**Helping Children Learn Strategies for Calming Down**

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* Read ***Jared’s Cool Out Space*** together. Follow-up with discussion.
* Work together to create a comfortable space for calming down.
* The Committee for Children (2011) recommends children put their hand on their tummy and tell themselves “I need to calm down” when they feel strong feelings.
* Teach how counting slowly 1…2….3…. helps calm down. This strategy is best taught when an adult models and practices counting slowly with children on a regular basis.
* Children will be able to more easily generalize this life skill if modeled and practiced daily.
* Use a listening center for calming down. This center can be used preventatively or to help children calm down whenever strong feelings are experienced. Head phones with calming music or a soothing story on CD next to a bean bag chair (or something similar) provides a multisensory break from the group at home or school.
* Use words of encouragement to track effort and improvement when a child seems frustrated or overwhelmed. Examples: *This is hard, but I see you are sticking with it; You are really working at that; I see on your face you are trying; You are keeping with it.* Encouraging statements will help children develop positive self-talk. Encouraging language facilitates the development of internal monitoring and motivation to persist when faced with a difficult task or situation. This “Mindset” (Dweck) helps children calm down and persist which will lead to more effective problem-solving.
* Teach deep breathing. The use of imagery and modeling helps children develop deep breathing skills that are effective. Class meetings or family meetings are a good time to work together to learn this life skill.
* Imagery example: *“Imagine you are holding a giant cup of hot chocolate with whipped cream and sprinkles on top, there is even a little chocolate straw. Take a slow, deep breath in --to smell the delicious and yummy hot chocolate. Now take a slow breath out to cool the hot chocolate.”*

Using different words to extend this imagery activity and continue practicing taking slow, deep, calming breathes facilitates the calming down process. Children need to practice taking deep breaths on a regular basis. An adult will need to model and breath with the child or group of children in order for there to mastery of this skill over time.

* Christiane Kerr has several apps that practice children calming down. Kerr founded Calm for Kids in 1999. These resources are available through iTunes.