

How to Create a Plan for Everyone in Your Family to Calm Down When Counting to 10 Just isn't Doing the Trick

Sometimes kids just need a good cry and to be held.

But what are the other ways we can help our kids to calm down?

And what about our own feelings? What can we do rather than boiling over or bottling up our feelings? If we can calm ourselves down, then we role model and teach our kids how to handle their own feelings.

Do you have a hard time coming up with fun or creative ideas for calming down when you or your child is really upset? Of course. We all do. Being fun and creative is hard to do when the lower part of the brain that produces your feelings has hijacked you. Feelings can cause you to momentarily lose touch with your higher brain (your prefrontal cortex, if you want to get technical about it). Your higher brain, while slower to respond, is the home of creativity, perspective taking, planning, reasoning, and problem solving. Because it's hard to come up with calming ideas in the moment, make this plan ahead of time together.

Talk about it over dinner, or better yet over dessert. Pretty simple, huh? That's because it is. But don't let that fool you. A calming plan is very effective for creating peace and calm in your home. Your calming plan might not work overnight.

There may be some patterns in your family that will take a while to undo.

Patterns can be undone. This is the first step. May it serve you well.

Remember -- it's about progress, not perfection.

Love,
Cecilia and Jason Hilkey

STEP 1

When everyone is calm, read the list on page 5 and 6. Everyone in the family picks their top 4 or 5 favorite ways to calm down. You will have different plans. This is okay. You are different people. Choose only the ideas that fit your family values and your living situation. For example, don't let your kids choose "jump on the trampoline" if you don't own a trampoline.

STEP 2

The plan for each person gets written down on paper with a section for each person in your family. If a child can't read, draw a picture symbol that reminds them of their plan so they can "read" it without you.

STEP 3

Post the plan in a centrally located area of the house. We use the fridge. Some folks like to stick extra copies of their plan in strategic areas around the house, in a purse or man bag, or in the car. Whatever works for you.

STEP 4

Some parts of your plan might require common household materials. Gather these up. Put them in a box or basket accessible to all who need it so you aren't left scrambling.

STEP 5

When the oatmeal hits the fan, use the plan (that even rhymes). If kids say, "I don't want to use the plan." You say, "That's okay. I'm going to read it so you know what your options are. These are the things you wanted me to remind you of when you have big feelings."

STEP 6

Remember: Regardless of whether your kids use their calming plan, the most important thing is that YOU use your plan. Role model for your kids how you regulate your emotions. Your calm presence and listening will naturally help them to calm.



Visual

- Go outside
- Look at an aquarium
- Look out the window
- Look at a picture book or magazine
- Look at trees, grass, or plants outside
- Look at a bouquet of flowers
- Look at photos of loved ones
- Look at photos of favorite places
- Blow bubbles
- Blow up a balloon
- Watch a snow globe or a jar filled with water and glitter
- Draw a picture

Auditory

- Recite a mantra
- Chant or say ohm
- Strike a gong or singing bowl
- Play a musical instrument
- Breathe deeply or sigh out loud
- Listen to music
- Sing a song

Tactile

- Soak your feet
- Snuggle together
- Pet the dog, cat, hamster, etc
- Brush your hair
- Scratch your back
- Wash your hands/face
- Take a shower/bath
- Rub a smooth stone
- Braid hair (yours or a doll's hair)
- Run fingers through dried corn or beans
- Brush or floss your teeth
- Play with clay, play dough, or slime

Olfactory (smell)

- Smell flowers
- Smell essential oils
- Spray air freshener
- Light a candle

Movement

- Write in a journal
- Drink tea or water
- Think of something humorous
- Do something outrageous (underwear on your head)
- Play with a toy, doll, or stuffed animal
- Play a game
- Chewy on a rubber chewy
- Do a craft
- Meditate/Pray

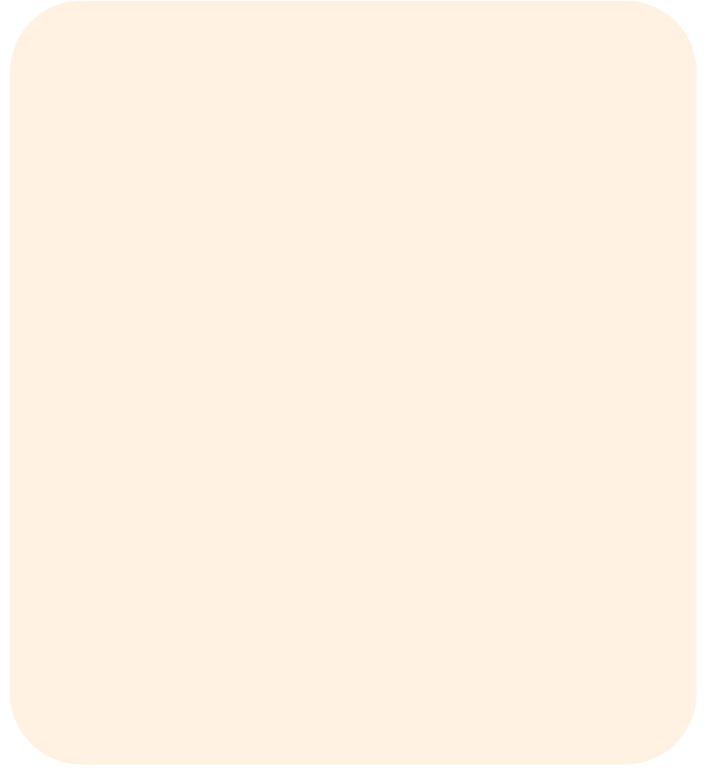
Miscellaneous

- Jumping jacks
- Push against a wall
- Run around the block
- Jump on trampoline
- Swing on a swing
- Wrestle
- Dance or a family dance party
- Practice yoga
- Squeeze stress ball (flour in a balloon)
- Make the bed
- Lift a heavy object or a weight
- Hang on the monkey bars
- Slide on a slide
- Go for a walk
- Push-ups / pull-ups
- Sit ups or squats
- Stretch
- Give each other a bear hug
- Ride a bike, scooter, or skateboard
- Dribble a ball, shoot baskets, play catch
- Play a drum
- Sweep the floor
- Dust a shelf
- Wash a window
- Wipe down a table
- Cut the grass, pull weeds
- Fold laundry
- Make silly faces

Our Calming Plans

Name: _____

Name: _____



Name: _____

Name: _____

