



# Safe Alliance Worksheet

## Understanding Your Emotional Regulation Systems

This worksheet is designed to help you access your **soothing system**, one of three emotional regulation systems described in **Paul Gilbert's Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT)**:

- **Threat System (Protection & Survival)**: Activates fight, flight, freeze, or fawn responses to perceived danger. Often linked to anxiety, fear, or self-criticism.
- **Drive System (Achievement & Reward-Seeking)**: Pushes us toward goals, accomplishments, and external validation.
- **Soothing System (Connection & Safety)**: Engages when we feel safe, secure, and nurtured—key for emotional balance and healing.

This exercise will help **shift from the threat system to the soothing system** by cultivating a **felt sense of safety**—a deep, internal experience of security, calm, and connection. It also draws on Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy (EFIT), which highlights the importance of attachment in healing. Our ability to feel safe is deeply connected to our past and present relationships.

### Step 1: Identifying Your Safe Alliance

A **safe alliance** is a person or place where you feel safe, secure, and connected. This might be someone from your past, someone in your life now, or an imagined figure or space that represents safety.

#### Option A: A Person from Your Life

Sometimes people struggle with identifying a safe person. This could be a parent, grandparent, teacher, friend, mentor, or even a neighbour—anyone who made you feel safe, secure, and connected. Welcome to write in the space below.

Think of someone (past or present) who makes/made you feel safe and supported.

- **Who is this person?** (e.g., a parent, grandparent, teacher, friend, or mentor)



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- **What makes them feel safe to you?**
  
- **What experiences do you associate with them?** (e.g., baking cookies with my grandma, walking in the park with my dad)
  - **Describe a specific event or memory in detail.** Where were you? What was happening? Who else was there? What were the sights, sounds, and smells?
  
- **How did you feel emotionally during this experience?**
  
- **How did your body feel in this moment?** (e.g., warm, light, safe, relaxed)
  
- **What did this experience teach you about safety and connection?**



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- **What feelings come up during these experiences?** (For ideas on specific feelings, refer to the *Feelings and Sensations Workbook*)
  
- **How did your body respond in those moments?** (e.g., relaxed muscles, warmth in chest, slower breathing)

## Option B: Imagining a Safe Person

If you can't think of someone, you can **create** a safe figure. This could be a caring mentor, an animal, a spiritual guide, or an entirely new presence.

- **What does this safe person look like?**
  
- **What qualities do they have?** (e.g., kindness, strength, gentleness, wisdom)
  
- **What experiences would you imagine having with them?** (e.g., sitting together in a cozy room, feeling protected in their presence)



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- **How do they express care and support for you?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What words would they say to reassure you?**

## Step 2: Identifying a Safe Place

A **safe place** is a space where you feel at ease, free from judgment or danger. This can be a real location from your past or present or an entirely imagined setting created in your mind. Your safe place should evoke a **felt sense of safety**—a deep, internal experience of security, calm, and connection.

Think about a place where you have felt safe before, or imagine one that could provide a deep sense of comfort. This can be:

- A childhood home or a cozy corner in your current home
- A favourite outdoor setting (e.g., a forest, beach, or garden)
- A sacred or spiritual place
- A completely new, created space that feels warm and inviting

To deepen your connection to this place, explore the following questions:

- **Where is this place?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What do you see around you?**



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- **What sounds are present?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **What textures can you feel?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Are there any scents in the air?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Is there a taste that brings comfort?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **How does your body respond in this place?**

**You can also take out a separate piece of paper and draw your place. Or better yet, cut and paste pictures!**



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## Step 3: Daily Practice

Strengthen your connection to safety by incorporating this exercise into your daily life. This includes exploring your **felt sense of safety**—the deep, internal experience of feeling safe, secure, and connected.

### Grounding in the Felt Sense of Safety:

Take a moment to connect with this feeling:

1. Close your eyes and take a slow, deep breath.
2. Picture your safe person or place in full detail.
3. Notice how your body responds—what shifts?
4. Stay with this sensation for a few moments before opening your eyes.

### Ideas for Daily Practice:

- **You can spend as little as 2 minutes or as much as 30 minutes** visualizing your safe person or place each day.
- **Write a letter** from your safe person to yourself when you need reassurance.
- **Recreate an experience** with your safe person (e.g., bake their favorite recipe, or visit a place you shared together).
- **Use grounding techniques** (deep breathing, touching a comforting object) when feeling overwhelmed.
- **Journal about the felt sense of safety**—how it changes over time, what helps strengthen it.

### Troubleshooting if This Feels Difficult:

- **If safety feels unfamiliar, start small.** Think of moments of “less stress” rather than total safety.
- **If visualization is hard, focus on bodily sensations.** How would safety *feel* rather than look?
- **If emotions arise, remind yourself it’s okay.** Healing takes time, and this is part of the process.

### Tracking Your Experience:

Date Before (Emotions/Sensations) After (Emotions/Sensations)



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## Step 4: A Note on Difficulties

It's okay if this exercise feels hard at first. Some people may struggle to recall safety, and that's completely normal. You are **not alone in this experience**. Safety is something that can be rebuilt with time and practice. If distress arises, take a break and return when you're ready.

### A Reminder of Self-Compassion:

- You deserve to feel safe.
- It's okay if this takes time.
- You are worthy of care, whether from others or from yourself.

**This worksheet is meant to gently guide you in recognizing and cultivating feelings of safety. Be patient with yourself, and know that even small steps matter. ❤️**