



Many children with Autism are easily frustrated, have strong reactions to change and have a more difficult time calming themselves when they are upset. Many parents have found it helpful to use the following strategy to help their children learn how to calm themselves when they are frustrated, angry or anxious.

Step 1: Observe and Get Ready to Teach Your Child

Figure out what your child looks like right before a meltdown:

No one knows your child as well as you do. Watch them for the warning signs that they are getting upset. Often you can see changes in their behavior (change in voice, chewing nails, pacing, asking questions incessantly) that tell you they are feeling overwhelmed or upset.

Train yourself to recognize the subtle signs:

Make sure all the adults in your child's life are aware of these signs and watch out for them.

Observe what your child looks like when calm: What does your child like to do when he is left alone? What activities are relaxing? Some children love being near a family pet. Others love music or video games. Some really relax with their favorite books.

Make a calm activities list and share it with your child:

Include the activities you see your child gravitate to and other activities you've seen work in the past, like swinging or jumping on a trampoline or taking deep breaths. Keep this list in a form that is easy for your child to use. Use pictures for young children and words appropriate to their reading level.

Step 2: Activate the Plan

When you see the upset behavior starting, tell the child what you are seeing. "I can see you are having a hard time being calm because you are wringing your hands." Then show them the second list of calm activities to do and say, "Which one of these would you choose to try now to feel better?" What's important is that they know the sign of being upset (wringing hands) and THEY can choose what to do to feel better. When they choose, they are learning to help themselves. Be sure to reinforce that they've made a good decision to try the calm activity.

Step 3: Practice the Plan

Learning how to use a calming strategy takes practice. Parents need to stay calm while their children are learning this skill. Remind them that they can ask for their calm list, make a choice, and feel better. Add new ideas to either list as new anxious behaviors arise or you learn more activities they find calming. Eventually they won't need the list. They will have learned how to recognize their frustration or agitation before it escalates to a full blown meltdown. And they will have a few different options to help them calm down.

Don't forget to check out our online store for product we have to offer any child to help with emotions, activity fun and basic learning education to promote awareness for Autism.



This is my calming list. These are the things I like to do to help calm myself.

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List your own preferred calming technique here:

Place a check in the box for the techniques that apply.

Watch a movie

☐

Rest my eyes

☐

Put together a puzzle

☐

Read a book

☐

An activity—Draw or Color

☐

Go outside and play with friends

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