COMMUNICATING SAFETY

During the intake process or during ongoing sessions, something may come up for you. At the beginning of our work, I will share my system of communicating safety and threat activation with you. (See below.)

You get to tell me and your partner where you are. I will be paying attention but I might not always know what is happening inside you. So please indicate your level of safety whenever you feel a change in your capacity to continue.



"In the Red" means we stop.

Any conversation is no longer productive because your nervous system is overwhelmed. You may feel flooded, completely shut down, panicked, dissociated, unable to think clearly, or unable to take in what I am saying.

At red, the goal is not further insight but helping you reconnect with your body and surroundings, reduce the intensity, and regain enough stability for you to feel safe.

We can always come back to that conversation later. There is very little value in forcing someone through a conversation after they have become too overwhelmed to actually process it.

"Yellow" means caution.

You may be getting activated, overwhelmed, anxious, disconnected, angry, ashamed, or otherwise having a stronger reaction. You can still communicate and take in what is happening, but we are getting closer to the edge of what has traditionally felt unmanageable.

I sometimes call that "being in the weeds." Yellow doesn't automatically mean we stop. It means we become much more intentional. We may slow down and make adjustments to the environment.

"Green" means we are okay.

When we are green, the conversation can usually stay pretty open, even if we are also experiencing a negative emotion. Green means we can still explore, ask questions, make connections, or go wherever the work needs to go.

I want you to trust me, but I also know that trust is earned over time. If something feels too uncomfortable to share right now, please tell me. You do not have to push past your limits just because a topic comes up.

If something feels hard to discuss, you can also use the same safety color system to communicate your current level of comfort or trust around that topic — green, yellow, or red.

