

COS for Parents & Professionals Regarding Caregiving in a Time of Disaster and Crisis

Circle of Security Project

www.circleofsecurity.org

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Here's how we hope the Circle of Security Website might be helpful for parents and children whose world has been turned upside down in a time of disaster and crisis:

1. Take a look at three specific downloads: a) The *Circle of Trust*, b) the *Circle of Security*, and c) "*Traveling Around the Circle*." Each download will give you specific information about the importance of primary caregivers in the emotional life of their children, most especially in times such as these.
2. Read the following brief synopsis regarding the importance of a primary caregiver in helping children in crisis deal with feelings of fear and helplessness.
3. Read the "Summary of Circle Related Themes in a Time of Crisis for Parents and Professionals"

Helping Children of All Ages Deal with Feelings of Fear and Helplessness

- One of the biggest problems for children of any age in the face of a traumatic event will center on how they deal with their sense of fear and helplessness.
- The worst danger isn't that children experience fear. The worst danger comes when fear is not recognized and accepted by a safe and secure caregiver.
- A child's sense of fear, when it is unattended to by a caregiver, moves in the direction of terror.
- The child's sense of helplessness, when unshared and unregulated by the caregiver, moves in the direction of despair.
- Terror (unregulated fear) and despair (unregulated helplessness) become overwhelming for children primarily because they doesn't feel like they can be shared with and organized by someone who is bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind. ("I'm all alone in this worry and weakness with no one with whom I can share it.")
- Hence, the goal is to find a way to give caregivers a sense of clear direction and sound encouragement in offering themselves as a resource for the management of fear and powerlessness.
- The *Circle of Trust* was designed to offer parents and professionals direction and clarity about how essential parents are to their children in a time of trauma and crisis. Attachment research fully supports how valuable parents are in circumstances where it may appear that they themselves are without usefulness and value.

- More than anyone else during a time of disaster, a child's primary caregivers are the center of that child's world and are *the* resource who can make all the difference.
- Offering predictable daily routines that a child can count on becomes a valuable resource, especially when these routines are sponsored by a trusted caregiver. (Bedtime rituals, morning rituals, etc.)
- Finding examples of specific things, events, and people for which to be grateful in the midst of great difficulty can become a resource for a family in crisis.

Summary of Circle of Security Related Themes in a Time of Crisis for Parents and Professionals

In a time of crisis, central among the capacities that children will be looking for will be:

1. The caregiver's ability to take charge and be firm, yet kind and caring (bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind),
2. The caregiver's choice to consistently soothe her/his child(ren), focusing on each child's clear (or hidden) cues of distress,
3. The caregiver's decision to consistently be available for protection, comfort, and organization of any feelings that a child (themes on the bottom of the Circle of Security)
4. The caregiver's recognition that only as the child is feeling safe on the bottom half of the Circle will s/he begin to venture out on the top half of the Circle in the direction of exploration and play
5. The caregiver's recognition that the child will inevitably return again and again to the bottom half of the Circle, with seemingly "unreasonable" and "endless" needs for reassurance. This is to be expected, because the child will be wanting
6. The caregiver's realization that underneath most of a child's problems and meltdowns is a simple but sometimes-difficult-to-understand request for reassurance,
7. The caregiver's willingness to simply be available, rather than thinking that specific problem solving skills, is needed.