

Love, listening, language - building everything!



I believe in kindness. Also in mischief.
~Mary Oliver~

19th March 2021

Dear Premier and teams,

Thank you for initiating the Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy – a milestone for Tasmania. Brilliant.

I have contributed thoughts and words to the submissions of some other organisations as part of this consultation process – however, this submission comes to you in my voice as ‘citizen’.

Wellbeing is created in warm, positive, reciprocal relationships. The foundation of such relationships lies in secure relational attachment. This is especially true within the very first relationships of life. Supporting secure attachment between children and their parents and other caregivers is one of the most powerful things we can do as a society to create ongoing peace, harmony, equity, and social flourishing.

“Children who are more secure are more able to:

- Enjoy more happiness with their parents
- Feel less anger at their parents
- Turn to their parents for help when in trouble
- Solve problems on their own
- Get along better with friends
- Solve problems with friends
- Have better relationships with brothers and sisters
- Have higher self-esteem
- Know that most problems will have an answer
- Trust that good things will come their way
- Trust the people they love
- Know how to be kind to those around them”¹

These are the features of daily interactions which, when reproduced devotedly, will flow-out into the world as sources of personal wellbeing, relational wellbeing and social harmony.

¹ Circle of Security Parent DVD Program 2009

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This short submission elevates the importance of expanding Tasmanians' security within relational attachments.

I wish to particularly draw your attention to a tool that can help Tasmanians expand their personal relational security and that of their children – the Circle of Security Parent DVD Program.

Using simple graphics, targeted language, and readily graspable metaphors, this evidence-based²³⁴⁵ program has enfolded almost everything that has been learned about attachment over the past 100 years. It has condensed it, accessibly, into an eight-week program with proven transformational power.

I have now personally had experience delivering more than forty cycles of the program in a variety of contexts. I have delivered it to participants from low, and high, socio-economic strata in the prison through my work with Connect42, and in clinic-based delivery to couples and families; I have demonstrated and mentored its delivery in community settings, delivered via telepresence to small groups, to foster and kin carers through Foster and Kin Carers Association Tasmania, and volunteered its delivery in community.

In every cycle of the program that I have ever been involved with, one or more participants has made a comment along the lines that 'everyone in our society should do this program'.

This comment emerges because participants experience the transformation that the kind, rigorous, reflective program brings to their own lives. They are amazed at, and grateful for, its power to support new insights and reveal practical, bespoke solutions to their challenges with their children and other relationships. The insights emerge from the generous connection that is formed when reflecting with others on the vulnerable topics of parenting and having been parented. In noticing these powerful insights emerging within conditions of safety, participants are then moved to share them with others beyond the

²Amber Yaholkoski B.A., Kylee Hurl M.A. & Jennifer Theule Ph.D. (2016) Efficacy of the Circle of Security Intervention: A Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 15:2, 95-103, DOI: 10.1080/15289168.2016.1163161 | [Efficacy of the Circle of Security Intervention: A Meta-Analysis: Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy: Vol 15, No 2 \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

³ S.S. Woodhouse, B. Powell, G. Cooper, K. Hoffman, J. Cassidy (2017), The Circle of Security Intervention Design, Research, and Implementation, in *Handbook of Attachment 3rd Edition*, Guilford Press.

⁴ Kohlhoff, J., Stein, M., Ha, M. & Meiaha, K. (2016). The Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) intervention: Pilot evaluation, *Australian Journal of Child and Family Health Nursing*, 13(1): 3-7.

⁵ Hoffman, K., Marvin, R., Cooper, G. & Powell, B. (2006). Changing toddlers' and preschoolers' attachment classifications: The Circle of Security Intervention. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74(6): 1017-1026.

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gathered group. It is at this point that someone will say ‘everyone should do this program’. For even if one is not a parent, one has certainly been *parented*.

If a child does not have secure attachment, he will learn to self-soothe on his own, and possibly in an unhealthy way. Without support, this is a pattern that he may then carry all through his life. This pattern leads to loss of social capital and isolation – the nadirs of wellbeing. It is also a pattern that leads to violence and relationship breakdowns. But much of such trauma and resulting human expense and public-purse expense, could be averted through the intentional provision of thickly-distributed support for healthy relational attachment.

I think we could indeed bring the Circle of Security to all Tasmanians in an upscaled way. There are enough trained facilitators in the State.

When I trained to become a facilitator of the Circle of Security in 2013, I was one of a group of 160 others gathering at Wrest Point. There was a similar sized training in Hobart just a couple of years earlier. And there have been two more of similar size, since.

Unfortunately, most trained practitioners are currently not using the program with the fidelity upon which its evidence base was built. Rather they use – and I quote, for I have heard this many times – ‘bits of it’. ‘Bits’ should not be used. It should be delivered with fidelity. It should be delivered by allied health practitioners who can bring an empathic client-centred, clinical model to its delivery, rather than a ‘trainer’ model.

So, this submission is to put forward that Tasmania make serious steps toward the wellbeing of its people by supporting ‘everyone’ to participate in the Circle of Security. The people ask for this. Regarding community development, we are now well-versed as a culture in the theory of ‘doing with’ not ‘doing to’ our communities. Here then, is opportunity to take what people actually ask to have done *with* them and do it – that is, to apply the Circle of Security broadly.

I welcome the repeated insight that many participants from many Circles have made. If Tasmania can succeed to deliver the Circle of Security very widely – to the privileged and the less privileged, the seemingly strong and the vulnerable,

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the benefits will flow-out into society as calmer children, calmer teachers, calmer parents; enriched spoken language, greater settledness to support learning at school, greater cooperation, less anger, more kindness.

Greater awareness and skill in how to support the micro-level of individual interaction will multiply this building block into the macro-level of societal and cultural interaction.

I will be delighted to speak to you further about the Circle of Security and its up-scaled use.

Kindly,



Rosalie Martin

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