



Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP)

Developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, the SSP is a five-day auditory (music) intervention (1 hour per day) designed for Adolescents, Adults and Children to reduce stress and auditory sensitivity while enhancing social engagement and resilience. Based on Dr. Porges' Polyvagal Theory, by calming the physiological and emotional state, the door is opened for improved communication and more successful therapy.

This non-invasive intervention involves listening to music that has been processed specifically to retune the nervous system (regulating state), by reconfiguring the inner ear structure, to introduce a sense of safety and the ability to socially engage. This allows the client to better interpret not only human speech, but, importantly, the emotional meaning of language. **Once interpersonal interactions improve, spontaneous social behaviours and an enhanced ability to learn, self-regulate and engage are often seen. The SSP is a research-based therapy showing significant results in just five days in the following areas in Adolescents Adults and Children:**

- Social and emotional difficulties Auditory sensitivities
- Anxiety and trauma related challenges Inattention
- Stressors that impact social engagement

The SSP is designed to work with treatment, not to replace it. By providing a means for children to feel calmer and be socially more engaging, it will allow the therapist/clinician to better engage your child in intervention, and will help your child to respond better.

Resulting new behaviours reflect an increased sense of safety in the world, but they are fragile and can be disrupted if not recognized and responded to in a positive manner. Eye contact should not be forced or bribed, but when you see it, respond with a smile and encouragement. When children attempt eye contact that is not reciprocated, they may stop trying or feel like the other person does not want to engage. Reciprocal eye contact and smiles will help the child identify other "safe" people that are part of a "safe" environment where the child can relax and be friendly and loving.

Listen: Your child may now start understanding speech better. You may not have to repeat yourself when you ask the child a question or ask the child to do something. Your child may stop complaining about loud noises or stop covering ears when loud noises occur. By completing the SSP, your child's ear muscles are now better able to "ignore" loud noises, and allow them to focus on speech instead.

Regulate: Your child may now have better emotional control and expression. Temper tantrums and outbursts are typically a sign of dysregulation, or uncontrollable



feelings. Temper tantrums can occur for a lot of reasons, some of which are addressed by the SSP.

For example, if a child has a temper tantrum because he/she wants to leave the park NOW, but feels like the parent is not listening to him/her because the parent does not leave the park NOW, these feelings may be calmed now that the child can make eye contact with and listen to the parent, and feel like he/she is part of a reciprocal conversation about when it is time to leave the park. When your child does experience a tantrum, try to keep a calm demeanour - soothing voice, eye contact. After the intervention, the child may be more responsive to social cues and learning how to control temper by watching you!

Play: Your child may now have better play behaviours with other children. Play involves reciprocal interactions, and communication between the players is eased by eye contact and listening to each other. For now, take a more active role in playdates or sibling play so you can support the interaction and talk to your child afterward about what you noticed.

Love: Your child may now be more expressive of love to other people, including more smiles and hugs. Do your best to reciprocate those behaviors when they occur! This will be easy. Be aware, though, of the child's personal space; unwanted hugs (or hugs from unfamiliar people) can make child feel defensive instead of relaxed.

Additional Support: The SSP is only one way to help your child improve looking, listening and regulation. Other ways that you can continue to help your child include: playing woodwind instruments (exercises breathing control and ear muscles) singing alone or in a choir (exercises breathing control and ear muscles) breathing exercises, meditation, posture and self-control exercises

Support: Keep maintaining a safe and pleasant environment for your child. Things that parents find comforting may not be the same things the child finds comforting, so talk to your child about what things help him/her feel relaxed. Some ideas: soothing environments; vocal music; gentle lighting; soft surroundings and fabrics; pleasant fragrances; and avoiding loud or abrupt noises.

Working with Your Child's Therapist: The SSP is designed to work with treatment, not to replace it. By providing a means for children to feel calmer and be socially more engaging, it will allow the therapist/clinician to better engage your child in intervention, and will help your child to respond better.

Get a video: The changes can be subtle or dramatic, either way, a video can be a wonderful way to show and share changes a client undergoes. Remember, you can't go back and get a pre video, so grab it while you can, you can always delete it.