

EMOTIONAL SAFETY: WHY KIDS NEED A SAFE SPACE TO FEEL, LEARN, AND GROW



Emotional safety is foundational to learning and growth.

Understanding the difference between emotion and feeling is key to helping us create the conditions for growth.



Emotions – happiness, sadness, fear, love, anger, etc. – are physiological, instinctive and involuntary processes that happen inside us. We all have them. Our emotions play a pivotal role in how we respond, behave, and interact with our world – whether we are aware of them or not.



Our **feelings** make us aware of the emotions we are experiencing. Our feelings are the conscious messages that we receive from our emotions that let us know what we are experiencing.

EMOTIONAL SAFETY IS WHAT CREATES THE CONDITIONS FOR THE FEELINGS TO BE SAFE ENOUGH TO EMERGE.

Key relational components that are foundational to creating emotional safety:



Inviting relationship:

Does a child feel like we care about them? Do they feel connected to us? We are hardwired for connection, and relationship creates a sense of safety. And when we feel safe, we can be who we are. Relationship and connection are the foundation of emotional safety.



Helping students feel at home:

'Home' is not necessarily where one lives. The word home can mean where your heart feels the safest. When we feel connected, we feel at home. We feel at home when we can be ourselves. And it is when we feel at home that our armour can come down and our hearts can be soft.



Providing warmth:

Most children have a great warmth radar and can feel this invitation from us. Warmth is worn differently by different teachers. Some of us may display our warmth in traditional ways that we might recognize easily (like smiling faces and grandmother-like coziness), while others might simply have a twinkle in their eye. Some of us might seem somewhat gruff but have an incredible kindness and warmth inside that shines through.



Providing an invitation for them to be who they truly are:

Children can sense this invitation from us. Are they invited to exist as they are? Do they sense our welcome of them regardless if they have done something right or wrong? This does not mean that we never say no, or discipline our students, but what this does mean is that we bridge any discipline so our students do not feel that the relationship is conditional.

