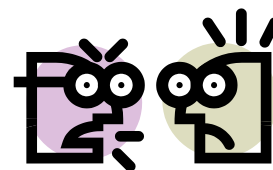


Emotional Safety



What is Emotional Safety?

Emotional Safety is a relational atmosphere. When emotional safety is present in a relationship, ideas and feelings can be expressed with confidence. Those in the relationship feel physically safe, emotionally supported, and secure. When correction or challenging is needed, it is done with honesty and respect. Emotional safety means having a level of predictability and consistency in emotions and behaviors, including clear boundaries and expectations. Continued emotional safety requires that repairing occurs when the relationship is damaged. Indicators of emotional safety include: vulnerability, disclosure, honest feedback, absence or reduced defense mechanisms, and a feeling of connection.

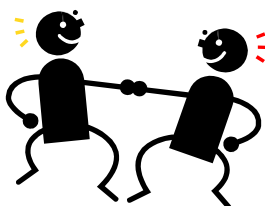
What does Emotional Safety have to do with New Haven's Relational Approach to Healing?

Creating emotional safety in relationships requires us to model for others the very thing we are hoping to receive from them, treating what they share as important and valuable, and providing them experience with us consistently doing what we can to support them. Our ability and willingness to look at ourselves in our relationships with others is a starting point in facilitating needed emotional safety in order to address behaviors, understand beliefs, and help facilitate healing.

How does Emotional Safety effect lasting change?

- *Love*: Foundation of change - Love promotes long lasting change; fear promotes short lived behavioral changes - Must create emotional safety to allow for love to be felt.
- *Spirituality*: Healing often occurs through connections with things larger than ourselves and with whom we can be accountable to – Lack of emotional safety creates hesitancy to have faith in and connect with things bigger than self.
- *Family*: The most meaningful and influential relationships in facilitating healing - Emotional safety is a prerequisite for love, trust, vulnerability, authenticity and connection in the family.
- *Positive Values*: Need to explore and reconnect to positive values to rise beyond problem behaviors - Consistently following positive values promotes emotional safety.
- *Internal Locus of Control*- Consistently regulating one's own self contributes to the emotional safety others experience with me.
- *Self Esteem*- The byproduct of successfully living by internal control and positive values, leading to greater levels of self-respect, emotional stability and relational confidence.

Each of these is seen as a progression in the process of change. Without emotional safety to pave the way, permanent positive change would not be able to occur.



ASSIGNMENTS:

Do the following sometime during a family therapy session or family phone call:

1. Have each family member complete the Emotional Safety Rating Scale. Rate yourself on each question. As a family, discuss each individual's contribution to emotional safety and develop individual and family goals for improving emotional safety.
2. Catch yourself using voice tone, displaying attitude or using language that is judgmental, inappropriately critical, or otherwise emotionally unsafe. Acknowledge this and communicate your message again in a different way.
3. Practice empathetic listening. Make responses that demonstrate understanding. Resist impulses to give advice and provide "solutions". Express confidence in family members' abilities to solve problems and make good choices. Talk to the therapist about this experience.
4. Together as a family identify and describe at least one family pattern that results in one or more family members experiencing a lack of emotional safety. Discuss this with your therapist.
5. As a family identify a list of behaviors that are warning signs of an emotionally unsafe situation. Discuss action plans for how to do things differently.
6. Listen to and acknowledge feedback from other family members without defensiveness, anger or arguments.
7. Parents Only: Discuss with your spouse, or another adult that you are close to, the issue of control in relationships. Discuss appropriate vs. inappropriate control with children. Where are the proper boundaries between a parent's right to control and a child's right to self-control? When is control emotionally unsafe and developmentally detrimental?

Emotional Safety Rating Scale

How effective are you at creating an atmosphere of emotional safety? Consider how you “show-up” in your relationships in the following areas: your *Communication*, your expression of *Emotion*, your *Tolerance*, your *Closeness*, and your use of *Power & Control*.

Read the statements below and then rate yourself according to the following scale:

1. Never Me 2. Rarely Me 3. Sometimes Me 4. Often Me 5. Always Me

Communication	Circle 1-5
I speak with kindness, consideration and sensitivity.	1 2 3 4 5
I listen attentively and sincerely, allowing others to speak without rejecting or interrupting.	1 2 3 4 5
I give feedback and advice and ask questions in the spirit of love and caring without judging and condemning the individual.	1 2 3 4 5
Honesty and truthfulness prevail in my relationships.	1 2 3 4 5

Emotions	Circle 1-5
I am responsible and accountable for my own feelings and actions.	1 2 3 4 5
I recognize and validate the feelings of others without judgment.	1 2 3 4 5
I do not use feelings to punish, harass, coerce, manipulate, intimidate, or control others.	1 2 3 4 5
I am able and willing to be vulnerable in relationships when appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5

Tolerance	Circle 1-5
I am able to recognize differences and conflicts in my relationships, and seek understanding, accommodation, and cooperation.	1 2 3 4 5
I acknowledge and respect the uniqueness of other individuals.	1 2 3 4 5
I do not attempt to dominate others as a means of handling differences.	1 2 3 4 5
I realize that my knowledge, experience and abilities are limited, and pursue learning and growth in my interaction with others.	1 2 3 4 5

Closeness	Circle 1-5
I freely and easily communicate closeness and connection in meaningful relationships.	1 2 3 4 5
I am aware of the importance of healthy boundaries and implement them in my relationships.	1 2 3 4 5
I allow others to support me when appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5
I am supportive of others and do not use antagonistic coalitions or scapegoating.	1 2 3 4 5

Power & Control	Circle 1-5
I am responsible for myself to the degree that is appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5
I allow influence from others to the degree that is appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5
I do not use my power for manipulative purposes, or to dominate others in a demeaning way.	1 2 3 4 5
I allow others to make their own decisions to the extent that is appropriate and that fits the circumstances.	1 2 3 4 5

Total Score: _____

Safety Score: 0-29 Hostile / 30-49 Poor / 50-69 Moderate / 70-81 Good / 82-100 Excellent