



Calming Strategies



Being Calm

We all use calming strategies.

As teachers, we have learnt to stop, breathe and think before we speak or act when a child is doing something we find challenging or stressful.

As parents, we sometimes need to leave the room to calm before responding to our children.

As adults we have activities and routines that we find calming and relaxing. We have friendships that are fun and relaxing to help us manage the stress in our lives.

There are different reasons for needing calming strategies:

- ▶ ‘In the moment’ calming, when you are suddenly challenged and need to be calm to respond.
- ▶ ‘Maintaining a sense of calm’ when a longer-term situation requires you to be calm to meet an ongoing challenge.

Children need to learn calming strategies too. Some children need more strategies than others. Some children have heightened reactions, some are very energetic, and some children have little experience with feeling calm or being in a calm environment.

Building a Range of Strategies that work

- ▶ Not all strategies work for all children.
- ▶ It is important to trial and observe to see the impact that the strategy has on the child.
- ▶ It is important to **stop** immediately if a child doesn't like or respond positively to a strategy.
- ▶ What works one day may not work the next.
- ▶ Some children will need to develop a 'Tool Box' of strategies that they can choose from. This will change and evolve over time as the child changes and matures.



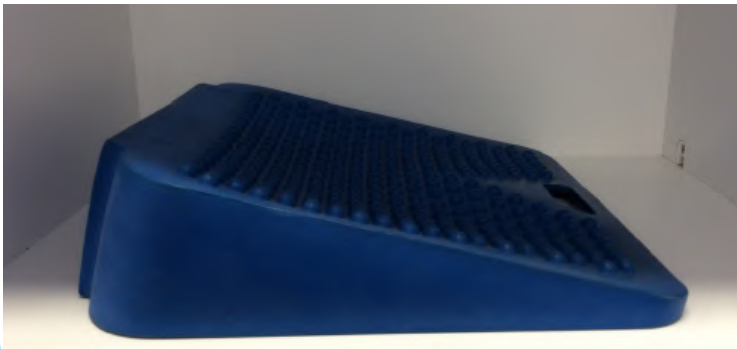
Motion

Motion assists children to **expend energy**.

Action songs, running, climbing, jumping, bike or tricycle riding, swinging, mini trampoline.

Sitting on a physio ball, wedge, cushion, or Move and Sit allows child to sit and move at the same time, which may help them to focus.

Important to follow up with heavy work or pressure and touch if the child is still heightened.



Pressure and Touch



Pressure and touch provides sensory feedback to calm and settle a child's body. Use after motion to settle child.

This can include arm squeezes, brushing arms and legs, rolling up in a blanket, massage, hugs, rolling a ball over back, squeezing between cushions, weighted blanket or pillow over knees, squishing into a small space such as a box or corner with pillows, wearing a heavy back pack and massage.



Heavy Work



When children engage in heavy work, the push, pull and pressure is calming and the motion is alerting.

Heavy work involves weight-bearing through the arms (and legs) and using muscles: push ups, bear walking, wheelbarrowing, monkey bars, digging, carrying heavy items, bike riding, climbing and star jumps.

This can be very regulating for children who have high energy levels.



Retreat and escape



Encourage the child to move to a preferred quieter area when they are feeling overwhelmed. This may be a calm corner, outside area, tent, reading corner, etc.

If a child helps to set up a calm space with things they like, they will be more likely to use it. Some children prefer a very small space (cardboard box or bottom shelf) to retreat to. This gives the child some personal space.

This can also include sitting and lining up at the back (or front) of the group.



Tactile sensory experiences

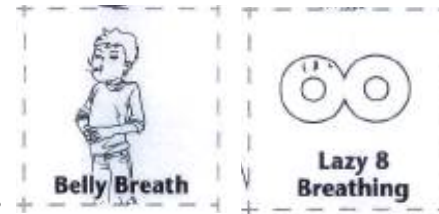
Tactile sensory experiences - sand play, water, goop, finger painting can be enjoyable and calming for children.

Fiddle Toys can also assist children to regulate movement during group times and other times when they need to sit still.



Suck, chew and breathe

Oral input to organise and alert, to help listen and focus.



Breathing exercises, meditation and mindfulness all involve teaching children to be aware of their bodies, breathing and surroundings. Also includes blowing bubbles, blowing small pompoms and other light objects with mouth or straws.

Suck and chew a variety of textures in food: crunchy, soft, sticky, hard.

Oral **sensory** input around the mouth: electric toothbrush, chew toys, massage, songs and games involving the tongue.



Music



Listening to quiet music can assist children to calm. Using headphones can be used to block out overwhelming noise or to retreat from an overwhelming environment.

Using music and songs with a strong beat encourages regulation. Tapping the beat on the child's arm or back can also be regulating.

Marching and action songs assist children to organise their bodies.



Preferred activities



Engaging children in **favourite activities** can be very calming. Reading a book, construction, Lego, making table, drawing, puzzles, reading, listening to music, swings, ball games, etc.



One-to-one time



On-to-one time with an adult in **play** involves giving the child some positive attention, following their lead in play and giving them some positive feedback about what they are doing well.

One-to-one support can **co-regulate** and **calm** if the child becomes upset.

One-to-one adult support can **prevent escalation**. The adults is there to intervene and support the child through challenges, modelling and teaching 'good choices' in their play and interactions with others.



Sensory diet

A good Sensory diet can assist a child to stay calm and regulated throughout the day.

Tactile - fiddle toys, sand pit or tray, water, foam, kinetic sand, etc.

Auditory - headphones when too loud, music, beat and rhythm, monitor noise levels in the room.

Visual - Visual schedules, decluttered spaces, not too much on the walls, iPad, reading a book, bubble timer, marble or car run.

Smell (Olfactory) - having a variety of different calming smells like lavender , vanilla, baking, flowers, herbs in the environment, fresh air.

Oral - variety of textures in food, electric toothbrush around mouth, blowing bubbles, chew toy or wrist band.

Vestibular - movement, dancing, freeze games, balancing, climbing, jumping off, falling on mat, handstands, forward rolls, swinging.

Proprioceptive - firm pressure (wrap in blanket, cushion sandwich), touch (shoulder squeezes, ball massage), weight bearing through arms (crab walking, pushing, carrying heavy objects, digging, swinging from hands).

Resources

‘The Out of Sync Child’ by Carol Stock Kranowitz

<https://out-of-sync-child.com/>

‘Zones of Regulation’ by Leah Kuypers

<https://www.socialthinking.com/Products/zones-of-regulation-curriculum>

Stickids

<http://www.stickids.com/>



The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible AA Page 1










Resources

‘The Kids Guide to Staying Awesome and In Control’ by Lauren Brukner

<https://suelarkey.com.au/product/the-kidso-guide-to-stayingawesome-and-in-control/>

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Lauren's Self-Regulation
Menu of AWESOME Big Body
Break Dessert Choices

Big Body Break	Picture	Choice (Check Off as many as you need to feel Just Right)
Wall Push		
Amy Crawl		
Crab Walk		
Cross-Crawl		
Superman Pose		
Jumping Jacks		
Taking Space		

Did You Use Your Tools the Correct Way? Circle the **Just Right** Check Once You Do! ✓

Do You Feel **Just Right**? Circle the **Just Right** Smiley Face When You Do! 😊

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