

## A Case Study Approach on Co-Constructing the Idea of 'Safety' with Children

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**Abstract :** In most work that involves children, the voice of the children is often not heard. This is ironic since a lot of discussions might involve their welfare and safety. It might seem natural that the professionals should hear from them about what they wish for instead of deciding what is best for them. However, this, unfortunately, might be more the exception than the norm in most case and hence in many instances, children are merely 'subjects' in conversations about safety instead of active participants in the construction or creation of safety in the family. There might be many reasons why it does not happen in our work. Firstly, professionals have learnt how to 'socialise' into their professional roles and hence in the process become 'un-childlike'. Secondly, there is also a lack of professional training with regards to how to talk with children. Finally, there might be also a lack of concrete tools and techniques that are developed to facilitate the process. In this paper, the case study method is used to show how the idea of safety could be concretised and discussed with children and their family members, and hence making them active participants and co-creators of their own safety. Specific skills and techniques are highlighted through the case study. In this case, there was improvement in outcomes like no repeated offence or abuse. In addition, children were also able to advocate for their own safety after six months of intervention and how the family members were able to explicitly say what they can do to improve safety. The professionals in the safety network reported significant improvements. On top of that, the abused child who was removed due to child protection concerns, had verbalized observations of change in mother's parenting abilities, and has requested for home leave to begin due to ownership of safety planning and having confidence to co-create safety for her siblings and herself together with the professionals in the safety network. Children becoming active participants in the co-creation of safety not only serve the purpose in allowing them to own a 'voice' but at the same time, give them greater confidence to protect themselves at home and in other contexts outside of home.

**Keywords :** partnering for safety, collaborative social work, family and systemic psychotherapy, child protection

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