

NAIT Safe Space at Home Guidance

What is a Safe Space?

A Safe Space is a place in your home where your child can choose to go when they are beginning to feel overwhelmed or need time and space to regulate themselves.

Safe Spaces should be:

- Readily accessible to the child so that they can go safely and independently when they need to
- Available whenever they are needed by the child, for as long as they are needed
- Specific to them; not used by anyone else

When your child is in their Safe Space, everyone else in the house should try not to talk to them or to ask anything of them, but should give them time and space, unless they are unsafe. Ideally they should choose to come back out whenever they feel ready.

What does a Safe Space look like?

It could be:

- A pop up tent, if a child likes to feel enclosed
- A light cloth over a table
- A corner of the room with cushions or a bean bag
- A corner space between two chairs or sofas
- A quiet corner in an infrequently used room
- A high backed chair, perhaps facing away from the rest of the room
- space containing things you know will help the child to calm down – you might involve your child in planning this



How do I decide what is the best Safe Space?

Consider your child's views

Your child may be able to tell you what they prefer but they may not. They may already seek out certain spaces where they feel safe and you can tell from this what they like.

Consider accessibility

If the preferred space is too far away, or somewhere the child cannot go independently you may need to find a closer space. Sometimes the child's bedroom is an enjoyable and relaxing space but your child already uses this to sleep, dress and play so it is unlikely to make a good Safe Space.

Consider safety

Wherever your child's Safe Space is, it needs to be safe and you need to be able to see them and know that they are okay.

If your child hides in a toilet, this may not be the safest place and we might think – they like a quiet, private, contained space and think about how else we could meet this need?

Consider consistency

Your child may not need the Safe Space for long periods of time but it needs to be there for the time they do need it. It's a good idea to keep it available, even if your child is not using it regularly. Sometimes just knowing it is there, and that they could go to it if needed, can be reassuring.

How and when should your child go to their Safe Space?

- As often as they need
- Teach them how to use by introducing it and rehearsing using it when they are calm
- You may wish to provide a card or symbol so they can inform you that they are going there without having to speak. It's also okay just to go there without asking.
- Don't use the Safe Space as a reward – they don't have to earn it, rather we should be pleased they are self-monitoring and finding a way to manage their feelings. There may be other preferred spaces that you can use as a reward or for movement breaks.
- For as long as they need – asking a child to come out before they are ready can be counter-productive
- You might suggest your child to go to the Safe Space if you recognise the need. Often an adult can give a child the symbol and say, 'I think you need time in the tent', perhaps with a sand timer to help them understand it's not forever. However be aware that your child might need longer than initial time set.