

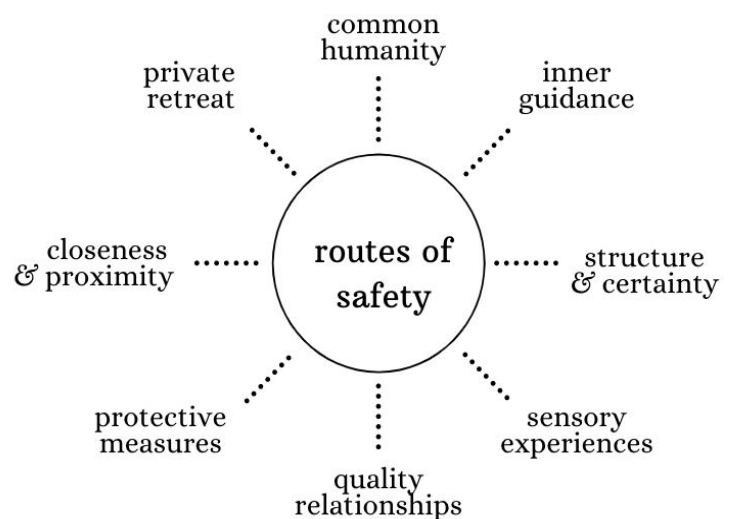
Routes of Safety

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The Routes of Safety model is built on the belief that feeling safe is an essential treatment for those who have experienced various forms of hurt or trauma. Trauma changes and compromises our ability to feel safe within ourselves and the Routes of Safety was built to assist people in gaining more access to a felt sense of emotional safety.

There are eight Routes of Safety:

- Inner Guidance
- Structure & Certainty
- Sensory Experiences
- Quality Relationships
- Protective Measures
- Closeness & Proximity
- Private Retreat
- Common Humanity



The Routes of Safety model describes the ways we fluidly access safety. How we access safety (our route) depends on our lived experiences; our early emotional experiences, the trauma we've experienced and/or inherited, and our current relationships with ourselves and others. Find your routes by asking yourself: *"What makes me feel safe?"*

Inner Guidance

Using resources within oneself as a pathway to access and secure safety.



LOOKS LIKE

- Cultivating presence
- Building self-trust, confidence
- Reframing thoughts
- Writing & journaling
- Reparenting yourself



FEELS LIKE

- Feeling your real feelings
- Mindfulness, Meditation
- Self-compassion
- Soothing inner child
- Grounding and being in your body



SOUNDS LIKE

- “I can trust my own judgment.”
- “I know how to keep myself safe.”
- “I can soothe myself.”
- “I’m trying my best.”

Structure & Certainty

Relying on predictability, probability, and risk-calculation to access and secure safety.



LOOKS LIKE

- Calculating risk
- Making a schedule to follow
- Preferring a list
- Carving out space and time
- Excessive cleaning or organizing



FEELS LIKE

- Gaining certainty when uncertain
- Staying regulated by keeping busy
- Needing something to do in order to stay regulated



SOUNDS LIKE

- “I need to know.”
- “I need to have an answer.”
- “I want more choice and control.”
- “I feel secure knowing what’s next.”

Sensory Experiences

Using our sensory and somatic systems to reach a felt sense of safety and regulation.



LOOKS LIKE

- Smelling a candle
- Listening to nature or music
- Cuddling a friend, partner, pet
- Eating your favourite food
- Watching the clouds



FEELS LIKE

- Nourishment, relaxation, relief
- Feeling your real feelings
- Self-holding or self-brushing
- Grounding, being in your body



SOUNDS LIKE

- “What does my body need right now?”
- “I’ll put on the TV for background noise.”
- “I need to take some deep breaths.”
- “Where’s my weighted blanket?”

Quality Relationships

Relying on connective and relational resources to reach a place of safety.



LOOKS LIKE

- Having a strong sense of community and togetherness
- Experiencing repair after rupture
- Connection with others
- Healing in relationships
- Excessive cleaning or organizing



FEELS LIKE

- Having your needs met
- Coregulation
- Attunement
- Compassion and shared empathy
- Intimate touch and playfulness to do in order to stay regulated



SOUNDS LIKE

- “Other people can keep me safe.”
- “I’m able to trust others.”
- “Healing happens in relationships.”
- “People care about me too.”
- “I feel secure knowing what’s next.”

Closeness & Proximity

Decreasing the physical distance between yourself and another person or object to achieve a sense of regulation or safety.



LOOKS LIKE

- Receiving a hug, giving a hug
- Wanting or needing to be near others, needing touch
- Having someone there just in case
- Help is available if/when you need it



FEELS LIKE

- Being deeply held or swaddled
- Security & protection
- Aliveness & high energy connection
- Increased intimacy through touch



SOUNDS LIKE

- “I want more intimacy in my relationship.”
- “Can you stay close in case I need you?”
- “Hey, just checking in. How are you?”
- “Can we cuddle while watching this movie?”

Private Retreat

Increasing the physical distance between yourself and another person or object to achieve a sense of regulation or safety.



LOOKS LIKE

- Needing quiet time/alone time
- Gravitating to small, dark spaces
- Enjoying being home alone
- Escaping as avoidance
- Escaping with a book, music or art



FEELS LIKE

- A sense of ease or comfort in retreat
- Finding solace in darkness/at night
- Needing to avoid to feel safe
- Checking out, shutting down, dissociation



SOUNDS LIKE

- “I’m safer alone or by myself.”
- “I prefer to be alone.”
- “Things are better kept private.”
- “Sorry, I was daydreaming!”

Protective Measures

Securing a felt sense of safety through internal or external sources of survival, security, or protection.



LOOKS LIKE

- Setting boundaries with others
- Relying on survival strategies to cope/stay alive
- Self-sufficiency & pragmatism
- Reconciliation & restorative justice



FEELS LIKE

- Ease, comfort, security
- Radical honesty & vulnerability
- Being physically protected
- 'Connecting by protecting'



SOUNDS LIKE

- "Your safety matters to us."
- "It's safe to say no."
- "I know how to stand up for myself."
- An apology with changed behaviour.

Common Humanity

Accessing a sense of safety and reassurance from our shared human experiences that shift our perspective, open up new possibilities, and reframe our current ways of living and knowing.



LOOKS LIKE

- Being listened to, being believed
- Allowing mistakes & imperfection
- Sharing experiences (good & bad)
- Making space for joy & humour & play



FEELS LIKE

- Being heard, seen, recognized, known
- Reciprocity in vulnerability
- Being good enough as you are
- Sharing your feelings & opinion



SOUNDS LIKE

- "Your accessibility needs matter here."
- "I'm your ally in this."
- "It's okay to say 'no'."
- "You don't have to do it alone."
- "I'm so proud of you!"
- "I love being your friend."

My Routes of Safety:

“What makes me feel safe?”

Route 1: _____

My preferred strategies:

Route 2: _____

My preferred strategies:

Route 3: _____

My preferred strategies: