

I Calm Down



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I see things
all around me.



And I **think** and **feel** lots of things *inside* me.



Tips and Activities for Helping Children Feel Calm

Like all of us, toddlers experience a spectrum of emotions. With your help, and with practice, toddlers can learn to recognize when they are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like anger or anxiety, learn where to turn for help and comfort, and learn ways they can regulate their moods and feel calmer.

Be empathic. Speak gently and respectfully. Listen and let the child know you are there to give support. Ask questions about what happened and how the child feels. Listen to the child's concerns. Then talk together about a solution to the problem.

Be an example of calm. Be patient as you help children solve problems. State expectations firmly but kindly, and don't change the rules to give in to a child's tantrum. Don't hit or spank. Staying self-controlled and showing concern will lower the child's feelings of anxiety or tension.

Show that you care. Children need to feel loved and protected. This comfort can do a lot to temper angry and fearful emotions. Let them know that they are never alone, and that there are many people who want to help them. Make sure children's physical needs are met. Children feel better emotionally as well as physically when they aren't tired or hungry.

Notice and affirm children's efforts to manage their emotions. Managing emotions takes time and practice. Toddlers will be encouraged to please you and will start to learn that they feel much better when they are able to regulate their own emotions.

Guide children to look at problems in a positive way. Also help them find ways to resolve their problems and find comfort by changing their thought patterns.

Help children help themselves. As children learn self-help skills and feel more in control of their circumstances, they can feel calmer and more in control of their emotions.

Teach children to reach out. Help them notice others who struggle. Learning to empathize with someone else can help develop a sense of perspective.



Make calming cards. Write the calming strategies from this book on separate index cards, adding an illustration for each: *deep breath, happy thoughts, talk about it, ask for help, hug*. Add a few favorite activities such as *read, draw, run, play with clay, blow bubbles*. Talk about the strategies, then give children cards and have them act out responses to different scenarios. If you wish, make multiple card sets, hole punching the cards and putting them on a ring. Then children can each have their own set to choose a strategy from as needed.

Make a calming jar. Use a clear jar with a lid (such as a baby food jar or water bottle). Mix one part corn syrup or white glue with two parts water. Stir the liquids in a bowl with some glitter; then pour the mixture into the jar. Add hot glue or super glue to the inside of the lid rim and seal it shut. Invite a child to shake the jar; explain that the whirling glitter is like all the thoughts and feelings going on inside them. Watch together as the glitter settles. Explain that, like the glitter, their thoughts and feelings can settle too. Tell children they can use the jar when they wish to help themselves feel calmer.

For additional ideas about helping young children calm down, go to freespirit.com/2becalm; use the password **calmdown**.

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