IAC
Instituto de Apoio à Criança

CONSCIOUS PARENT ACADEMY

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Working with children with special/different needs:

Managing the child well-being and needs.

28 February 2023

Managing the children's well-being and needs as a foster family

Children in foster care have specific needs that require special attention from the foster family, which has to be able to:

1. Provide a family environment that promotes physical, emotional, and psychological security.

2. Promote a trusting, affectionate, responsive, and reliable relationship.

3. Meet the physical and mental health care needs of the child.

4. Promote a healthy social and emotional development.

5. Promote educational attainment and success.

6. Value diversity and support children's cultural needs.

Managing the child well-being and needs:
## The importance of Attachment for Foster Care

What is Attachment? Is it important?

It is a close emotional relationship characterized by mutual affection and a desire to maintain closeness.

○ It is the **first relationship** that the baby forms with its main caregiver.

○ The object of this attachment is **the attachment figure**, which **is the person who usually reciprocates the child's feelings**, creating a **strong bond in both directions.**

○ Most often, this figure **is the mother.**

○ **It is selective and consists** in seeking physical proximity, comfort and security.

○ **The quality of the first child/attachment-figure relationships has a strong influence on the child's development**, on the organisation of their attachment system and on their ability to establish affective attachments then and throughout their life.

The Circle Of Security
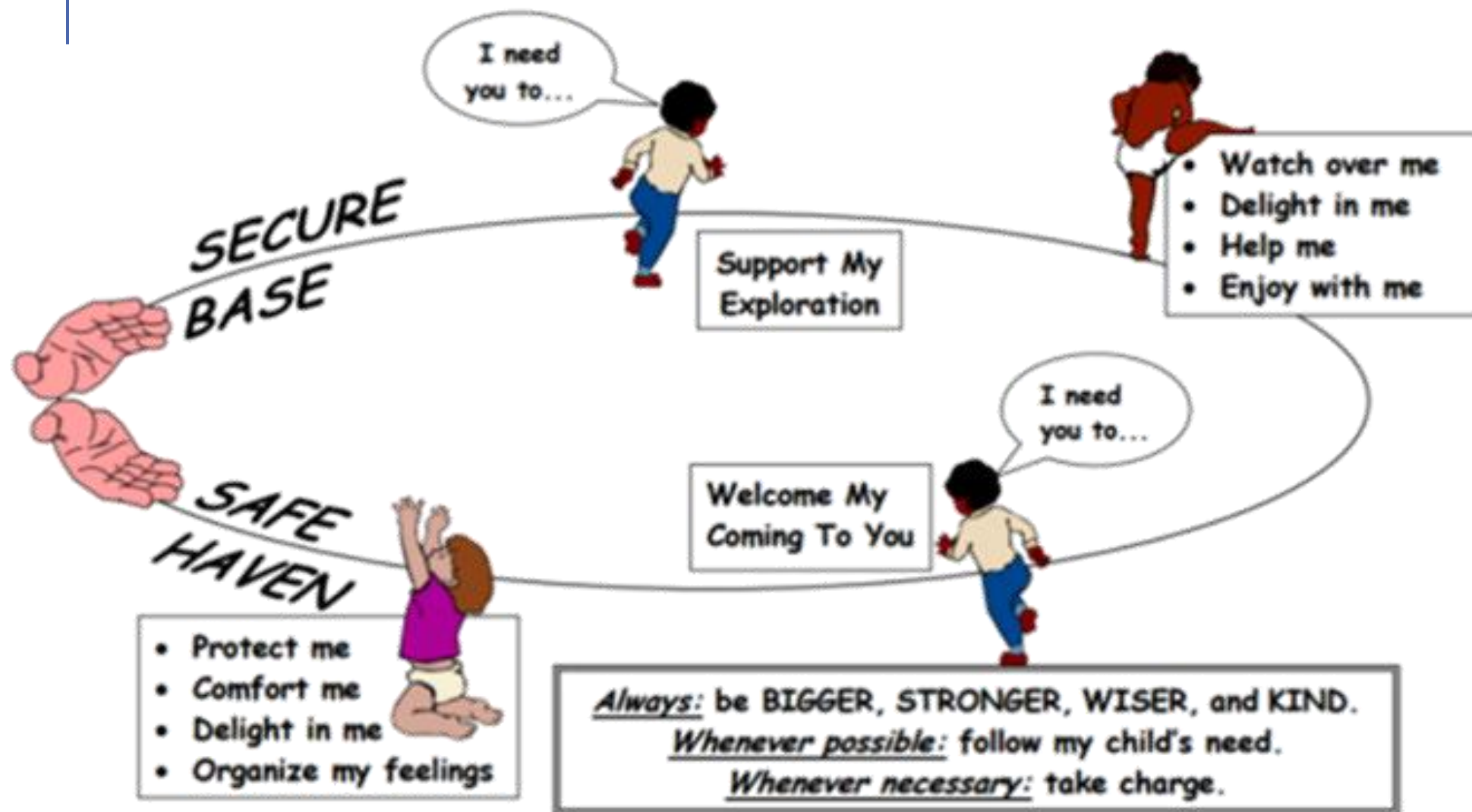
The relationship that is established with the caregiver is fundamental for the child's development, both in terms of their physical and emotional safety, as well as in encouraging the exploration of the environment and the promotion of their autonomy.

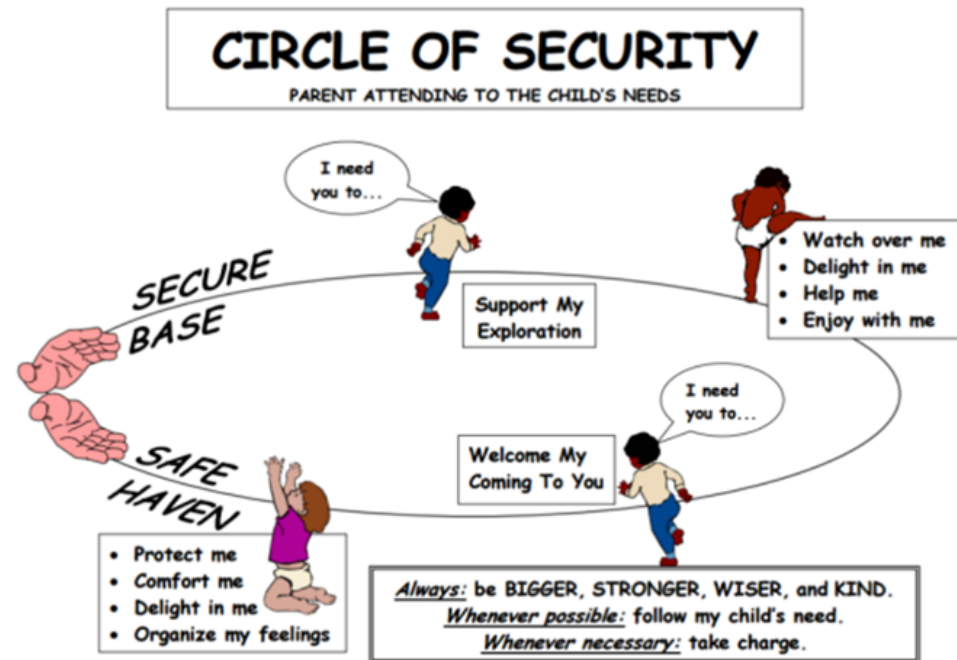(Martin et al., 2002)

The Circle Of Security

The relationship that is established with the caregiver is fundamental for the child's development, both in terms of their physical and emotional safety, as well as in encouraging the exploration of the environment and the promotion of their autonomy.

- The child explores the environment, if they feel that the caregiver acts as a "secure base" - they support the exploration and are involved in that experience, being present and available in case of need.

- When the child feels the need to approach the caregiver (e.g., because they are scared, distressed, or hurt), they expect the caregiver to be a "safe haven" - welcomes, comforts, and organizes their feelings, preparing them to resume exploration.

CIRCLE OF SECURITY
PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS

I need you to...

SECURE BASE

Support My Exploration

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

I need you to...

Welcome My Coming To You

SAFE HAVEN

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

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

© 1998 Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell
circleofsecurity.org

How can it be promoted in the relationship?

The quality of care determines the organization of the relationship, through its effect on the level of trust in the caregiver's availability, that is, the security that the caregiver transmits.

Sensitivity and Responsiveness

- Caregiver's ability to detect the signals implicit in the child's behaviors and communications, interpret them correctly and respond to them appropriately, satisfying their needs.

- Establishment of a secure attachment
- Development of language and cognition
- Development of the child's socioemotional skills.

Intrusiveness

- Behaviors on the part of the caregiver that interfere with the child's activity and that show disrespect for their autonomy, desires, interests, and behaviors.

- Less involvement of the child with the caregiver
- Insecure attachment pattern.
- Difficulties in the child's cognitive and socioemotional development.
- Lower academic performance at school age.

(Ainsworth, 1979; Malmberg et al., 2016; De Wolff et al., 1997; Tamis-Lemonda et al., 2004; Egeland et al., 1990; Ispa et al., 2004)

The importance of sensitivity and responding to children's cues

What are your thoughts and ideas about this video?

Anything specific that caught your attention?

Children's regulation to respond to adults

What are your thoughts and ideas about this video?

Anything specific that caught your attention?

Characteristics of Biological Families and their effects on children

Maltreating parents are mostly described as:

⬇

Highly insensitive to the child's distress

⬇

Have difficulty in responding to their cues and needs.

⬇

Demonstrate repeated episodes of hostile intrusiveness and/or emotional detachment.

Traumatic experiences and frequent exposure to high levels of stress and other risk factors may lead to:

⬇

Restrictions, mismatches and hostility in interactions.

⬇

Less reciprocity, open communication and ability to repair conflicts.

⬇

Leads to fear, uncertainty and insecurity in children, as they don't know what to expect from interactions with adults.

(Moss et al., 2014)

Group Exercise

Now, we would like to invite you to create groups of

2 or 3 and to discuss among yourselves the

behaviors and signals of children who were

neglected and the differences with the children who

are still in their natural context with their family.

Afterwards we will discuss it in group.

Group Exercise

Babies 1 and 2

- ✓ Actively and confidently explore their environment.
- ✓ Play freely with the blocks.
- ✓ Interact with the environment around them.
- ✓ Smile.
- ✓ Have fluid movements.

From favorable contexts

Biological and/or adoptive families

Babies 3, 4, 5 and 6

- ✗ Seem aloof and uninterested in the environment around them.
- ✗ Have little interest in the activity and play (touch the blocks, but don't play with them).
- ✗ Have body rigidity.
- ✗ Display anxiety in their exploration (e.g., avoid touching the blocks).
- ✗ Seem more interested in the people around them, than in the activity itself.

From unfavorable contexts/adverse experiences Neglected and Institutionalized

Why is the attachment relationship important?

Children in foster care have been more exposed to harmful experiences, such as abuse, neglect and disruption of parent-child bonds, which makes them vulnerable to suboptimal and disordered patterns of attachment**.

**These patterns can aggravate the risk for negative emotional and social outcomes for the child.

Reactive Attachment Disorder	Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder	Disorganized Attachment

Almost exclusively, in children subjected to:
extreme neglect and
repeated changes in caregivers.

More common when there was:
abuse, neglect and highly
insensitive/atypical parenting

However, this can be improved, meaning that the children can become securely attached… ➡️ **When parental sensitivity and responsiveness is enhanced.**

(Oliveira et al., 2022)

Why is the attachment relationship important?

○ In foster care, children **attachment cues are more subtle, highly distorted or absent** (e.g., not crying when they hurt themselves, because they're not used to be comforted).

○ Making it **more difficult for caregivers to recognize, understand and respond to them**.

So foster carers need to be:

More sensitively attuned to the child's cues and respond to them consistently and appropriately
(sensitivity and conscious parenting)

Be assertive but affectionate and understanding when disciplining unwanted behaviors
(sensitive discipline)

(Oliveira et al., 2022)
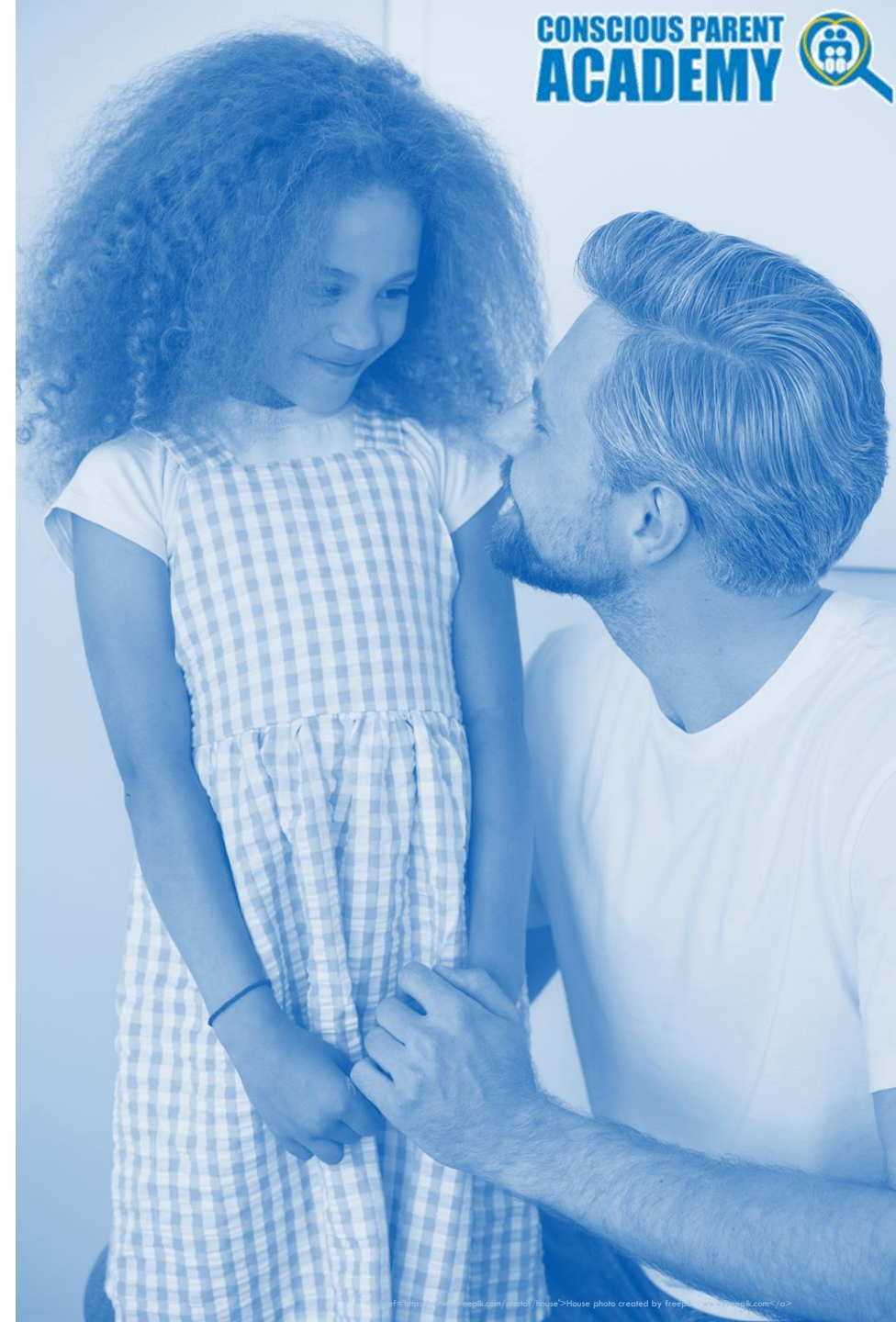
How to promote the attunement to children signals

Obrigada pela atenção!

Thank you for your attention!

Dėkojame už jūsų dėmesį

Dziękuję za uwagę

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