

Activity Book For Family Well-being



DANIEL
EDUCATIONAL
SERVICES

Introduction

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Introduction

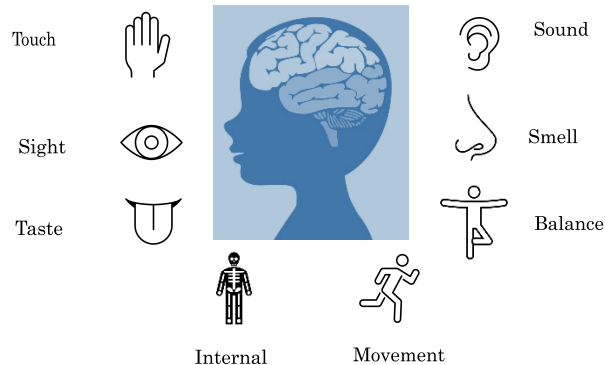
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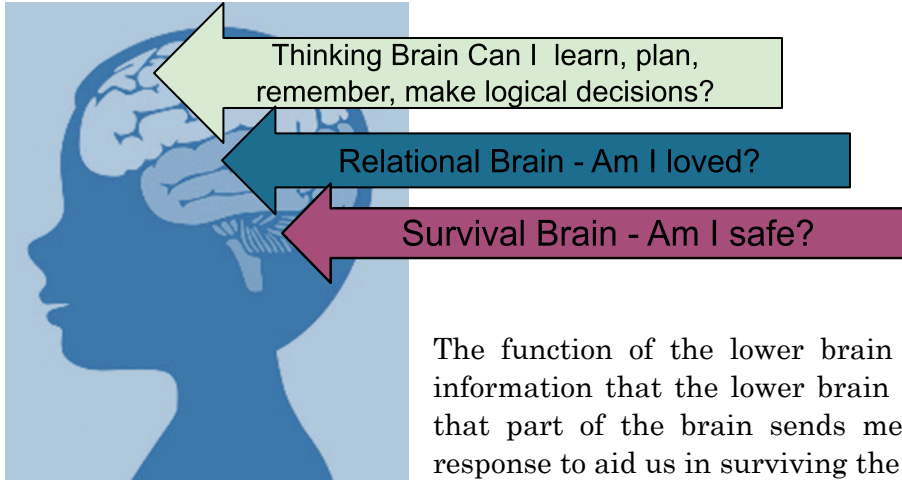
Introduction

How the Brain Processes Information

Our brains are amazing organs that help us to observe and respond to the world around us. Our nervous system runs throughout our body and helps us take in information through touch, taste, smell, vision, and hearing. It also helps us with our sense of balance, body position, and closeness to other people and objects. This system helps us to know what is happening inside of our bodies (am I hungry, thirsty, in pain?) as well. All of this information comes in through the lower parts of the brain first. The activities in this book are organized by what sensory area the activity targets.

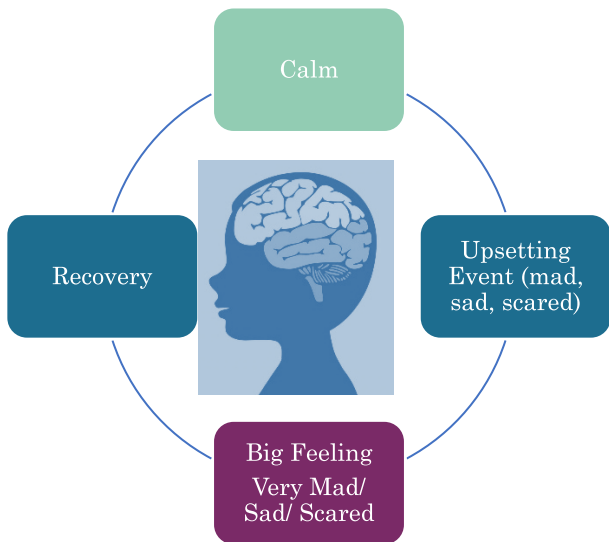


Introduction



The function of the lower brain is to help to keep us safe. If the information that the lower brain receives is interpreted as a threat, that part of the brain sends messages back down to the body in response to aid us in surviving the threat. In other words, the lowest part of the brain asks the questions “Am I safe?” and “Am I loved?” as it filters through incoming information. If the answer is “yes” then the information is passed on to higher parts of the brain for response. If the answer is “no”, the survival part of the brain takes over, cutting off higher brain functioning like learning and memory.

Introduction



This is the feelings cycle. When we are calm, we can use the top parts of our brain to make good decisions and learn. When we become upset, the lower brain can take over. The activities in this book are color coded as to where in the cycle they are most likely to be effective. Most activities are for when adults and children are calm. If activities are practiced when the lower brain feels safe and loved, it will build up the ability to use when upset. Strategies are less likely to be effective if only used in response to big emotions.

Introduction

Getting Ready

When to use: Whenever you practice calming and regulating activities with children.

Materials needed: Calm and regulated adult.



What to do: Provide a safe and secure environment and interact in a non-threatening manner.

1. Set up your environment for success - Set up what you need in advance. Keep hazards out of reach and sight.
2. Put your distractions aside, stretch and breathe, and focus on your own calm and state. Regulated adults = regulated children.
3. Follow the example of the children and what they are telling you that they need: comfort, play, someone to listen to them. Get on their level on the floor or in a comfortable chair whenever possible.

Calm/ Recovery



Visual Seeking Activities

***When to use:** These strategies will engage children that are visually seeking. This means that they gravitate toward things that are colorful or visually interesting. They also may be distracted by visual interest such as staring out of the window. These strategies may help to narrow and direct visual focus to one area of interest.*

Prepare for Co-regulation: Take a deep breath and check in with yourself. Ask yourself, in a calm and regulated state? Am I ready to engage in co-regulation?

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Name your feelings

Materials: Feelings chart

It is helpful to know the names of feelings, beyond just mad, sad, or happy. Practice naming your emotions using a feelings chart. “I feel scared and excited when I meet new people”

This will give your child language to use when feelings get big and overwhelming and might reduce crying and yelling.

How do you feel?



Hopeful



Surprised



Happy



Sad



Mad



Confused



Hurt



Excited



Embarrassed



Scared



Disappointed



Proud



Tired



Worried



Angry

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Visual Timer

Materials needed: Tools such as a visual timer or oil and water toys.

What to do: These can be used to mark time, support transitions, or put a limit on an activity without auditory reminders. Cues like, “tell me when the last bubble falls” or “when the red is all gone” are useful.



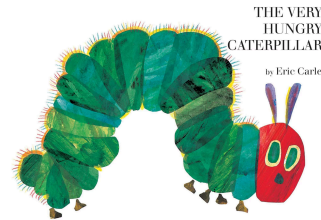
Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Visual Interest Pictures and Videos

Materials needed: Printed pictures, flashcards, picture books. Phone or other device

What to do: Web search for visual meditation videos. Pick out calming pictures such as nature scenes for children to view. Virtual fish tanks of fireplaces can also be calming. Looking at a picture book can also be helpful.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Visual Schedule

Materials needed: Visual schedule (magnets, Velcro, whiteboard) to help anticipate daily activities.

What to do: Preview daily schedule at the beginning of the day and at transitions to support visual seeking children. Use this tool to help children to anticipate changes in routine. This promotes predictability and safety.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Glitter Jar

Materials needed: Empty plastic water bottle; glitter, food coloring, glycerin (corn syrup), dish soap (a few drops to keep glitter from sticking), and glue to seal the lid.

What to do: Take the label off the water bottle. Add all ingredients and then fill with water leaving some space at the top. Glue the lid on to prevent spills.

Instructions to children for use: "Sometimes we have really big feelings. Your mind may be feeling all swirly and mixed up because you are mad, angry, confused, sad, or something else. Shake up the bottle. When you have these feelings, you can take a break, breathe, watch your feelings, and then let them settle. Watch the jar until the last glitter settles. We don't want our feelings to disappear, we just don't want them to block our view of what is happening and how we are responding."



Calm/ Recovery



Visual Avoiding Activities

When to use: *These strategies will support children that are visually avoiding. This means that they are overwhelmed by too much color or visual input. They can be stressed by having to look at things that are visually “busy” or having to visually track for long periods of time (such as when reading). They may rub or close their eyes frequently or become avoidant when visual tracking is required.*

Prepare for Co-regulation: Get yourself into a regulated state. While in a seated position, spend a minute to progressively tighten and then relax the muscles in your face, arms, hands, shoulders, legs, and feet. Take a deep breath and a long exhale before you begin.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Visual Break

Materials needed: A regulated adult.

What to do: Allow children a visual break. Encourage them to close their eyes and listen to the sound of their breath. The adult can cue them to visualize a pleasant scene as they describe it or even visualize them succeeding at the upcoming task or assignment in their minds.

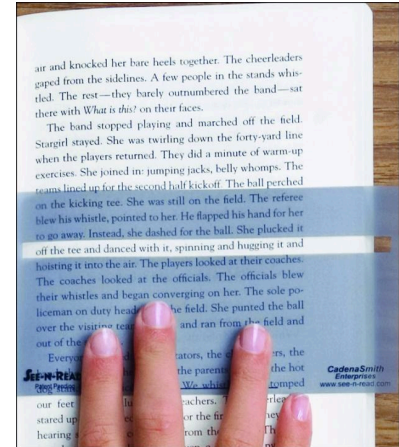




Activity Name: Visual Containment



What to do: Allow children to limit visual input. Offer reading guides to limit the number of words in focus. Encourage them to take breaks by closing their eyes or focusing on a fixed point in the room while counting to 20 silently.





Calm/ Recovery



Sound Seeking Activities

***When to use:** Use frequently to maintain a calm state and to signal transition between activities. This is especially effective for children who seem to seek auditory input and respond positively to sounds. These strategies support children who seek noise and auditory input. They enjoy singing, humming, and listening to music or speech. They may make noise when the room is quiet.*

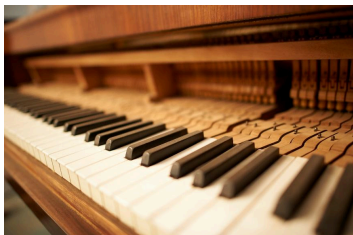
Prepare for Co-regulation: Take a deep breath and mentally scan your own body from head to toe. Ask yourself, am I feeling tension or stress? What do I need to let go of right now?

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Calming or Energizing Music

Materials needed: Smartphone or other technology to play music



What to do: Calming: Play classical or other soothing music at a low volume in the background. Have this playing when children arrive to set a tone in the room as a calm space.

Energizing: When you want children to be more energized and engaged, change music to something more upbeat (but not overwhelmingly complicated or loud).

Focus: Play music that is 60 beats per minute (Spotify has playlists). This type of music has been shown to increase focus and concentration.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Feelings Talk

Materials needed: A regulated adult.

What to do: Name the feelings that you notice in children as they are experiencing them. You seem angry, sad, frustrated, happy, scared, etc. This will help to promote a good emotional vocabulary as language develops. If a child exhibits negative or unwanted behavior, reflect the emotion back to them rather than labeling the behavior as naughty or bad. Use frequently to narrate a child's experiences throughout the day and provide empathy when there are behavioral or emotional challenges.

Share your emotions as well. "Wow, I feel really frustrated that I cannot get this technology to work" and model solutions "I need to take a breath and walk away for a second. I'll try again in a minute."

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Call and Response

Materials needed: Calm, regulated adult. Drum may be used.

What to do: Lead a child in a pattern of call and response using a drum or other surface to tap out a beat. You go first and then ask them to repeat back. You can make the beat more complex as you progress. This activity is regulating because it provides rhythmic sensory input. It also helps with focus children who may tend to daydream or lose focus. Use prior to an activity requiring focus. You can also use vocal cues, clapping patterns or attention getters.





Calm/ Recovery



Sound Avoiding Activities

These activities are useful when there has been a lot of auditory input (after school or loud play) and are especially effective for children who are easily overwhelmed by sound (cover ears, seek out quiet spots).

Prepare for Co-regulation: Get yourself into a regulated state. Cross your arms and give yourself a squeeze. Progressively squeeze down your shoulders, arms, and legs. Notice where you are holding tension and stress. Take a deep breath and a long exhale out.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Quiet Time



Materials needed: Calm, regulated adult.

What to do: Quiet time is a scheduled time of day where children are offered intentional relaxation and calm. Ten to fifteen minutes of time to read, write, draw, work on a puzzle, or do some other quiet work can help children take a physical, mental, and emotional break.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Headphones



Materials needed: Headphones, earbuds or ear muffs

What to do: Allow a child to use these to block out loud or consistent noise. Introduce them to a child by demonstrating on yourself to reduce fear or anxiety. Have the child move on and off of their ears and report if the sounds in the room (music or other noise) sounds loud or soft.



Calm/ Recovery



Movement and Rhythm Activities



These activities are useful when there has been a lot of sitting or low movement activities. Movement that is rhythmic “speaks” to the lower parts of the brain and builds calming and regulating neural pathways. These activities should be done frequently to build self-regulation ability. These activities also help with learning after teaching something new.

Prepare for Co-regulation: Give yourself a face massage. As we get stressed throughout the day our muscles tighten and clench. Massage forehead, temples, cheekbones, and jaw. Tighten and release muscles through opening and closing mouth, smiling, and releasing, and raising and lowering eyebrows.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Rhythmic ball or bean bag toss



Materials needed: Racquetball, tennis ball, or bean bags

What to do: Stand opposite to your child. Toss ball or bean bag while counting out loud together. Try to get into a steady rhythm. For a more advanced option, have children switch hands (catches with right hand, switches ball/bag to left hand and tosses with left hand) or balance on one foot while catching.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Balance walk



Materials needed: String or yarn

What to do: Set up a path using string or yarn. Instruct the child to walk along a pathway without falling off. Make the pathway more complex for older children.

Materials needed: A variety of seating options.
Change to family friendly



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Yoga poses and Stretching



Materials needed: Regulated adult to lead activities; list of planned poses; rug or padded floor/ yoga mats if available.

What to do: Holding basic yoga poses for 10-15 seconds each while breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. These can be calming and can be used to begin or end activities.

Nature Yoga Poses for Kids



Tree Pose



Mountain Pose



Frog Pose



Owl Pose



Butterfly Pose



Dog Pose



Child's Pose





Calm/ Recovery



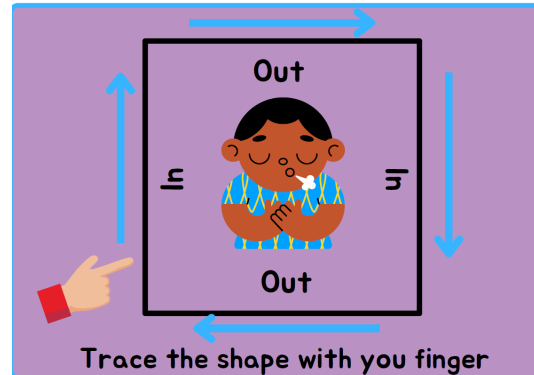
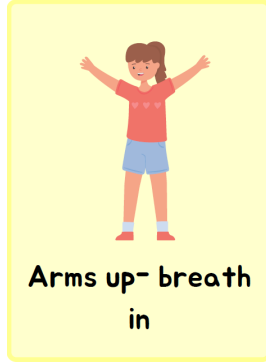
Activity Name: Deep Breathing

Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Choose one of the following to direct children to control their breath. Beath with the children to promote co-regulation.

- o **The Flower Breath:** Imagine smelling a flower. Breathe in through your nose. Then **Blow Out the Candle:** Exhale through the mouth to blow out an imaginary candle.
- o **The Bunny Breath:** Take three quick sniffs through the nose and one long exhale through the mouth.
- o **The Snake Breath:** Inhale slowly through the nose and breathe out through the mouth with a long, slow hissing sound.
- o **Belly Breathing:** Lay on floor with stuffed animal or toy on child's belly. Ask the child to breathe deeply to make the toy move up and down, but calmly enough so that it does not fall off.

Calm/ Recovery



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Deep Breathing Games

Materials needed: Regulated adult. Bubbles with wand, Cotton balls, straws, and/or toy wind instrument

What to do: Make a game of deep breathing exercises.

Who can blow the biggest bubble? Long, slow breath is required to blow a big bubble.

Who can blow a cotton ball the furthest down the table with a straw in one breath?

Who can play the longest pleasant sounding note on the flute?



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Movement Break



Materials needed: Regulated adult

What to do: Effective movement breaks are controlled, rhythmic, and repetitive whenever possible. Things like “dance party” or “get your sillies out” can sometimes be dysregulating and overwhelming. Here are some examples of rhythmic activities:

- Reach for the sky, touch the ground. Repeated 5 times.
- Reach your arm across your body and reach for opposite wall. Switch and repeat.
- Knee lifts, squats, and lunges.
- Wall push-ups. Repeat 10 times.
- Head, shoulder, knees and toes song.
- These can be done to music that has a strong, steady beat or used during a scheduled time of day when children become fidgety and need to release energy.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Mindfulness/ Still body

Materials needed: Regulated adult and mindfulness script or audio.

What to do: Have children get into a comfortable seated position. A chime or bell can be used to signal the beginning of quiet time. Mindfulness practice can be found on-line or be guided with a script. See samples here:

<https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-for-kids/>



Children can also be asked to focus on their breath and a word or phrase that is meaningful and positive to them. Gentle reminders to return to focus on breath throughout are helpful. Play gentle music to accompany this practice.

Calm/ Recovery



Touch Seeking

These activities are useful for children who seek touch. These may be children who ask for hugs, fidget with their clothing, or run their fingers along the wall when they walk down the hallway.

Prepare for Co-regulation: Do a session of “Box Breathing”. Breathe in your nose for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four, release your breath for a count of four, hold for a count of four. Repeat 4 times Draw a box with your finger on a table or desk as you do this.

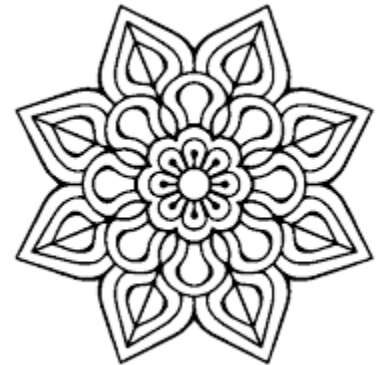
Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Coloring/ Drawing/ Mandalas

Materials needed: Coloring sheet or mandala with crayons or colored pencils.

What to do: Allow children to color or draw especially where repetitive shading or coloring movements are required. Mandalas are patterns that have repetitive shapes and coloring sheets can be downloaded for coloring in.





Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Fidgets and Sensory Items

Materials needed: A variety of sensory items. Include things that are a variety of textures (soft, prickly, bumpy, etc.) and items that have movement (fidget spinners, bubble poppers).

What to do: Allow children to use for regulating, self-soothing and focus. Teach proper usage and procedure around each item as a tool not a toy.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Ball Squeeze

Materials needed: Racquetball, stress ball, or textured ball.

What to do: Allow children to use for regulating, self-soothing and focus. Squeeze ball and release it. Notice the changes in tension in your hand. Roll ball over your arms, legs, shoulders using firm pressure.

Children can also give themselves progressive squeeze and release along arms, legs and shoulders for a similar effect.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Weighted Items/ Heavy Work



Materials needed: Weighted lap pad, stack of books, ream of paper.

What to do: Children who are touch seeking often like the feel of pressure on their bodies. Weighted lap pads or even using other weighted objects (like a ream of paper) can create a sense of calm and regulation. Children may also respond well to carrying a small stack of books (could you take these to the kitchen for me?) or wall push-ups.

Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Busy Hands

Materials needed: Puzzles or other items to be manually manipulated.

What to do: Children who are touch seeking often are regulated when able to fidget or touch items. Use them to keep hands busy when a child may need to focus or refrain from touching other things.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Comfort Items

Materials needed: Soft or plush items that can be comforting when dysregulated or hugged as needed for emotional support.

What to do: Make comfort items available in a calm down corner or other place where children can get a feeling of comfort when feeling dysregulated.





Calm/ Recovery



Touch Avoiding

These activities are useful for children who avoid touch. These may be children who avoid high fives, hugs, or handshakes. They do best with loose clothing free from tags or other irritants.

Prepare for Co-regulation: Get yourself into a regulated state. While in a seated position, spend a minute to progressively tighten and then relax the muscles in your face, arms, hands, shoulders, legs, and feet. Take a deep breath and a long exhale before you begin.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Personal Bubble

Materials needed: A regulated adult.

What to do: Teach children about personal space by using an object like a hula hoop. Talk to them about the fact that different people are comfortable with different levels of closeness. All for a personal space bubble to be marked around a child's desk where he/she can feel assured that they will not be touched or bumped into within this bubble.



Calm/ Recovery



Activity Name: Boundary Words

Materials needed: A regulated adult.

What to do: Teach children boundary phrases to help others understand when they need space or do not want to be touched.

“I prefer not to be touched.”

“I need a bit more space, can you back up, please?”

“Please stop, I don’t like that.”

“I am not a hugger.”



Calm/ Recovery



Smell Seeking

These activities are useful for children who seek out scents. They may enjoy smelling markers, glue, cleaning products or even scents that others find repugnant.

Materials needed: Essential oils (bottles or in a diffuser) /or cups with different scents.

What to do: Allow children to try different scents. These can be essential oils or household items like vinegar, mint toothpaste, cinnamon, or citrus. Ask them to rate thumbs up or thumbs down. Do any of them make them feel relaxed? Energized?



Calm/ Recovery



Smell Avoiding

These activities are useful for children who avoid scents. They may complain about things or people and say that they smell bad.

Activity Name: Mask/ Preferred Scent

Materials needed: Mask and preferred scent.

What to do: Allow children to try different scents from the activity above. Allow children to use a mask to block scent or to put a drop of a scent that they like into a mask so that they can use it to cover up other scents that they do not like when they arise.





Calm/ Recovery



Taste Seeking

These activities are useful for children who seek out strong flavors. Some children may also seek oral input through chewing on a pencil, sucking on a pen cap, sucking on clothing, or constantly putting items in their mouth.

Children that are taste/oral avoiding might be picky eaters or dislike brushing their teeth or putting things in their mouth (for example a musical instrument). Children should be allowed to avoid it when possible.

Calm/ Recovery



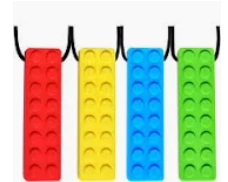
Activity Name: Sucking or Chewing

Materials needed: Safety sucker, frozen fruit.

What to do: If a child is sucking on items like their sweatshirt or thumb, find a replacement to occasionally satisfy this need such as hard candy or mints. If sucking behavior is not problematic or harmful, allowing it as a self-regulating strategy is best unless the child is seeking an alternative.

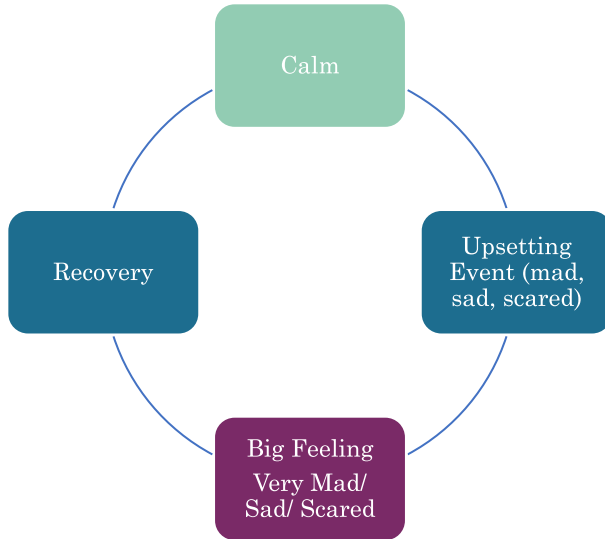
Materials needed: Alternative items to engage chewing response such as gum or chew stick.

What to do: If a child is chewing on items or biting and it is problematic, find a replacement to satisfy this need.





Upsetting Event



When a child is upset, the goal is to move to recovery as quickly as possible and avoid really big feelings. If we have built up patterns of regulation by regular use of the strategies above, children will be less likely to become upset and will return to a calm state more quickly.

Prepare for Co-regulation: When a child is distressed, you need to respond quickly. But remember that your internal sense of calm will help the child to calm. And if you are upset, the child will become more upset. Take a few quick deep breaths and repeat a word in your head such as “calm, calm, calm” or “peace, peace, peace” or whatever words work for you.

Upsetting Event



Activity Name: See You Again Soon



Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Sometimes it is sad or scary when we have to separate from someone that we love, even for only a short period of time. A routine including a hug, high five or a personal handshake that is just shared by the two of you can be helpful in transitioning into time apart.

A routine including words can also help children to feel safe - “I’ll see you as soon as school is done”. “I can’t wait to hear about your day when I pick you up.”

A “transitional object” can also be used to assure a young child that you will return for them. “Can you hold onto my favorite blanket until I see you again? You can use it for nap time.” Objects could also be sunglasses, scarf, a book, or any other object of importance but not needed during the day and ok if it gets lost or broken.

Upsetting Event



Activity Name: Change of Scenery



Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: If a child is triggered or agitated, encourage them to leave the environment and take a break to get a drink of water or use the bathroom. You can also ask them to run an errand or do a favor for you (Would you go and fill my water bottle for me?). Often a distraction or change of scenery can derail the upset feelings.

Upsetting Event



Activity Name: Walk and Talk



Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Ask the child to take a quick walk with you so that you can hear their concern in private. Side by side interaction is often more regulating than face to face interaction.

Upsetting Event



Activity Name: Fixed point



Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Invite the child to de-escalate by focusing on a preferred picture, visual image, video, or fixed point in the room while taking several deep breaths.

Upsetting Event

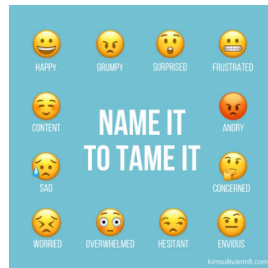


Activity Name: Name it to tame it

Materials needed: Regulated Adult.

What to do: When an upsetting event occurs, it is tempting to say things like “it’s ok, don’t worry about it, don’t cry, we will fix it, you are fine.” But sometimes we can only deal with big emotions by putting words to them, not denying they exist.

If a **child is feeling sad** if their friend moves to a new school, you might say: “It’s so hard to say goodbye to a friend. It’s ok to miss her.” If a **child is scared** after a loud noise, you might say: “Wow, that was so scary! You didn’t like when that fire truck drove by.” If a **child is frustrated** and angry while trying to learn something new, you might say: “Learning this can be hard and frustrating!” After acknowledging the feeling, don’t try to solve or dismiss the problem. Say: “What do you need?” or “How can I help?”



Upsetting Event



Activity Name: Reduce Sensory Input

Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Whenever possible, remove the trigger or source of agitation for the child. Reduce the visual input by dimming or turning off overhead lights or allowing children to go to a space with limited objects /items on the walls.

Use when a child is experiencing an upsetting event that may lead to a peak escalation or is in the process of de-escalation from an event. Putting words to the feelings conveys empathy and understanding which can prevent further escalation.



Upsetting Event



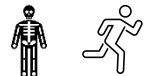
Activity Name: Calm Space



Materials needed: A space in the house designed for calm.



What to do: Use empathy as you direct a child to a calming corner. “Should we go to the calm corner to talk about it?” This corner is a place where there is a comfy chair or pillows to sit on. A basket of sensory toys such as those listed in the green section above (bean bags, sensory balls, feelings faces, or beautiful pictures, and cues for deep breathing). Be content to sit near the child in this space as a calming, comforting, presence. Continue to pay attention to your own breathing. You do not need to keep offering tools to the child. They will choose when they are ready, and this will signal to you that they are beginning to move to recovery.



When to use: Have this corner as an option for anyone to use throughout the day. It is important that this is not used as a reward or punishment. Nor should it be a place that a child is forced to go, like “time out”. Describe it as a place for a person to get help with working out big feelings and that it can be used at any time. Model using this corner yourself throughout the day.

Upsetting Event

Activity Name: Calm Space



CALM SPACE

When I feel...

		
Sad	Angry	Scared

I can...


		
Breathe	Book	Water

		
Rest	Count	Hug






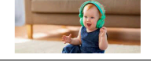



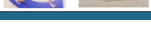
Upsetting Event


Design you calm space: For Children



DESIGN YOUR CALM SPACE

For Children

	Description	Examples
Where	Decide where the space will be located. It should be somewhere that is somewhat separated but where child can still be observed. Consider also having a spot for adult to sit and co-regulate with child.	
Seating	Have comfortable seating like a nap mat or soft chair on a small rug.	
Touch	Fidget toys, playdough, drum, bean bags, stress balls, stuffed animal, soft items	
Sound	Noise canceling headphones Soft music, Noise machine (waves/white noise) Musical Toy	
Visual	Signs with picture cues to breath or count. Pictures with calm or happy scenes. Books Oil and water toys	
Oral/ Breath	Bubbles, Chew sticks Flutes, Pinwheels	
Smell	Lavender scented lotion, Oil diffuser	
Movement	Balance rocker or seat	



DESIGN YOUR CALM SPACE

For Children

	Your plan
Where	
Seating	
Touch	
Sound	
Visual	
Oral/ Breath	
Smell	
Movement	



Upsetting Event

Design you calm space: For Adults



DESIGN YOUR CALM SPACE

For Adults

	Your plan
Where	Space should be a place where adults can get a quick break to regulate themselves to prepare for coregulation with children.
Seating	Comfortable seating,
Touch	Fidgets, stress balls, thinking putty, soft items
Sound	Noise cancelling headphones, music, noise machine with waves/ white noise
Visual	Calm scenes, Oil and water toys
Oral/ Breath	Mints, crunchy, spicy, or sour snacks Deep breathing visuals
Smell	Essential oils Scented lotions
Movement	Rocking chair, balance board, sensory path



DESIGN YOUR CALM SPACE

For Adults

	Your plan
Where	
Seating	
Touch	
Sound	
Visual	
Oral/ Breath	
Smell	
Movement	

Upsetting Event

Activity Name: 5,4,3,2,1

Materials needed: A space that is calm and a regulated adult.

What to do: Grounding is any activity that supports children to connect with present time and space. Sometimes big feelings can trigger past bad memories and children feel that they are experiencing a traumatic event. This activity can mentally bring them back into the room where you can assure that they are safe from harm.

- **Look For 5 Things You Can See:** Notice the wood grain on the desk in front of you. Or the shape of your fingernails. Become aware of something on the wall. Take your time to really *look* and acknowledge what you see. Deep breath
- **Become Aware Of 4 Things You Can Touch:** The rough texture of the chair. Your shirt against your neck. Spend a moment literally touching these things. Maybe notice the sensation of gravity itself, or the floor beneath you. Deep breath.
(Continued on next page)

Upsetting Event

5,4,3,2,1 Continued

- **Acknowledge 3 Things You Can Hear:** Quiet for a count of ten (visual with fingers). What can you hear? The voices in the next room.? The ticking clock? A fan blowing?

Deep breath

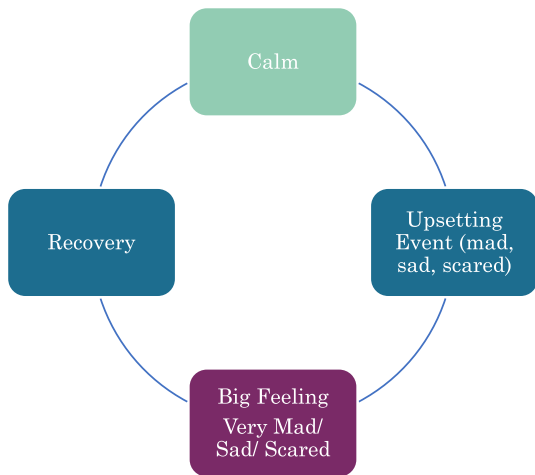
- **Notice 2 Things You Can Smell:** If at first you don't feel like you can smell anything, simply try to sense the subtle fragrance of the air around you, or of your own skin.

Deep breath

- **Become Aware Of 1 Thing You Can Taste:** The taste of lunch or breakfast on your tongue, maybe? Does your mouth feel dry? Notice what is going on in your mouth.

You can also ask them to repeat back a pattern that you drum, stomp, or clap if they are unable to reply verbally.

Big Feelings: Mad, Sad, or Scared



When a child has very big feelings, the survival parts of the brain are determining the child's actions and responses. The goal is to provide safety and move to recovery as quickly as possible and avoid harm to themselves or others. If we have built up patterns of regulation by regular use of the strategies above, children will be less likely to become dysregulated and will return to a calm state more quickly.

Prepare for Co-regulation: Give yourself permission to not have a need to “fix” the situation immediately. Our level of stress

sometimes has our focus to be on stopping the behavior and controlling the situation. It is most helpful to focus on your own regulation and to view your role as supporting the child through big feelings that are scary for them as well. We want the child to maintain the feelings of being safe and supported by adults in their lives as they deal with challenges.

Big Feelings: Mad, Sad, or Scared

Activity Name: Make the area safe

Materials needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Consider your goal. Is it to win a power struggle? Not to let the child “get away with this? To show other children who is in charge? Shift that goal to focus on this moment and say to yourself, “I just want to help this child to get through this and move to recovery”. Consequences or outcomes can be dealt with later such as helping to clean up a mess that they made or finding a way to repair relationships and harm.



Scan the area and remove any items that the child may hurt themselves or others with. This includes things they may throw or hit themselves or others with. Continue calming breaths to create co-regulation. Use when a child is in a high state of dysregulation (screaming, crying uncontrollably, kicking, hitting). He/she is operating out of the survival parts of their brain. **Logic based statements or explaining will not be effective.** Reminders of consequences, yelling /shaming, will usually make the behavior last longer and not change it long term.

Big Feelings: Mad, Sad, or Scared

Activity Name: Calm, Quiet Presence

Materials Needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Minimize the amount of talking to or near the child. View yourself as a calm, quiet, presence, who is maintaining safety and stability while the child experiences big emotions.

Use when a child is in a high state of dysregulation (screaming, crying uncontrollably, kicking, hitting). He/she is operating out of the survival parts of their brain. Logic based statements or explaining will not be effective. Reminders of consequences, yelling or shaming, will usually only prolong the escalation and not change the behavior long term.



Big Feelings: Mad, Sad, or Scared

Activity Name: Allow Safe Escape

Materials Needed: Regulated adult.

What to do: Be mindful of your position in relation to the door and the child. Allow for escape a release whenever it is safe and possible to do so. Cornering someone who is in a survival mode can lead to increased aggression.

We sincerely hope that this book will serve as a valuable guide in your journey towards fostering and strengthening your bonds with your children. Remember....Patience and practice are key.





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