Children's Home Society of North Carolina

Spring Into Safety

We've all seen it. The iPhone video of the tornado swirling toward the viewer in a terrifying demonstration of nature's fury, debris flying everywhere. I don't know about you, but I usually find myself thinking "What kind of crazy person hangs out on their deck taking video of an oncoming tornado?" I'd be in the basement under a mattress. Taking videos of an oncoming tornado is a great example of what is not safe.

Most of us, thankfully, rarely encounter such extreme situations of danger and threat – nature-made or otherwise. We live our lives in a sense of relative safety, most of

the time. As foster parents, it is natural then, that we strive to reassure the children in our care that they are safe. You might even reassure a frightened toddler who is being newly placed in your home, “You are safe here.”

But did you know there’s a difference between physical safety and psychological safety? You can be physically safe, but not feel safe. Our earliest foundation for psychological safety – our ability to feel secure and safe in novel environments – is laid down in early childhood. In a home marked by chaos, where caregivers were unpredictable and/or violent, the child quickly learns that the world is not a safe place. This becomes a lens through which that child views the world and others, and it cannot be easily changed or “reassured out of the child.” So what can foster parents and caregivers do? Fortunately, there are strategies that work! They don’t work overnight, but they will work, given time. Check out the strategies below.

Three Strategies for Safety

We hope this provides some ideas for increasing a sense of felt safety for the child in your home. If you would like more information on any of the above, please reach out to your specialist or the training team at training@chsnc.org.

Children's Home Society of NC, PO BOX 14608, Greensboro, NC 27415, 800.632.1400

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