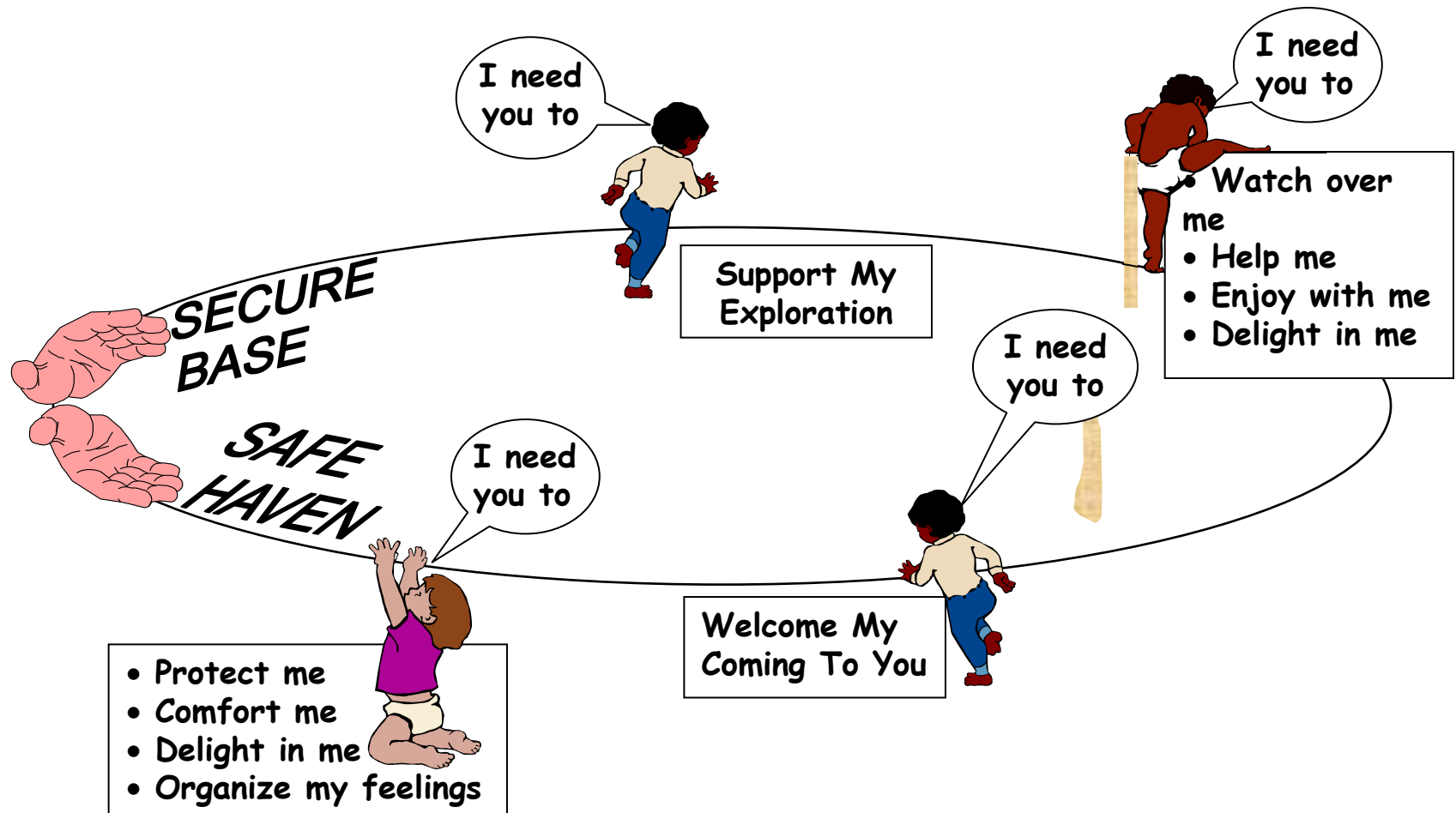


*Bottom of the Circle:
Facilitating Contact/Proximity Seeking*

- Protect me
- Comfort me
- Delight in me
- Organize my feelings

Circle of Security

Parent Attending to the Child's Needs





Strange Situation Procedure

- Standardized, laboratory (playroom) procedure involving series of episodes
- Infant, caregiver and an unfamiliar adult (Stranger)
- Designed to examine balance between infant's attachment (proximity seeking) and exploration.
- Lasts between 20-25 minutes
- Organization of infant's attachment behavior towards caregiver--may differ with different caregivers



Attachment Classifications

Infancy

Secure

Avoidant

Resistant/Ambivalent

Disorganized

Preschool

Secure

Avoidant

Resistant/Dependent

Disorganized/Controlling

Insecure-Other



Secure Attachment

- Distressed by separation
- Direct expression of negative affect
- Clear approach and expectation of comfort
- Settled by caregiver's attempts to soothe
- 55-65% in low risk samples

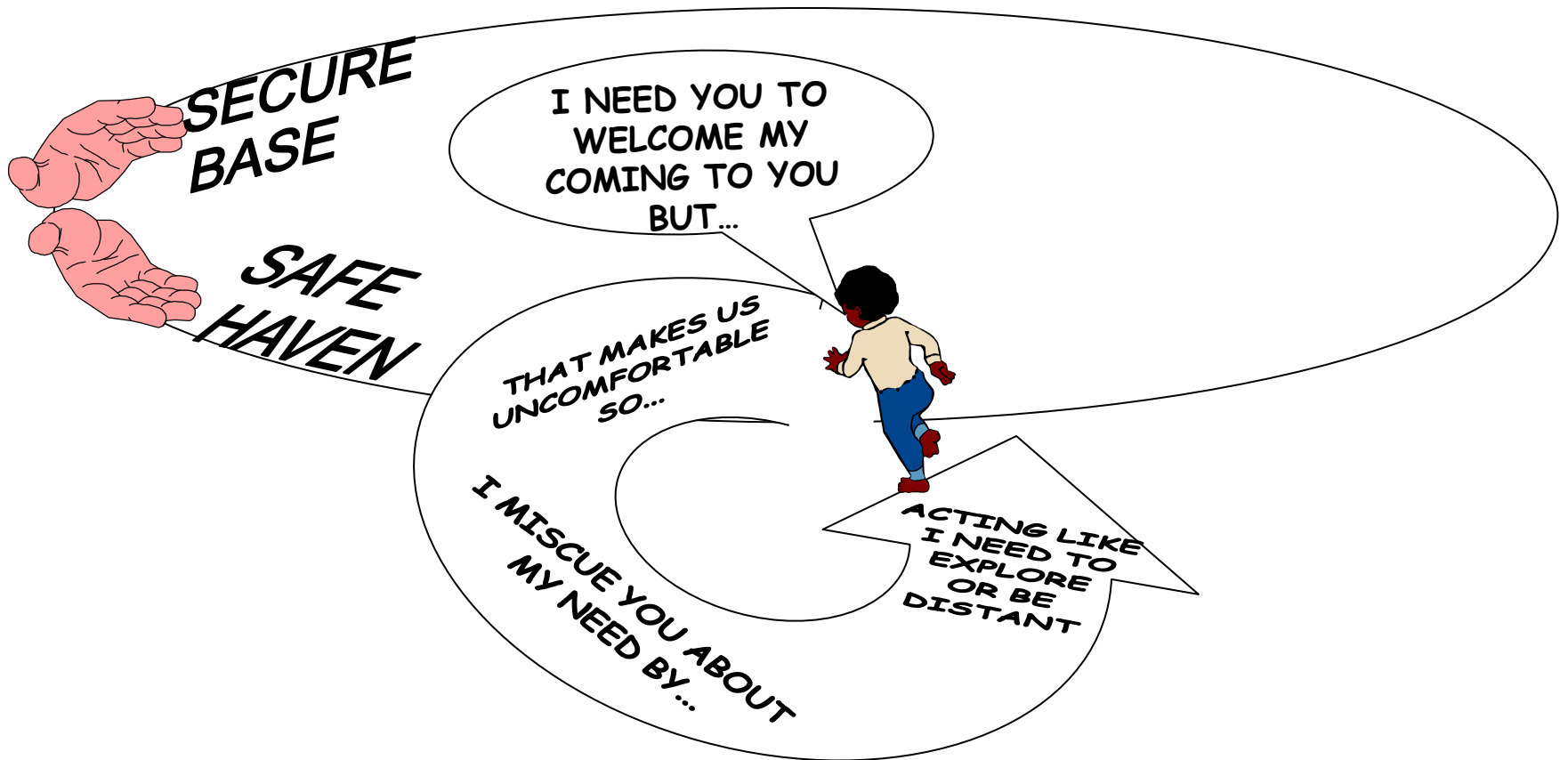


Avoidant Attachment

- Minimal response to separation
- Either minimal reaction during reunion or active avoidance of caregiver during reunion; attention focused on toys
- Implicit claim of strength, independence, normalcy
- hypoactivation of attachment system
- Physiologic arousal
- 15-20% in low risk samples

Circle of Limited Security

Child Anxious about the Parent's Needs



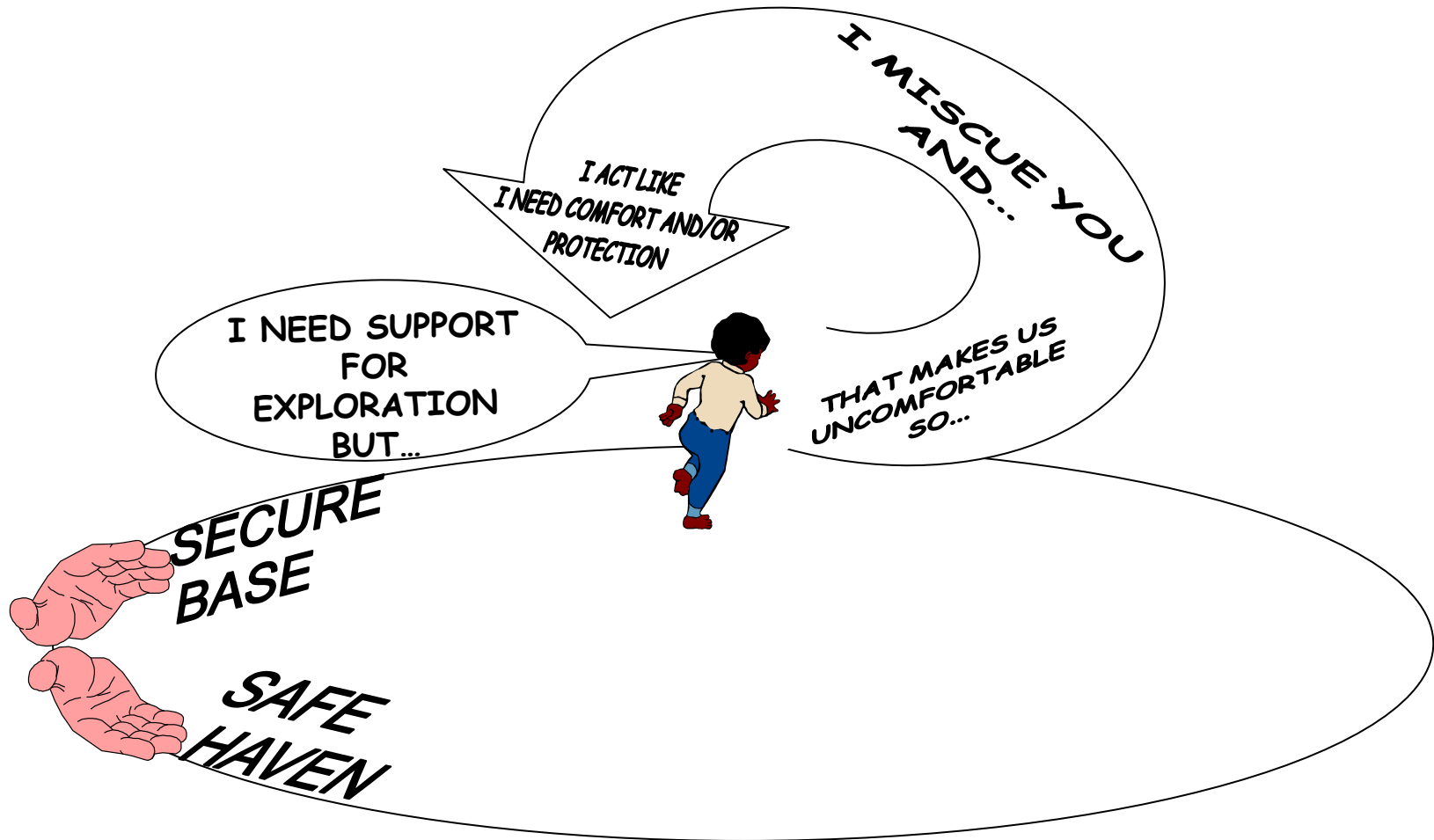


Resistant/Ambivalent Attachment

- Distressed by separation
- Unable to be soothed by caregiver
- Either passively overwhelmed or angrily preoccupied
- Hyperactivation of attachment system
- 5-10% in low risk samples

Circle of Limited Security

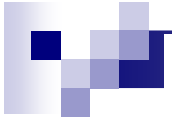
Child Anxious about the Parent's Needs





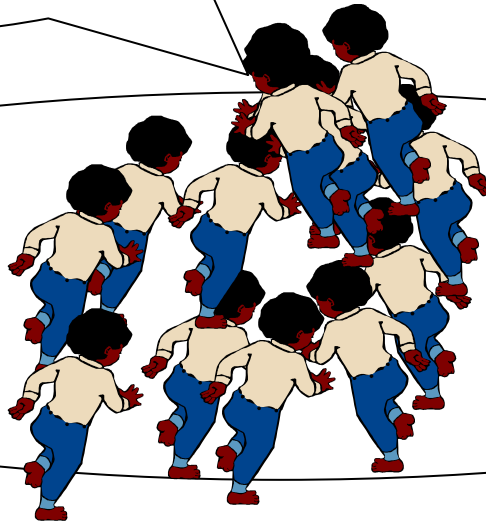
Disorganized Attachment

- Derived from aberrant organization of child's attachment behavior in presence of caregiver
 - contradictory attachment behaviors
 - behaviors lacking goal orientation
 - direct indices of fear/apprehension
- Underlying pattern (secure, avoidant, or resistant) usually evident



Circle of Disorganization

I need you but you are so
frightened or frightening
that I have no one to turn
to and I don't know what
to do.





Protocol

- Week 1, 2 Introduce Circle, power of relationship, cues and miscues
- Weeks 3-10 Tape review #1
- Week 11 Introduce Shark music
- Week 12-19 Tape review #2
- Week 20 Graduation celebration



Port of Entry

- Core fear is abandonment.
- Therapist conducts a “differential diagnosis of each parent’s specific relational paradigm.”
- Based on belief that each parent approaches attachment relationships with a particular lens regarding sense of self and sense of other.
- Three core sensitivities that range from adaptive to personality disorders.



Three Types of Sensitivities

Adaptive

- Separation
- Esteem
- Safety

Disordered

- Borderline
- Narcissistic
- Schizoid



Separation Sensitivity

- To avoid perceived abandonment, they must comply with what others – including their children - want, need, and feel, while disavowing their own wants, needs and feelings.
- Feel incapable of living without feeling the continual availability of significant others.
- Their job is to focus on another's needs and appear to be helpless regarding their own.
- Struggle to allow their children an experience of autonomy while exploring but are unable to genuinely provide comfort.



Esteem Sensitivity

- Who they are, just as they are (imperfect, flawed, average) is not enough to be valued.
- Must prove that they and their children are worthy (unique, special, exceptional, anything but average, etc.) through performance and achievement.
- Vigilant about any implication of having failed or being inadequate as parents or having others see their child as inadequate.
- Pressure their children for achievement and performance and struggle to provide comfort and organization of feelings.



Safety Sensitivity

- Cost of being connected and emotionally close to their children is the loss of self-determination.
- Perceptions of being controlled and/or intruded upon by their children.
- Must maintain a position of self-sufficiency, and to expect self-sufficiency from their children.
- Child's lack of fulfillment leads to demands that reconfirm the parent's view of significant others as demanding and controlling.



Linchpin Issue

- *Linchpin struggle*--the key defensive pattern of attachment-caregiving interaction and caregiver internal working model that most maintains the pattern of insecurity in the dyad.
- Questions
 - Is the parent in charge—providing safety and structure? [Hands]
 - Can the parent reliably provide comfort to child? [Bottom of circle]
 - Can parent allow exploration for child? [Top of circle]



Tape Review #1

- Apply learning about circle to child.
- Highlight underutilized strength.
- Talk about child's struggle on circle.
- Name that need.
- Learn about cues vs. miscues.



Tape Review #2

- Welcome to the Club
 - Everyone struggles
- Shark Music
- Need-Shark-Movie
- Alternative



Key Features

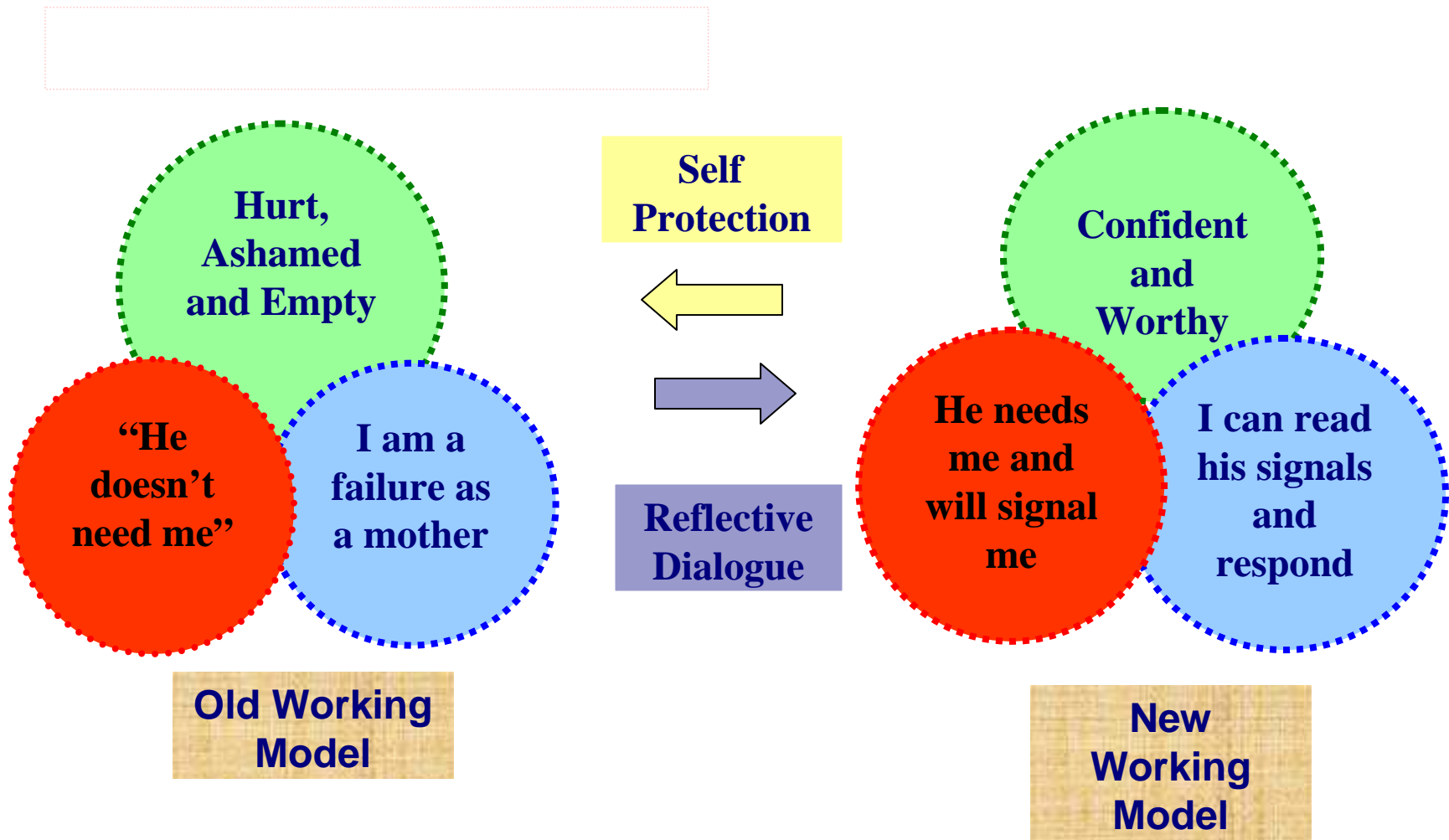
- Actively engages parents wish to be a better parent
 - Beautiful tape
- Video rich
- Visual aids
 - Magnets
 - Handouts
 - Photographs
- Blending of psychoeducation with psychotherapy



Case

- Virginia 38 years old
- David 15 months
- 4 oldest in custody of state because mother abused drugs
- Later quite depressed
- Enrolled in SA Residential treatment with youngest
- Baby avoids mom—she feels pressure to create CPS proof bond with him.

Virginia's Representational World





Interactive Behavior

- Virginia will need to see how her wish to have her son “fill her void” is influencing her behavior
 - She is very intrusive
 - He is very avoidant
 - She experiences his avoidance as not “needing her” and, with the weight of having lost her other children, pushes harder for connection



Formulation/Pitch

- You are special to David.
- You feel pressure to make it work with him because you lost your other children
- You deal with this pressure by trying to control him (play on your terms)
- This makes both of you feel bad.
- You also isolate yourself socially—this compounds your distress
- In your desire to keep him close, you are pushing him away
- You are capable of more, and he wants to feel closer to you.

Circle of Change

Parent Prioritizing the Child

