

TIP SHEET

Calm Down Strategies



When dealing with dysregulated young children, it's essential to have a toolbox of strategies that can help them calm down and regain control of their emotions. Here are some specific strategies:

Deep Breathing Exercises

Teach the child simple deep breathing techniques. Encourage them to take slow, deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. Use visual cues such as blowing bubbles or pretending to blow out candles to make it more engaging.

Mindfulness Activities

Introduce age-appropriate mindfulness exercises such as guided imagery or body scans. Encourage the child to focus on their breath or notice sensations in their body. This can help them become more aware of their emotions and bring their attention back to the present moment.

Provide a Safe Space

Create a designated calming area where the child can go to when they need to regulate their emotions. This space should be quiet, comfortable, and equipped with sensory tools like soft pillows, stuffed animals, or fidget toys.

Use Visual Supports

Utilize visual aids such as a feelings chart or emotion cards to help the child identify and express their emotions. This can give them a sense of control and validation over their feelings.

Offer Sensory Input

Engage the child in sensory activities that provide calming input, such as squeezing stress balls, playing with kinetic sand, or listening to soothing music or nature sounds. Experiment with different sensory experiences to see what works best for the child.

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Establish Predictable Routines

Structure the day with predictable routines and transitions to help the child feel secure and in control. Use visual schedules or timers to signal upcoming transitions and prepare the child for changes in activities.

Validate Emotions

Acknowledge the child's feelings and validate their experience without judgment. Use empathetic statements such as "I can see that you're feeling upset" or "It's okay to feel angry, but let's find a way to calm down together."

Offer Choices

Provide the child with choices whenever possible to give them a sense of autonomy and control. For example, ask if they would like to sit in the calming area or take a few minutes to do a quiet activity.

Model Calmness

Model calm and regulated behavior yourself, as children often mirror the emotions of the adults around them. Speak in a calm tone of voice and demonstrate coping strategies like taking deep breaths or counting to ten.

Build Trust and Connection

Foster a supportive and trusting relationship with the child by showing empathy, respect, and understanding. Offer praise and encouragement for their efforts to regulate their emotions, even if they don't always succeed.

It's important to remember that every child is unique, so it may take some trial and error to find the strategies that work best for each individual child. Be patient, consistent, and flexible in your approach, and continue to adapt your strategies based on the child's needs and preferences.