



Safe & Loved

The Heart of Gentle Teaching

Teaching others to feel safe with us and loved by us is the heart of Gentle Teaching – it is our most fundamental and central task as gentle teachers. We believe that all learning and development occur only after and when a person feels safe and loved.

However, someone feeling safe and loved with you is often a winding path; the journey will look different for everyone. Even after a person has learned to feel safe and loved things such as life circumstances, memories, internal fears can cause them to lose this feeling, at least temporarily. When this happens, we must remind the person that they are safe with us and loved by us before we can move forward.

Teaching others to feel safe and loved requires patience, consistency, and a deep sense of empathy. It is not a one-time accomplishment but an ongoing process of connection and reassurance. As gentle teachers, we must remain attentive and adaptable, always seeking to understand and respond to the unique needs and experiences of everyone. This commitment to fostering a sense of safety and love is what creates the foundation for true learning, growth, and healing.

What Did John Say?

Refocusing Our Perceptions

In the list that follows, compare how a person whom you are trying to help struggles with fear and is distanced from a feeling of being safe. Reflect on the subtle interactions that the person expresses that show “I am safe with you” but always remember that we are not blaming ourselves. Yet, we need to gain insight into the fear that envelops those we serve. Look at each factor in the list and check those that apply. If fearful outweighs safe, then we know how important it is to teach the person a feeling of, “With us, you are safe!”

Feels Fear...

- Runs away
- Cries a lot
- Expressionless
- Sad appearance
- Slovenly
- Hits self
- Hits others
- Sleeps poorly
- Complains
- Refuses to participate
- Eats poorly
- Self-stimulates
- Curses
- Hordes
- Flinches

Feels Safe...

- Stays with others
- Expresses joy
- Relaxed
- Contented appearance
- Well-cared for
- Respects body
- Respects others
- Sleeps well
- Expresses love
- Enjoys participating
- Eats well
- Enjoys hobbies
- Uplifts others
- Shares
- Appears content

Read the following and check the factors that apply to the person(s) that you are helping, to get an idea of how loved the person feels. When you are finished, think about how much more deeply you must teach a sense of being loved.

Feels Unloved...

- Complaining
- Addiction to drugs or alcohol
- Poor grooming and dress
- Withdrawal
- Self-stimulation
- Hurting self
- Hurting others
- Irritability
- Running from caregivers
- Running from peers
- Screaming
- Hoarding objects
- Hurtful sexual expression
- Sense of worthlessness

Feels Loved...

- Asking for help
- Finding joy in others
- Pride in self
- Socializing
- Pride in hobbies
- Caring for bodily needs
- Helping others
- Contentment
- Finding joy in care givers
- Finding joy in peers
- Sweetly communicating
- Sharing possessions
- Loving sexual expression
- Sense of self-esteem

Q1

How can you tell if the person you are serving feels safe and loved by you?

What, if any, are the barriers to someone feeling safe and loved?

Q2

Q3

How can you refocus your efforts on depending on the sense of 'safe and loved' with you?

Challenging the Heart & Head

We should never have a meeting without solely focusing on Safe & Loved! Anytime we are concerned with someone's choices or reactions, our first question should always be "are they feeling safe and loved in this moment". This will often lead us to the right response.