

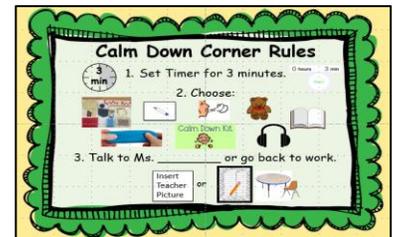
How To: Regulating Emotions

What does it look like?

Emotional regulation involves the use of strategies for helping a person calm down when strong emotions are getting in the way. Useful strategies may include a delineated “calm down space”, belly breathing, counting, listening to music, or creating a “calm down toolkit”.

How?

1. **Find a Spot-** Choose a place that is quiet and not too busy. It could be a corner in a room or another space in the home.
2. **Define the Space and Make It Cozy** - Think of ways to define the space as the “Calm Down Space”. Some ideas may include: a small rug or mat, a beanbag chair, or a child’s tent.
3. **Add Calming Tools** - Include things in the space that will assist in calming down and provide visual reminders of strategies that work for the child. A “[Calm Down Toolkit](#)” could be a box or bin with items that help with calming them down. Examples of items may include stress balls, play dough, a book they like or a device for accessing guided mindful practice ([MindYeti](#)). Create “Calm Down Strategy Cards” for a visual reminder of what calms and relaxes them. Include that in the box too. For example, a card with a picture of someone smelling a bowl of soup could be a visual reminder of how to use [Belly Breathing](#) to calm down. Hang up this “[Calm Down Poster](#)” for a visual reminder [to belly breathe, count, or use positive self-talk](#) when feeling strong emotions.
4. **Explain** - Provide an explanation of what a calm down spot is and how to use it. Show where it is and explain that this is a place they can go when they need to calm down.
5. **Create a Prompt to Use It-** Your child may need a visual or verbal cue to use the space when feeling strong emotions. Create a consistent cue for the child to recognize as their sign that it’s time to take a break and calm down. This could be a code word for the space or a picture of the space taped to the workspace.
6. **Set Expectations** - Clear expectations should be set on what to do while in the space (choose a calm-down tool) and up to how long they may be in the space at a time (5-10 minutes). Use a timer for tracking when it’s time to check to see if the child is calm and ready to return to the task.
7. **Practice-** Practice using this when the child is in a calm frame of mind. It’s best to practice using these strategies before emotions are in a heightened state.



Tips

- The strategies listed above are the same strategies used with healthy emotional regulation in adults. Try using these strategies alongside your child. Point out when you are using them to regulate your own emotions. Adult modeling of healthy emotional regulation strategies is a powerful tool for the development of these strategies in children.
- Practice these strategies while your child is calm.
- A strategy that works this week, may not work tomorrow. That’s OK! Our needs change. Have a few different strategies your child finds to be calming in case their regular “go-to” strategy isn’t providing the comfort they need.