
FORM 8.1.

Circle of Security Assessment and Treatment Plan Organizer

1. List the strengths and struggles on each part of the Circle.

- Hands
 - Follow: _____
 - Misattune: _____
 - Take charge: _____
 - Abdicate: _____
 - Shifting/competing strategies: _____

- Top
 - Support for exploration: _____
 - Watch over me: _____
 - Delight in me: _____
 - Help me: _____
 - Enjoy with me: _____

- Bottom
 - Welcome my coming to you: _____
 - Protect me: _____
 - Comfort me: _____
 - Delight in me: _____
 - Organize my feelings: _____

- Of the above struggles, which is the “linchpin struggle”? _____

2. What is the sensitivity? Esteem Safety Separation

- How does the sensitivity inform an understanding of the linchpin struggle?

- How might the sensitivity inform the presentation of the linchpin struggle?

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Give examples of how to frame the issues or approach the caregiver regarding the linchpin struggle: _____

Give examples of how **not** to frame or approach the caregiver regarding the linchpin struggle: _____

3. Rate reflective function.

- A. Low: evasion and/or generalized statements to questions that ask for reflection
- B. Medium: a number of instances of reflective functioning
- C. High: reflective functioning is clear throughout the interview

Comments: _____

4. Rate empathy on two dimensions.

- A. Rate perspective taking
 - a. Low: lacks and/or evades perspective taking
 - b. Medium: a number of instances of perspective taking
 - c. High: perspective taking is clear throughout the interview

Comments: _____

- B. Rate affective resonance
 - a. Low: lacks resonance
 - b. Medium: limited resonance with certain affective states
 - c. High: capacity for resonance across broad range of affect

Comments: _____

5. Rate capacity to focus on the self.

- A. Low: avoids or seems unable to focus on self
- B. Medium: limited focus on the self
- C. High: can focus on self when appropriate

Comments: _____

6. What do you want this caregiver to learn? (Mini-story for shark music)

Create step-by-step learning goals. (You may need to do this twice with some complex dyads where you have two linchpin goals.)

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- Learning Goal One (My child needs me for X on the Circle) “Linchpin Need”:

- Learning Goal Two (When child needs X s/he miscues by doing Y) “Child Linchpin Miscue”:

- Learning Goal Three (When my child needs X, I miscue by doing Z) “Parental Linchpin Diversion”:

- Learning Goal Four (I do Z as a way of managing my [name affect if possible]) “Shark Music”:

- Learning Goal Five (I have the capacity to respond to need X and manage my shark music as exemplified by . . .) “Underused Linchpin Capacity”:

7. Choosing Video Clips (Put the in and out frame numbers).

Phase I

- Softening/Caregiver activation (Phase I—Clip 1): _____
- Underutilized capacity with Success (Phase I—Clip 2): _____
- Linchpin/Shark Music minor (Phase I—Clip 3): _____
- Celebration/Resolution moments (Phase I—Clip 4): _____

Phase II

- Softening/Caregiver activation (Phase II—Clip 1): _____
 - Linchpin/Shark Music major (Phase II—Clip 2): _____
 - Underutilized capacity with Success (Phase II—Clip 2): _____
 - Celebration/Resolution moments (Phase II—Clip 4): _____
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FORM 10.1.

Circle of Security Interview

Hello. My name is _____. For the next hour or so, I'll be asking you a variety of questions about how it is for you to be a parent. I'd like to begin by briefly getting to know something about you and [name of child]. Then I'd like to find out your response to the experience the two of you just had together. Then I'll ask you several questions about your relationship with [name of child] and we'll close with a few questions about your life while you were growing up and your relationship with your parents.

1. To help me get to know about you and [name of child], can you briefly tell me something about your life together:
 - a. When was he/she born?
 - b. Do you have other children and if so, how many, and what are their names and ages?
 - c. Are there other people in your life who you consider to be helpful in the raising of [name of child], and if there are can you briefly describe who they are and how they are helpful? [A general description here is acceptable.] [These questions offer an opportunity for the interviewer to join with the parent, give a general orientation to the interview, and allow the parent to both reflect on and potentially access his or her support system as the interview unfolds.]

Thank you. I'm now going to ask you several questions about the experience that you and [name of child] just had together in the room (upstairs, downstairs, down the hall, etc.).

2. What was it like for you to participate in the experience you just completed with him/her? [This gives a beginning glimpse at the parent's reflective functioning (RF) and the parent's approach to recognizing and regulating emotions in the child and him/herself, and a way to begin making sense of the parent's representations regarding self and other.]
3. You were asked to leave [name of child] in the room two times. What do you think that was like for him/her each time? [It is acceptable for parent to give a general description of both separations or be specific for each.] [RF; parent's current experience of empathy, recognition of needs, and approach to recognizing and

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regulating emotions] What was that like for you each time? [RF; empathy regarding self; capacity to recognize and regulate personal emotions]

4. Most parents have never had a chance to see their child from behind a one-way mirror.
 - a. While you stood there watching [name of child], was there anything that stood out for you? [RF; empathy; need recognition and emotion recognition and regulation]
 - b. What do you think he/she needed during the time that you were watching him/her? [RF; emotion recognition and regulation; empathy for self]
 5. You came back into the room two times:
 - a. What do you think that was like for [name of child] each time? [It is acceptable for parent to give a general description of both reunions or be specific for each.] [RF; need recognition; emotion recognition and regulation; empathy]
 - b. What was the reunion like for you each time? [Same rules apply as above.] [RF; emotion recognition; empathy for self]
 - c. In either of the reunions, did [name of child] show you that she/he needed comfort from you? [RF; need recognition; emotion recognition and regulation; empathy]
 - d. *Decision tree:*
 1. [If he/she showed a need for comfort:]
 - a. What did you do? [RF; need recognition; emotion recognition and regulation; empathy]
 - b. How did it feel when he needed comfort from you? [RF; need acknowledgment; capacity for self-regulation in context of need and emotional intensity]
 - c. Is this the way he/she usually shows you he/she needs comfort? [RF; issues of congruence and coherence regarding vulnerable information]

Or:

 2. [If he/she didn't seem to require comfort:]
 - a. How does [name of child] show you when he/she needs comfort from you? [RF; need recognition; emotion recognition and regulation]
 - b. What is it like for you when she/he shows you that he needs comfort from you? [RF; self-regulation in context of need and emotional intensity; congruence and coherence regarding vulnerable information] 6. When you asked [name of child] to pick up the toys, could you describe what happened? [Capacity for appropriate hierarchy; regulation of self and other in context of emotional intensity]
 - a. What do you think that was like for her/him? [RF; empathy]
 - b. What was it like for you? [RF; empathy; coherence in context of intensity]
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Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your day-to-day relationship with [name of child].

7. I'd like to ask you to choose five words or phrases that describe *your relationship* with [name of child]. I know this may take a bit of time, so go ahead and think for a minute, and then I'll write down each word or phrase you give me. [RF; coherence/congruence]
[For words 1, 3, and 5:] You used the word _____ to describe your relationship with [name of child]. Please give me a specific example or incident that comes to mind that shows what you mean by _____.
[Ask the question for a specific memory up to two times if necessary to get an episodic memory. The same applies to all questions asking for episodic memories.]
 8. What gives you the most joy in being [name of child]'s parent? [RF; emotion regulation; capacity for positive affect and pleasure]
 - a. Would you give an example? [Coherence/congruence] [If necessary, probe for a specific recent example.]
 - b. What do you imagine he/she was thinking about you at that time? [RF; projection/representation of other]
 - c. As you remember this example, what do you think about yourself? [RF; self representation]
 9. What gives you the most pain or difficulty in being [name of child]'s parent? [RF; emotion regulation; emotion containment; positive vs. negative attribution, openness regarding vulnerable information.]
 - a. Would you give an example? [Coherence/congruence] [If necessary, probe for a recent example.]
 - b. What do you imagine he/she was thinking about you at that time? [RF; projection/negative vs. positive attribution regarding other]
 - c. As you remember this example, what do you think about yourself? [RF; self representation; empathy regarding self]
 10. What is your greatest fear as [name of child]'s parent? [RF; congruence and coherence in context of painful information; capacity for containment of emotion]
 11. Does [name of child] ever get silent or pull away from you? [RF; need recognition; emotion regulation in context of intensity; negative vs. positive attributions; empathy]
[If yes:]
 - a. What do you think he/she is feeling at those times? [RF; negative vs. positive attribution; emotion recognition and regulation]
 - b. Why do you think he/she does that? [RF; empathy]
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- c. How do you feel when he/she acts that way? [RF; congruence and coherence in context of intensity; empathy for self]
 - d. What do you do? [RF; emotion regulation; understanding of repair]
12. Does he/she ever get clingy, pouty, or act younger than his/her age? [RF; need recognition; emotion recognition and regulation]
- [If yes:]
- a. What do you think he/she is feeling at those times? [RF; need recognition; empathy]
 - b. Why do you think he/she acts that way? [RF; need recognition; negative vs. positive attribution]
 - c. How do you feel when he/she acts that way? [RF; congruence and coherence in context of intensity; empathy for self]
 - d. What do you do at those moments? [RF; congruence and coherence; need recognition regarding autonomy and comfort]
13. Do you think [name of child] knows when you are upset or distressed?
- [If yes:]
- a. How does he/she know that you are upset or distressed? [Understanding of child's age-appropriate emotional capacity; implications for idealization or role reversal; emotion regulation themes]
 - b. Does he/she ever try to soothe you? [Implications for idealization or role reversal; emotion regulation]
 - c. How does he/she do that?
 - d. How does his/her soothing make you feel? [RF; emotion regulation; idealization or role reversal]
 - e. When he/she soothes you, what do you imagine he/she is feeling? [RF; idealization or role reversal, empathy for child]
14. All parents have moments of irritation or anger with their young children.
- a. What's that like for you? [RF; coherence/congruence]
 - b. If you had to guess, what is he/she thinking about you at these times? [RF; positive vs. negative attributions]
 - c. What are you thinking about yourself? [RF; self representation; empathy]
 - d. Does he/she ever get scared of you?
- [If yes:]
- e. How can you tell? [RF; congruence and coherence in context of intensity; empathy]
 - f. What does she/he do at those times? [RF; congruence and coherence; need recognition]
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15. Does [name of child] ever get angry or frustrated with you? [RF; empathy; emotion containment; positive vs. negative attribution]
- What's that like for you? [Coherence/congruence; empathy for self]
 - If you had to guess, what is your child thinking about you when he/she is angry and irritated? [RF; positive vs. negative attribution; empathy]
 - What are you thinking about yourself? [RF; empathy for self]
 - Are there ever times when he/she is irritated or angry with you that it's frightening for you? [RF; congruence and coherence; role reversal]
- [If yes:]
- Can you tell me something about that? [RF; emotion regulation; congruence and coherence]
 - What do you do at those times? [RF; congruence and coherence]
16. Sometimes young children want to do things their own way, a way that is very different from what their parents may want. [RF; need recognition; empathy]
- Does this ever happen between you and [name of child]?
 - [If yes:] Please describe a recent incident when this happened. [Coherence/congruence]
 - Did you work it out? If so, what happened? [i.e., What did he/she do and what did you do?] [Congruence and coherence; capacity for repair; positive vs. negative attribution; empathy]
 - If not, what happened? [RF; empathy; need recognition; capacity for repair; emotion regulation]
17. Can you describe a time when it felt like [name of child] was being "impossible"? [RF; emotion regulation; empathy for child and self; positive vs. negative attribution]
- [If yes:]
- What did you do to make things better? [Congruence and coherence; capacity for repair; empathy for child and self]
18. If you could change one aspect of *your relationship* with [name of child] what would that be? [If the answer focuses only on the parent or the child and doesn't focus on *the relationship*, probe further.] [RF; congruence and coherence; focus on the self; real relationship vs. idealized relationship goals]
19. Some parents tell us that they believe their child came into their life for a particular reason.
- Have you ever had such thoughts about [name of child]? [Focus on the self; real relationship vs. idealized relationship]
 - If so, can you briefly tell me the reason you think that [name of child] is in your life? [RF; idealized representation/emotion regulating function of the child; parent's expectation of child; self and other representation; empathy for child]
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Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about your own experience growing up as a child in your family.

20. Who was primarily responsible for raising you? [Needs to be limited to one or two people.]
 21. Earlier we talked about what your child does when he/she is upset or needs comforting from you. Now I'd like to ask you:
 - a. As a young child, as far back as you can remember, what did you do when you were upset or distressed? [RF; congruence and coherence; emotion regulation history; empathy for self]
 - b. What did your [primary caregiver] do? [If two primary caregivers, ask question for each.] [RF; congruence and coherence; emotion regulation; empathy for self and caregivers]
 - c. Do you remember being held at these times? [RF; congruence and coherence; need and emotion regulation history; empathy for self]
 22. All children, as they are growing up, have times when they want to do things their own way. Think back as far as you can remember and tell me about a time when you wanted to do something your own way. [RF; need and emotion regulation history regarding autonomy]
 - a. How did your [primary caregiver] react? [If two primary caregivers, ask question for each.] [RF; congruence and coherence]
 - b. How did that make you feel? [RF; need and emotion regulation; empathy for self]
 - c. How old were you?
 23. Is there something you learned from the way you were parented that you would like to pass on to [name of child]? [RF; congruence and coherence; positive vs. negative attributions; idealized vs. realistic goals; need and emotion regulation goals as basis for treatment plan and contract]
 24. Is there something in the way you were raised that you don't want to repeat with [name of child]? [RF; congruence and coherence; positive vs. negative attributions; idealized vs. realistic goals; need and emotion regulation goals as basis for treatment plan and contract]
 25. I have one final question. What do you hope [name of child] learns from his/her experiences of being parented by you? [RF; congruence and coherence; idealized vs. realistic goals; need and emotion regulation goals as basis for treatment plan and contract]
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FORM 12.1.

Welcome to the Club

Being a parent may just be *the* most difficult job on the planet. Every day, parents—the world over—want the best for their children. And every day, parents—the world over—fail to meet some of the needs of their children. “Help me” moments go unseen. “Watch over me” moments get interrupted. “Comfort me” and “Organize my feelings” moments end up being pushed away or lost in the rush and stress of everyday life.

Welcome to the club.

Of course, it's hard to know that we make mistakes. The good news is that, as parents, we all have an inner wisdom that helps us work with these mistakes. No matter who we are, if we listen to ourselves there is always something inside us that asks us to keep trying. No matter what our history, if we pay attention, there is a place in our hearts that wants to meet the needs of our children.

All parents have wisdom.

The best news is that parenting can be *the* most wonderful job on the planet. And one of the most wonderful parts of being a parent is knowing that we can add to our wisdom. We can recognize our weaknesses, learn from our mistakes, and find new ways to meet the very real needs of our children.

All parents struggle.

Please know that mistakes in parenting are inevitable. Every parent in this room wishes this weren't so. Each parent in this room is trying very hard to make sure that the needs of her or his child are being met. That's why you have taken the time and energy to be here, week after week. After so much work, to realize that there are things that aren't going right for your child can be upsetting.

Our greatest hope lies in beginning to realize that our weaknesses as a parent tend to be in a particular area on the Circle of Security. Every parent on the planet has an overused side and an underused side on this *Circle*. That isn't the problem. The problem begins when we don't realize that we have a stronger side and a weaker side. The problem gets bigger when we try to overuse our stronger side to make up for underusing our weaker side. The problem continues, one generation after another,

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when we don't find a way to deal with what it is within us, and in our history, that keeps that side weak.

It's hard to give what we weren't given.

It's hard to give what we weren't given. For example, it gets hard to give as much comfort as our child requires when it wasn't much a part of our own childhood. There will be times when our child cues us, asking for tenderness, and we hurt a little. At those times we may pull back and self-protect without even knowing it. We may get busy or ask our child to focus on a toy—cuing her/him in a subtle way to not make a direct request for comfort—because every time our child asks for the gentle holding we went without, it reminds us of a lack we carry within us, and that causes pain. Understandably, then, we will find ways to avoid those moments. Little ways. Unfortunately, our child will begin to realize this and eventually try to help us out by asking for fewer and fewer of these moments.

Or, maybe our parents weren't so good at letting us go out and explore the world. They kept us close, often too close. Now, as parents ourselves, we tend to feel uneasy when our child steps further away from us into the Circle. We aren't sure, just like our parents weren't sure, that it really is a circle and that our child will soon come running back to our waiting arms.

Sensitive to pain.

But, if we can know that we are sensitive to pain on one side of the Circle we can begin to change our behavior. We can step back and watch ourselves (“There I go again.”). We can watch ourselves, but not with judgment, and not with criticism. We can learn to stand back and observe our behavior with kindness. Really. We can honor how hard it is to give something to our child that we may have gone without when we were young. (“Of course this is difficult for me.”)

And, we can know that while it is hard, it is not impossible. Our wisdom and our genuine desire to meet our child's needs, all the way around the Circle, make it possible for new doors to open. We can come to realize that while it is difficult, if we can just recognize and admit our discomfort for a while (sometimes 15–30 seconds of additional closeness—or distance—is all that our child wants), our child's need will be met. If we can provide that closeness or distance an extra five or six times a day, everyone—child and parent—will be happier and feel more secure.

It just may be that the best part of parenting is being with our child as those real needs are being met . . . all the way around the Circle.

Welcome to the club.
