

Unlocking

The 4 S's of emotional support



**I will protect the children I serve from harm
and avoid becoming a source of threat or fear.**

What it means to feel safe...

- No fear
- No harm
- No threats
- Not frightened or guarded
- Not being controlled by someone else
- "Ok" to be vulnerable
- "Ok" with what is going on
- Know what to do
- Know what is expected
- Know what is happening or going to happen
- Understand the meaning of gestures, words, looks, & tone of voice (and lack thereof)
- No "internal alarms" are "going off"

How I create a "safe harbor" for children

- I validate their emotions
- I reduce sensory input
- I invite calm by being calm
- I offer individualized choices
- I slow down to give time for processing ideas and emotions
- I slow down so I can notice what my posture, tone, and pace are "saying"
- I notice what a child's emotions are trying to communicate
- I limit what I say when children are in distress
- I reframe what appears to be a "want" into something that is a "need"
- I pause to create space to think, feel, and understand their perspective.

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I see myself and the children I serve through the lens of wholeness.

What it means to feel seen...

- Children feel valued
- Children know I see their point of view
- Children know I hear what is important to them right now
- Children know I hear and empathize with their "shark music"
- Children know I will address their unmet needs
- Children know I aim to understand their perspective
- Children feel like every part of them matters when in my presence
- Children know I care about their ideas, thoughts, and feelings
- Children know I will uphold their rights

How I ensure children feel seen

- I ask "why" and "why now" to help me "see the child behind the behavior"
- I listen to understand and avoid judging and rushing to fix things
- I allow for the processing of emotions and offer coping strategies
- I "tune into" what children are thinking, feeling, experiencing, and even dreaming about
- I take children's perspectives
- I work with facts, in the moment
- I create calm, I encourage, I affirm, I emphasize, and I validate
- I notice my own biases and account for my impact not my intention
- I challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices
- *For teachers who are White or who pass for White:* I take responsibility for my power and privilege in the design and delivery of educational practices and policies

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Soothed  **I am responsive and model calm and inner-peace.**

What it means to feel soothed...

- Internal state is *not* experiencing distress
- Experience inner calm
- Able to respond and reflect vs. react and ruminate
- Emotions *aren't* overpowering or paralyzing thoughts or actions
- Prefrontal cortex (upstairs brain) is helping to control thoughts, actions, and judgments
- In a state of mental integration (Dr. Dan Siegel)
 - Flexible (able to bend)
 - Adaptive (able to adjust)
 - Coherent (able to make sense)
 - Energized (able to enthusiastic)
 - Stable (able to be grounded)

How I ensure children feel soothed

- I notice the things that cause me to "go limbic"
- I recognize and reduce stressors for children
- I "use my words" wisely (go silent, listen deeply, practice sound minimalism)
- I monitor my tone of voice and my facial expressions
- I use empathetic non-verbal communication (slow down, inviting posture, welcoming gestures, soft eyes)
- I ask questions that demonstrate my desire to understand children's perspectives
- I acknowledge how children feel, allow for processing emotions, and aid in identifying coping strategies
- I attend to the needs of children: safety, satisfaction, and connection

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Secure



I create an environment of trust and provide a learning base for self-regulation and empowerment.

What it means to feel secure...

- Have an internalized sense of well-being (*not too rigid and not too chaotic*)
- In a state of mental integration (Dr. Dan Siegel)
 - Flexible (able to bend)
 - Adaptive (able to adjust)
 - Coherent (able to make sense)
 - Energized (able to enthusiastic)
 - Stable (able to be grounded)
- I'm willing/able to...
 - Try things out
 - Deal with things
 - Manage stress
 - Navigate uncertainty
- Feel good in my own skin
- I'm able to connect and join others in positive relationships and interactions

How I ensure children feel secure

- I'm curious about my own reactions
- I'm aware of my biases and when I may be casting a shadow
- I avoid being defensive, rigid, and/or chaotic
- I connect emotionally with children and others
- I clarify boundaries for children
- I help children plan what to do next
- I repair the harm I've caused
- I'm both the "safe harbor" and the "launching pad" for children

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I will protect the staff I serve from harm and avoid becoming a source of threat or fear.

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How I create a "safe harbor"

- I validate emotions
- I reduce sensory input
- I invite calm by being calm
- I offer individualized choices
- I slow down to give time for processing ideas and emotions
- I slow down so I can notice what my posture, tone, and pace are "saying"
- I notice what their emotions are trying to communicate
- I limit what I say when they are in distress
- I reframe what appears to be a "want" into something that is a "need"
- I pause to create space to think, feel, and understand the perspective of others

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I see myself and the staff I support through the lens of wholeness.

What it means to feel seen...

- Others see how I feel
- Others see my point of view
- Others hear what is important to me (right now)
- Others hear and empathize with my "shark music"
- Others notice and address my unmet needs
- Others understand my perspective
- Others understand who I am as a whole person
- Others care about my ideas, thoughts, and feelings
- Others uphold my rights

How I ensure others feel seen

- I ask "why" and "why now" to help me "see the adult behind the behavior"
- I listen to understand and avoid judging and rushing to fix things
- I allow for the processing of emotions and offer coping strategies
- I "tune into" what others are thinking, feeling, experiencing, and even dreaming about
- I take the perspective of others
- I work with facts, in the moment
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- I avoid being defensive, rigid, and/or chaotic
- I connect emotionally with others
- I clarify boundaries for others
- I help others plan what to do next
- I forgive others
- I repair the harm I've caused
- I'm both the "safe harbor" and the "launching pad" for others