



## Life Through a Lens:

# An Infant Led Approach to Innovative Practice

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# Introduction

This presentation will highlight the following discussion points:

- An overview of the innovative Tweddle Home Parenting Education Service (HoPES) Program
- The models of practice that inform the program and guide practice
- The importance of focussing the program to the lens of the infant or child
- A case study of a family who participated in the program



# Home Parenting Education Program (HoPES)



The HoPES Program aims to preserve the family unit and support families during reunification.

This is achieved through rebuilding ruptured attachments between infants/children and their parents, empowerment, building sustainable family functioning, community connectedness and connecting families to and where needed, back to culture.

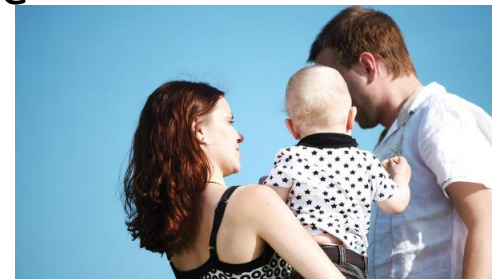
It provides:

- Eight-weeks of an intensive home visiting program for families with infants 0 - 4 years
- Two 2 hour visits in the family home per week
- Report and recommendations to Child Protective Worker

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# Aims of HoPES

- Rebuilding ruptured attachments between infants/children and their parents
- Increasing parenting knowledge and skills
- Promote child and family health
- Supporting reunification plans
- Empowering families
- Building sustainable family functioning
- Community connectedness
- Connecting families to and where needed, back to culture



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# Case Study

- Referral received from Child Protection Worker for reunification.
- James (35yr) and Rosie (37yr) and Tommy (11mth). They also have James's 11yr old child in their care.
- Both parents are very committed to having Tommy in their full time care.
- Child Protective concerns:
  - Past History of Drug and Alcohol addiction
  - Family Violence
  - Other children in out of home care.
- Tommy in kinship care since discharge from hospital and parents agreed goals:
  - To learn about caring for Tommy
  - To learn how to settle Tommy

# Principles of Practice

- Advocating for the infant/child
- Attachment focused
- Supporting the development of the parent/child relationship
- Working in partnership with a strength based approach
- Hands on modeling, coaching, use of video as a teaching and assessment tool
- Individualised goals and strategies
- Transparent and respectful feedback is provided on each visit i.e. what has been learnt, what is working well, what areas to continue to work on
- Discharge planning and developing further support networks

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# Keeping the child in mind

- Early childhood matters because experiences early in life can have a lasting impact on later learning, behaviour and health.
- Highly specialised interventions are needed as early as possible for children experiencing toxic stress.
- Complex family issues can cloud the child and their needs.
- The child is central to all assessments and interventions.
- Supporting families to provide the best possible care for the child.



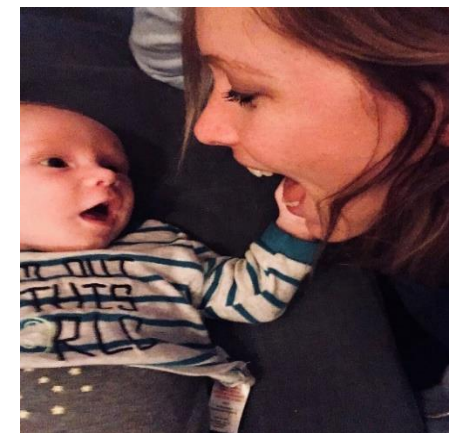
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## Parent/Child Interaction

- The caregiver's consistent responsiveness and sensitivity to the infant's signals in the first year of life appear to be the most influential factor in determining attachment.

*Caregiver's are deemed sensitive and responsive if they notice their infant's cues, interpret them accurately and respond promptly and appropriately. (Ainsworth & Bowlby)*



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# Reflective Parenting

- Many parents seeking help in both high and low risk settings characterise their children and their struggles with their children in terms of their child's behavior
- Reflective parenting programs attempt to engage parents in wondering what that “something” might be. In other words, we hope to engage parents in thinking about their children in terms of their internal experience rather than behavior

Reflective Parenting Programs: Theory and Development  
ARIETTA SLADE, PH.D.

# Reflective Parenting

Practitioners encourage parents to reflect on the following:

- What their child is doing and the meaning for the child.
- Providing another lens on negative interpretations.
- Wording up moments of connection.
- Using strength based language.
- Providing safe spaces for play and positive interactions



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# Tommy

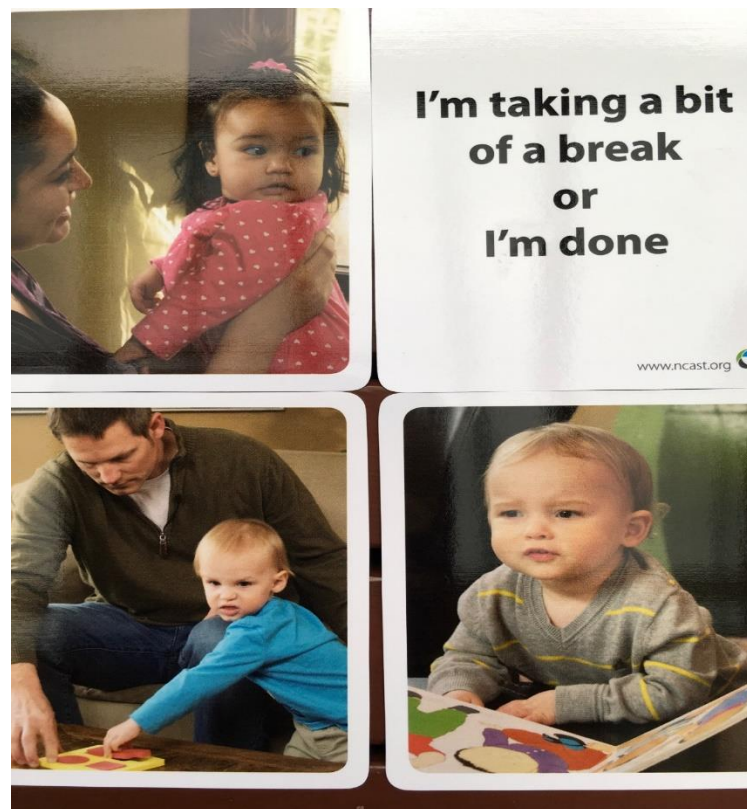
Representing Tommy and exploring his world:

- Tommy changed from a quiet baby who sat quietly playing to a baby who started to express himself and his needs
- This was not always a comfortable journey for his parents and his carer

It was important that changes to routine, feeding, play and responses were communicated to his kinship carer.

Challenges were discussed and the family supported to develop understanding of Tommy's world. This involved exploration of each members interpretation of "normal 10 month behaviour" and an appropriate routine.

# Using Cue Cards



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# Reflective Parenting

*We are mirrors for a baby,  
that tell him who he is.*

*We are also windows that tell him  
what he can expect.*

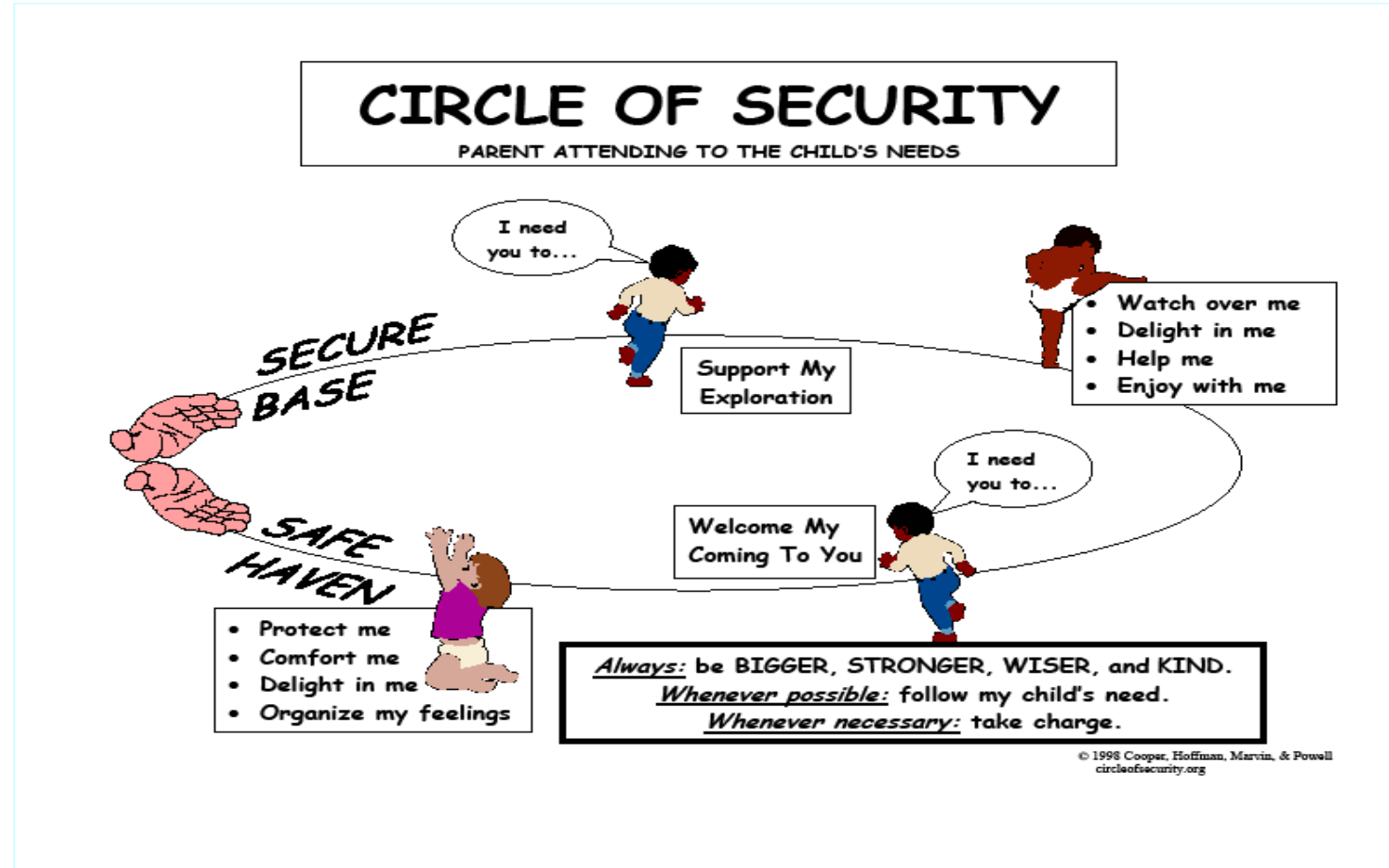
*(Jeree Pawl)*



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# Circle of Security



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# Family Sensitive Practice

Working in Partnership with the Family by:

- Building a relationship which is attuned to their unique situation and actively listening to their story
- Providing clear and transparent program information
- Involving them in decision making and finding out what outcomes they want from the program
- Identifying goals and ways to get there
- Finding strategies that work for the family
- Being alongside them during their journey and providing feedback, encouragement and support
- Being flexible and continually reviewing strategies
- Celebrating successes and any small wins

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# Family Resilience & Strengths



James and Rosie had experienced many challenges in their parenting journey.

The following strengths were identified:

- Working with Child Protection Workers and the HoPES Program staff
- Attending Rehabilitation for drug and alcohol addiction
- Gaining permanent custody of James's 11yr old child
- Keeping all their access visits and maintaining their hope to have Tommy in their custody
- Participating in the parenting education and changing their parenting practices

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# Family Challenges

James and Rosie acknowledged the following challenges:

- Rosie having an intellectual disability
- Mental health issues and anxiety
- Adapting to Tommy's developmental stage when he has not been in their care
- Past trauma with services and their concerns for Tommy



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# Final Program Outcomes

- Positive feedback from the family regarding their participation in the HoPES Program
- Both parents stating their goals have been met
- Tommy went from 2 supervised access visits to being in his parents care 5 days a week and 4 nights
- Tommy is developmentally age appropriate and is interacting in a positive manner with his parents
- Rosie has accepted support for her disability and her mental health issues
- James has insight into family violence and his role in perpetrating this. He has a plan to prevent this occurring “I don’t ever want to go there again”.

# Evaluation of Program

Casefile Review February 2019 by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

A/Prof Rebecca Giallo, Dr Holly Rominov & Alison Fogarty

- Reviewed 34 casefiles
- Purpose was:
  - To describe families who participated in the program.
  - To describe the key HoPES activities and processes
  - To identify outcomes for parents and children



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# Evaluation of Program

Review of the notes indicated positives in:

- Parenting knowledge and skills
- Parenting confidence
- Safety in the home environment
- Parent mental health
- Family relationships
- Community involvement

Due to small sample size a further mixed methods pilot evaluation has commenced.

This will provide more information on outcomes for families.



# Thank you

We would like to thank the following people:

- The families who have participated in the program
- The staff who work in the program and have helped to develop the framework and content
- The researchers as named previously
- Cat Fisher, Kirsty Evans and Louise Gawler who were key to developing the program



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**Any Questions???**

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