

## Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP)

Developed by **Dr Stephen Porges**, the SSP is a listening intervention designed to reduce stress and auditory sensitivity while enhancing capacity for social engagement and emotional resilience.

By calming the physiological and emotional state, a neurological doorway may be opened for improving communication and thus lead towards more successful therapy and learning.

The SSP is a research-based therapy which is showing significant results in approximately two weeks (depending on the needs of the individual) in the following areas:

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

Emotional and physiological state are critical to how we approach the situation at hand. So, when a person has better internal state control, awareness of their nervous system reactions, not only can they be more socially engaged, they are more open to therapy and to new learning.

**Better state regulation improves therapeutic and educational outcomes.**

**Feel Better** — *feel more safe, calm, grounded and resilient; feel less irritable, anxious and overwhelmed*

**Think Better** — *think more clearly, attentively, and creatively, think less rigidly, disorganised and distractible*

**Connect Better** — *connect more openly, genuinely and wholly; connect less guardedly, distantly and oppositional.*

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Based on Dr. Porges' Polyvagal Theory, the program is derived from nearly four decades of research on the relationship between the autonomic nervous system and social-emotional processes. It is designed to stimulate nervous system regulation by exercising and systematically challenging the auditory system with specifically processed music.

The music trains the auditory pathways by focusing on the frequency envelope of human speech. As the client learns to process these speech-related frequencies, they improve the functioning of two cranial nerves that are important for promoting overall social behaviour. Cranial Nerve VII (Facial Nerve) helps clients focus on human voice and tune out irrelevant frequencies. Cranial Nerve X (Vagus Nerve) enables self-soothing and autonomic regulation.

Following successful completion of the intervention, individuals will be better able to focus in school, therapy, everyday life and experience a calmed emotional and physiological state. This is based on studies that suggest that skills such as attention, state regulation and the ability to engage socially will be enhanced. It is most effective when followed by appropriate therapy or interventions to meet the individual's needs. It is suitable for adults of all ages and children from 7 years.

## WHAT IS INVOLVED?

The **'Safe'** comes first through establishing a safe relationship between provider, client and supporter (family member/ close friend). During the intervention sessions there will be short periods of listening and support to notice and respect the nervous system responses with continued safety through co-regulation. The provider is trained in depth to attune to the individual's nervous system responses and to guide the program according to their unique needs. This can also be achieved remotely through video link (Unyte-iLS ensure that all SSP Providers have specific training in remote delivery). Some individuals have found remote SSP very supportive, being able to remain in their own home. Feeling safe is the priority and we do everything within our control to create and sustain the safety for the individual.

The **'Sound'** involves listening to a specially formulated sequence of filtered music for thirty minutes max daily over a minimum of two weeks. This filtered music\* has been processed specifically to retune the nervous system (regulating state) to introduce a sense of safety and the ability to socially engage. This allows the person 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 socially are often seen.**

*"The Safe and Sound Protocol is intended to accelerate the effectiveness of other modalities by preparing the person's emotional and physiological state for engagement."*

\*The music for the intervention uses familiar songs (adult or child playlists) which have been specially filtered and modulated to remove high and low frequency wavebands, keeping the sounds to within the bandwidth of human speech (prosody) – specifically to the soothing frequencies which signal safety and calmness to the processes of neuroception (the neurological systems which are involved in detecting threat and safety). **Effectively the SSP directly gives the body the cues for neurological safety.**

The music is typically played through over-ear headphones via an app on a digital device in a quiet and safe environment. While listening there is no conversation, but the individual can choose to engage in creative activities (no screens), either separately or together. These activities should enable the individual to be able to listen and should not be able to hear any other sounds during this time or engage in cognitively demanding activities.

**Initial assessment: no fee. For any further questions, it's efficacy <https://therapeuticteaching.uk/2022/01/04/the-safe-and-sound-makes-a-difference-like-no-other/>) and estimate of fees, please contact me.**



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