



Introduction

Marylebone Families, a community-based initiative affiliated to St Mary's Bryanston Square, has started to run Circle of Security© Groups for parents with babies and children under the age of 5 years. Marylebone Families runs many activities to support families in central London and is delighted to now be able to offer this renowned programme to parents.

What is the Circle of Security©?

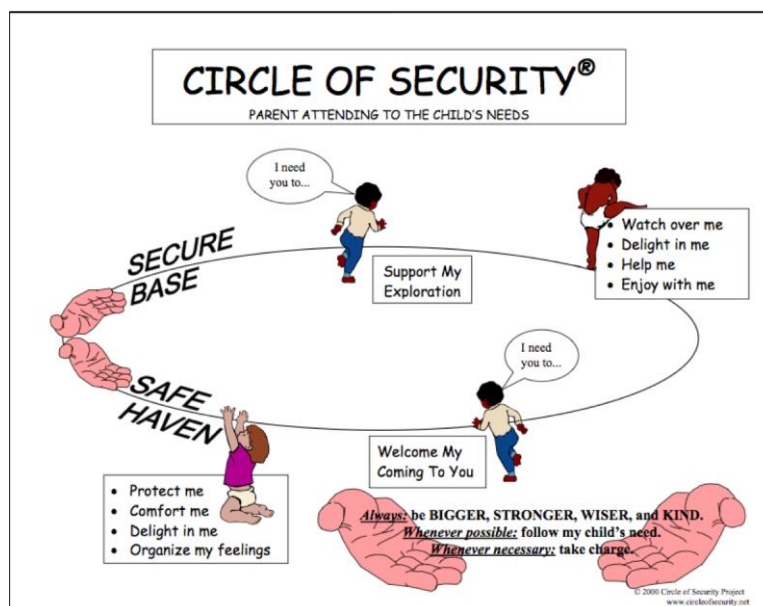
Circle of security Groups are user-friendly, non-judgmental and highly enjoyable. Their aim is to helping families tune into and respond to the emotional needs of their children. The groups will use the Circle of Security© (COS) Parenting DVD programme. The COS is a highly respected, evidence-based clinical application of Attachment Theory¹. It was developed in the USA by 3 psychotherapists to meet the needs of the population using the Head Start programme and as such is accessible to participants from different cultures, socio-economic backgrounds and family structures. The group structure is flexible and can be adapted to work for different groups

Decades of University based research has confirmed that securely attached children exhibit increased empathy, greater self-esteem, better relationships with parents and peers, enhanced school readiness, increased capacity to handle emotions more effectively when compared to children who are not secure. COS takes the volumes of research on attachment theory and puts it in language that families can understand.

The COS protocol differs from previous intervention approaches in several important ways. First, it teaches caregivers the fundamentals of attachment theory (i.e., children's use of the caregiver as a secure base from which to explore and a safe haven in times of distress) by using a user-friendly graphic that becomes available for immediate and ongoing reference by caregivers (see overleaf). Second, the COS protocol focuses on both parenting behaviors and internal working models. Third, the protocol is remarkably direct in presenting caregivers with a simple, user-friendly structure for considering the ways in which their internal working models influence their cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to their children. The goal is to provide accessible language that gives caregivers awareness and understanding of the non-conscious, problematic responses they sometimes have to their children's

¹ Information for Referring Profession Clinical and academic evidence for effectiveness of COS can be found in the accompanying paper: The Circle of Security Research 2010 or on the COS website: www.circleofsecurity.net

needs. Simply put: The COS approach provides caregivers with the skills to understand their children's behaviour, and the skills to understand and regulate their own cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to their children.



Who would benefit from this?

It would be our understanding that any parents of small children would enjoy the opportunity to tune in to the emotional needs of their children. However the programme was designed to be particularly helpful to families where the caregivers find it hard to have empathy for their child or to comprehend and respond to their child's emotional needs. The programme has consistently proven to be very successful with clients where there are high levels of disorganization and insecurity in the caregiver: child attachments.²

How can I refer clients?

Jenny Peters and Clare Gates³, co-founders of Marylebone Families, will run the groups. Parents would either self-refer (via the toddler groups or website) or be referred by Westminster health care professionals using the attached referral forms. Participants would attend an initial meeting with Jenny or Clare for the purposes of basic data collection and orientation and thereafter would be encouraged to the eight sessions, which are a mixture of DVD material and facilitated discussions. In the case of parents referred by Westminster council, close liaison with the referring professional would be the norm and feedback would be provided at the end of the course with the prior agreement of the participant. Attendance will be free of charge and where necessary we will endeavour to provide childcare by prior arrangement.

Course and Contact Details

The groups run in the lower ground floor of St Mary's Bryanston Square, Crawford Street, W1. See website for dates of next course. .

Website: www.stmaryslondon.com/cosgroup

Jenny Peters (02072585040) jenny@stmaryslondon.com:

Main COS website: www.circleofsecurity.net

² See Circle of Security Research Paper

³ See detailed profiles 'Marylebone Families – Information for Referring Professionals'