



The Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP): A Jumpstart to Calm and Connectedness

THE BASICS

Is the SSP right for me? The SSP works best for addressing symptoms and/or conditions brought about by prior trauma or by a co-existing diagnosis such as PTSD, sensory-processing disorder, misophonia, ADHD, inattention, autism, or anxiety. Be sure to clarify the concerns and symptoms you want to address with the SSP with your therapist prior to scheduling your first active listening session.

The SSP is designed to be an adjunct to other therapies and is not designed to be a stand-alone cure.

When utilized correctly, the SSP can accelerate improvements toward therapy goals by creating a body-sense of calm and safety. From this new foundation of felt-safety, one can more easily work on therapy goals such as communication, mindfulness, and addressing relational challenges with appropriate boundaries. Some see immediate results from using the SSP while others may see more gradual changes over a period of weeks.

Once the middle ear has regained its appropriate capacity to tune into human vocal frequencies, you may find other treatment goals easier to attain such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and identifying needs that sustain a sense of calm and safety. It may take the middle ear up to two months to fully achieve optimum functioning, so be patient and observe and note changes and improvements along the way. _____ (Initials)

What medical conditions might cause complications when using the SSP? The SSP works best for addressing symptoms caused by trauma, developmental delays, or neurological conditions such as autism, misophonia, or sensory processing disorder. Should you have any concerns, please contact your primary treating physician prior to beginning the SSP. The following conditions may complicate your response to the SSP and may not be appropriate for use without a physician's approval:

- ◆ History of stroke or seizures
- ◆ History of traumatic brain injury
- ◆ Middle or inner ear damage, like Meniere's Disease, tinnitus, or hearing loss
- ◆ Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease _____ (Initials)

There are situations and conditions that may prevent the SSP from working effectively. Recognizing the value of the SSP also requires us to respect the limits of what this auditory intervention can offer:

- Homes or relationships where **physical and emotional safety are not maintained** will prevent the middle ear muscles from attuning to the safety cues of the SSP. _____ (Initials)
- Home environments that are **loud, chaotic**, with few opportunities for privacy or calm will override the benefits of the SSP. _____ (Initials)
- **Alcohol use, illegal drug use, stimulant use including caffeine, or benzodiazepine/opiate use** may inhibit the brain's ability to process the SSP. _____ (Initials)
- **Acute trauma, mania, stress, or acute grief/loss** will trigger the brain to maintain fight/flight states and may inhibit the effectiveness of the SSP. _____ (Initials)

In order to make the most of the SSP, you may consider addressing these roadblocks prior to beginning the protocol. You may want to make short-term goals with your therapist and slowly incorporate the protocol into therapy to allow time needed to secure a safe and calm environment.



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THE DETAILS

What to Expect (Short-term): Different Sound, Varied Volume: The SSP is designed with two separate levels of manipulation with the ultimate goal of re-awakening your middle ear muscles to the safe sounds of the human voice. Days 1-2 are designed with the most manipulation of frequencies and act like training wheels for the middle ear. The SSP songs in these first two days sound the least like their originals, and some have described the music as sounding like recordings from the 1930s-1940s. The purpose of the manipulation is to allow the brain to access the vocal frequencies with as little input required from the middle ear. Days 3-5 have a wider range of frequencies and thus stimulate the middle ear to begin “tuning out” these non-vocal frequencies. The songs during these days will more closely resemble their originals but will still have an audible difference. The volume also varies throughout each song. These changes are intentional and will cue your middle ear to adjust and strengthen its responsiveness. Please do not turn the volume up and down as this will prevent your middle ear from gaining necessary skills. It is also recommended that you **refrain from talking, singing to the music, dancing, or eating crunchy foods** as these behaviors will interfere with progress. _____ (Initials)

Temporary Increase in Sound Sensitivity: Some clients report having a temporary increase in sound sensitivity after using the SSP. This response is most likely due to the middle ear’s newly enhanced capacity to tune in to human vocal frequencies. This increase should adjust over time. Some have found adjustment easier by reducing volumes from radios, tvs, asking loved ones and coworkers to adjust their device volumes, and by minimizing exposure to chaotic public environments. Some use headphones or earbuds if they cannot adjust the volume or stimulation in their environment. _____ (Initials)

Temporary Increase in Facial/Ear /Stomach Sensations: The vagus nerve runs from the brainstem up to through the larynx and pharynx and to the facial muscles and down through the organs to the stomach. When activated, this nerve provides our voices and facial muscles the ability to modulate and change with differing social expressions such as curiosity, surprise, delight, attentiveness, and empathy. Once the SSP music triggers the middle ear with calm, safe frequencies, the middle ear will then activate the vagus nerve up through the face. Some clients report feeling a mild flush or warmth in their face while listening to the SSP. This is a temporary sensation and is a positive sign of active vagal stimulation. Some clients also report feelings of shifting or tugging in their middle ears during active listening. This is another positive sign of active stimulation of the middle ear. Should the sensation become uncomfortable, simply turn off the music for a break. If you have scheduled daily listening sessions back to back, it may help to space the sessions out over several days. Others have reported improved tolerance by taking Tylenol or Advil prior to each session to address inflammation responses. _____ (Initials)

Increased Emotions or Memory Processing: Some clients find the SSP to be a gateway to emotional processing without fight/flight reactions. Most clients are able to process these changes more effectively during their weekly therapy session. If the emotions or memories are intense, then your SSP provider may suggest you slow the schedule of sessions a bit to allow for adjustment. _____ (Initials)

Changes in Energy: As the nervous system adapts to the positive changes the SSP provides, some may experience fatigue or an increased need to be active. While exercise is discouraged while using the SSP, it may be beneficial to schedule daily walks/runs or gym classes during the weeks you are scheduled to use the SSP.



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What to Expect (cont'd)

- **Greater Emotional Awareness:** Some have noticed that when their autonomic system has become regulated, they become more aware of tender emotions such as sadness, vulnerability, and emotional sensitivity. While this change might seem like a regression in healing, it can actually be a sign of progress. Now that the nervous system has been retuned to relational safety, other repressed emotions and needs can now have the space to be explored and addressed with empathy, calm, and nurture. The SSP cannot and does not take away grief or suppress needs for comfort, validation, or connection. The SSP simply reengages your nervous system in a healthy way that allows for more authentic connection without the hindrances of chronic fight/flight feelings and behaviors. If you find this change difficult to process, you may want to consider slowing down the protocol sessions to allow for adjustment. _____ (Initials)
- **Change in Music Preferences:** Since the SSP tunes the middle ear to safe, melodic tones found in the human voice, you may find a greater desire to experience these tones after completion of the protocol. Some have found that by listening to more melodic music rather than harsh aggressive tunes they can re-experience similar feelings of safety and social engagement. _____ (Initials)
- **Decreased Tolerance for Loud, Aggressive Human Speech:** If before the SSP you had developed a tolerance or defense against harsh unpredictable human vocal tones, then you may find that after the SSP you have less tolerance and willingness to block out the tones. Part of your therapeutic support sessions may include skillbuilding and exploring options for how to communicate your needs effectively with others. _____ (Initials)
- **Change in Body Posture:** If prior to the SSP your body and muscles had postured in defense mode, then you may find that post- SSP hidden or obscured body sensations may be more noticeable. Untreated or undiagnosed conditions of the inner ear, spine, or skeletal structure may then need to be addressed by appropriate medical professionals. _____ (Initials)

What to Expect (Long-term):

When the SSP is combined with other forms of therapy and therapeutic activities, many clients with hypersensitive nervous systems report **sustained levels of tolerance** for the varied sounds in their environment as well as **increased mood regulation, focus, and sense of being in the present**. Some find the gains to decrease within two months, especially if there's a significant trauma history, new trauma/stress, poor nutrition and/or sleep, or lack of continued vagal nerve stimulation (through singing, playing a wind instrument, yoga, or other focused breathing activities). A second partial round of the SSP often re-establishes the gains experienced after the initial round. Some have found one active listening session of Day 5 to be sufficient. Your SSP Provider will address the potential need for this at your follow-up therapy session. _____ (Initials)

For more detailed information regarding long-term benefits of the SSP, please visit Facebook and request to join the SSP Support Group or the SSP Parent Support Group. _____ (Initials)

Consent Form

I, _____ have read the SSP information and agree to the terms listed:

1. SSP is a listening intervention designed to accelerate progress toward a calm, socially engaged state and is not intended as the only therapy or intervention. Using SSP without continuing treatment may only provide temporary benefits.
2. SSP is best implemented slowly and with additional therapeutic support. At the initial consultation, the therapist will provide me with all the necessary information to apply the protocol in the safest and most beneficial way for me.
3. I understand the limitations of the SSP, specifically:
 - Homes or relationships that evoke feelings of danger and threat
 - Loud, chaotic environment at home or work
 - Alcohol, caffeine, benzodiazepines, opiate use, illegal drug use
 - Major trauma or grief/serious loss
4. I understand that certain medical conditions may complicate the use of SSP and that SSP is not recommended without prior physician approval, specifically:
 - History of stroke or seizure
 - History of traumatic brain injury
 - Damage to the middle or inner ear, such as Meniere's disease, tinnitus or hearing loss
 - Dementia or Alzheimer's disease
5. I understand the potential risks associated with SSP, specifically:
 - Temporary increased sensitivity to sound or sensitivity to loud, chaotic frequencies
 - Temporary moderate facial/stomach and/or ear discomfort- for which a break from listening to the protocol is recommended
 - Increased emotion or memory processing, especially if SSP sessions are too frequent or without adequate therapeutic support
 - Temporary change in energy level, especially fatigue or motor restlessness, for which rest/exercise is indicated
 - A change in posture as a result of increased levels of relaxation
6. I understand that no specific outcome can be guaranteed upon completion of the SSP and that additional recommendations may be made during or after the SSP.
7. I have read this agreement carefully and understand that this protocol will be applied in the best appropriate manner. I release Magda Kasprzyk MINDFULNESS FOR CHILDREN from any and all liability for any adverse effects, whether temporary or long term, related to the use of this program.

Signature of the client: _____ Date: _____