

## Safety

Safety is the key to our feeling regulated and in our Just Right State – if we do not feel safe, our social engagement system is offline and we do not have access to our Just Right State. We have seen that a dysregulated child may perceive threat in the environment where there is none. This means that the dysregulated child may perceive objects, sensations, events or interactions as threatening that, to the regulated people around him, are not perceived as threatening at all. Indeed, even the well-intentioned, compassionate intervention of a caregiver – a parent or teacher, for example – may be perceived by the child as a threat and so increase his dysregulation rather than support him to self-regulate and return to his Just Right State. Safety for the dysregulated child is thus defined by their experiencing a feeling of safety, rather than by the removal from the environment of what a caregiver might reasonably assume to constitute a threat. In order to feel safe, the child requires support from their caregiver to self-regulate and thereby to regain their Just Right State. The caregiver who understands the child’s sensory differences, validates their experience of distress and makes effective use of vocal intonation, facial expression, gesture and posture is well placed to provide this vital co-regulating support.