

Psychological Safety Messages

Elements of Psychological Safety Messages (Verbal & Nonverbal):

- Ask/Understand student needs (what makes them feel safe? Fears?)
- Listen to the student
- Normalize their emotions, concerns, and needs given the situation(s)
- Empathize with their struggle to manage/regulate
- Be honest in your approach
 - Example: Do not promise something that you cannot guarantee. Be honest and realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- Pledge your efforts to try to protect psychological & physical safety
- Develop partnerships with others (Work with other members of the student's team to provide support and consistency)
- Create predictable routines

Giving a Safety Message

When giving a safety message, use phrases like:

"I will work hard to keep you safe in my classroom"

"I will do my best to get you to a safe place"

"You are always able to come to me if you are feeling scared. I will always do my best to help you"

"I am a safe person to talk to. I will always respect your thoughts and feelings"

Avoid phrases like:

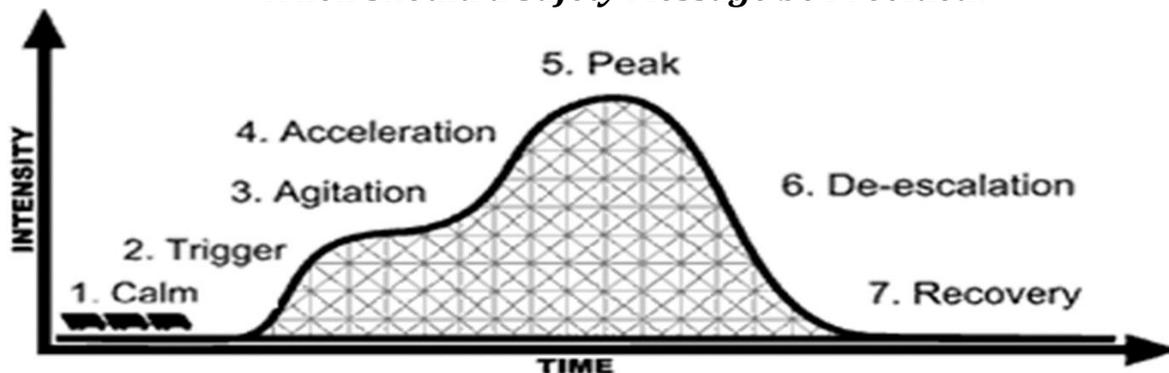
"No one will ever hurt you again"

"I promise you will not have to go home to your mother"

"Nothing bad will ever happen to you at school"

"Keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself at school"

When Should a Safety Message be Provided?



This diagram depicts the "anger mountain." When a student is accelerating or peaking (4 and 5), it is not an appropriate time to provide a psychological safety message. Psychological safety messages are most effective when provided when the child is calm or in a recovery state. Coping strategies can be effective in the trigger, agitation, and de-escalation states. When a student is accelerating or peaking, the primary goal should be de-escalating the student which may be achieved through giving them space or allowing them to take a walk/leave the situation.