

## Safe and Sound Protocol

### Feel better. Think better. Connect better.

The Safe and Sound Protocol, or SSP, is a 5-hour auditory intervention designed to improve physical state regulation and auditory sensitivity while enhancing social engagement and resilience.

The SSP is a non-invasive application of [Polyvagal Theory](#), developed by Dr. Stephen Porges and based on decades of research. The SSP's effectiveness has been proven in a wide range of studies, most notably in two clinical trials involving children with autism spectrum disorder. Trial participants demonstrated statistically significant improvements in:

- Emotional control
- Behavioral organization
- Hearing sensitivity and listening

The SSP is now used by clinicians worldwide and has been beneficial for clients with symptoms related to anxiety, ADHD, and trauma.

The SSP intervention is designed to help the nervous system to better receive, process and respond to the cues and signals from the world around us. This helps us to feel better regulated in the face of life's challenges. There are now 3 different programs within SSP, Connect, Core and Balance. The two supplemental pathways to the original SSP Core can provide a gentler introductory foundation for the SSP and a way to integrate and extend the experience.

Neuroception is a term used to describe the assessment of safety from cues in the environment, from the body and from others and often occurs outside of our conscious awareness. Our behaviors are affected by our physiological state. Change in the physiological state allows for different adaptive behaviors to emerge some of which are used to protect us and keep us safe (fight or flight) and others for social engagement. By calming the physiological and emotional state, progress in therapy is enhanced or even accelerated.

The SSP Core is a 5-hour auditory intervention that uses prosodic vocal music that has been filtered to train the middle ear muscles to focus on the frequencies of the human voice. It retunes the nervous system (regulating state) to introduce a sense of safety and the ability to socially engage by stimulating the Vagus nerve through the auditory system. This helps to improve interpersonal interactions, spontaneous social behaviors and the ability to learn and self-regulate.

## **Intervention**

The SSP listening is typically done in 30-60 minutes increments consecutively. The schedule for listening is dependent on the client's history, sensitivity, emotional reactivity, behavioral regulation and how well they tolerate the listening sessions. In some cases, it is beneficial to slow down the intervention to shorter sessions over a longer period of days.

- Listening should be done in a quiet environment with a supportive person present to provide encouragement, and cues of safety, thumbs up, smiles, etc.
- The support person is also there to monitor any reactions to the listening or to provide support and co-regulation if a break is needed.
- While listening the client can engage in quiet activities, puzzles, games, art activities, Legos etc. Screens or reading are not recommended as this can require too much cognitive focus and may distract them from "listening" to the music.
- Client can have quiet snacks (nothing crunchy) and should refrain from talking, singing, intense physical activity or sleeping.
- During the days of listening, they should avoid using ear buds or headphones and should avoid exposure to loud noises such as a concert.
- The listening program is individualized, and we will determine the best schedule for you or your child. It is important to complete the sessions consecutively as the program builds a platform and capacity over the days of intervention. For some clients we may recommend a break for a few days as to not overwhelm the system.
- If there is an illness or other interruption in the implementation it may be necessary to repeat sessions from the beginning to gain maximum benefit.
- Adults with a history of trauma should also be working with a therapist when doing the SSP. This will provide additional support and the opportunity to process any information that comes up for the client during or after the intervention. Intense trauma work, and other types of therapies may need to be paused during the SSP including other auditory therapies

## Post SSP

- The most important aspect to the effectiveness is the environment to which the client returns.
- It is important that the client is well supported during and following the SSP provided positive regard, cues of safety, compassion and understanding as the intervention can cause some dysregulation while the nervous system settles from the changes made.
- The client may begin to seek more engagement and connection which will need to be responded to in a loving, and positive way to continue the progression that occurs and maintain the activation of the social engagement system.
- While some changes may be observed as soon as the week of the intervention, it may take 4-6 weeks to recognize all the shifts or changes that occur.
- The intervention can be completed once or can be repeated after 3-6 months. SSP is generally repeated if:
  - improvement was observed and the intention is that a repeat will provide additional gains or change in state regulation.
  - improvement was observed but it seems some of the gains have faded.
  - no shifts or changes were observed and so the system may require additional work.

## Scheduling, Insurance & Fees:

- Intake Session
- SSP Core intervention sessions, consultation, and support
- Use of Mp3 player with headphones or digital delivery via an IOS or Android App.
- 6 weeks post SSP follow up session – *required for clients who are not ongoing clients of SSP provider.*

**Fee for the SSP is \$250.** *This fee is not billable to insurance but may be billed to a Health Care Spending Account.* If you are interested in repeating the SSP the fee is discounted to \$150

**In-Network Insurance:** We are in-network with Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO and Blue Choice. Fee for sessions will be billed to insurance. *Clients are responsible for copayments, coinsurance or sessions fees which have been applied to an unmet deductible.*

## Out of Network Insurance- In Office Fees

Cash payment discount rate of \$850 (includes SSP fee), intake session and therapy sessions.

As a courtesy, we can electronically submit claims for the therapy session portion to your insurance upon request. Some of the listening may be completed at home on a case by case.

## Remote Delivery of the SSP

- Intake session and education about Polyvagal theory via telehealth sessions.
- Use of Mp3 player with headphones or digital delivery via an IOS or Android App.
- Listening sessions scheduled online with therapist.
- Follow up and support for sessions completed at home when therapist is not present for listening session.
- Remote delivery is best suited for children and teens with the support of a parent. This may also be available for adults on a case-by-case basis.

The SSP remote delivery option is at the discretion of the therapist in discussion with the client/family and based on the confidence they can provide an optimal environment and support person during and following the intervention.

## Headphones for Digital Delivery:

For digital delivery of SSP you may use your own headphones providing they meet the recommendations below. There are also links for some on Amazon for purchase.

Specifications:

- We recommend over-the-ear (circumaural) headphones for their enclosed nature and the immersive sound experience.
- On-ear headphones and earbuds are not recommended
- Avoid noise canceling headphones.

Recommended Headphones for Remote Delivery:

ILs headphones designed for SSP delivery can be purchased directly from the iLs store here:

Adult: <https://store.integratedlistening.com/ssp-headphones>

Child: <https://store.integratedlistening.com/kids-ssp-headphones>

Other headphone recommendations:

[Audio-Technica ATH-M20x Professional Monitor Headphones](#)

[OneOdio Wired Over Ear Headphones](#)

Colleen Hanson, LCSW is providing the SSP to clients at CORE Connection Counseling and has had over 50 clients complete the intervention since May 2019 with positive results. For more information on the SSP please contact Colleen by email at [Colleen@coreconnectioncc.com](mailto:Colleen@coreconnectioncc.com) or by phone, 630-524-4000

To get on our list for scheduling please complete this [online form](#).

**For more information on the Safe and Sound Protocol research, development, and use, please visit:**

<https://integratedlistening.com/science-of-feeling-safe/>

<https://www.stephenporges.com/>

<https://www.stephenporges.com/bio>

Or view video interviews with Dr. Porges on the ILS Youtube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/IntegratedListening>

### **Podcast Interviews**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVVaTRbegJs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4NnJ6eJPjg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=na2bInkRhAY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivLEAlhBHPM>

There is a parent forum on Facebook, Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP) - Parent Info. Forum

### **SSP Research & Articles**

<https://www.stephenporges.com/articles>

<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02680730>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3610863/pdf/nihms425959.pdf>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4117928/pdf/fped-02-00080.pdf>

<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/middle-ear-may-hold-answers-for-autism-treatment-2014090410c83a.html>