

CALM

CONFIDENT

KIDS MINI GUIDE

HOME OR CLASSROOM

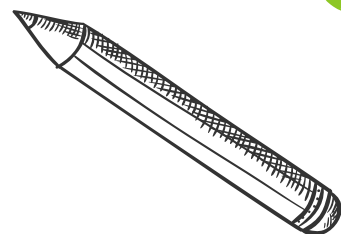
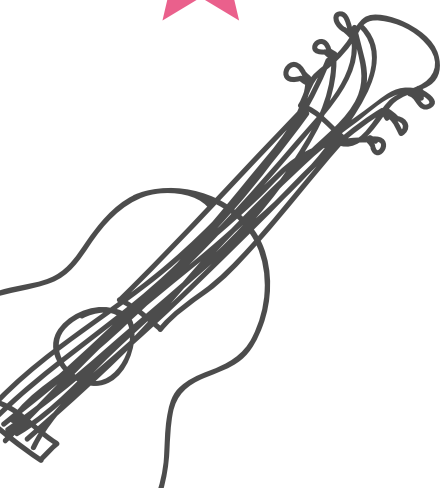
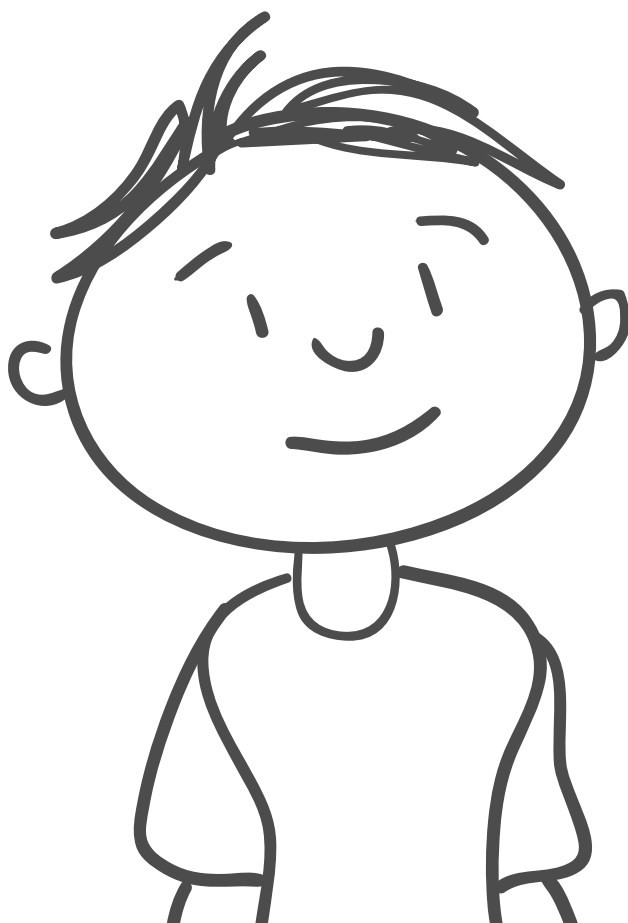
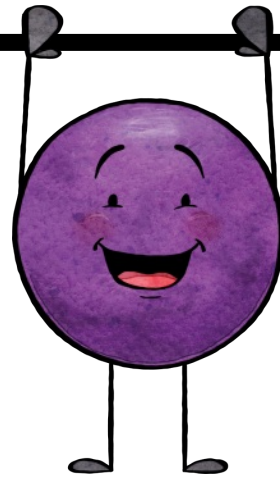
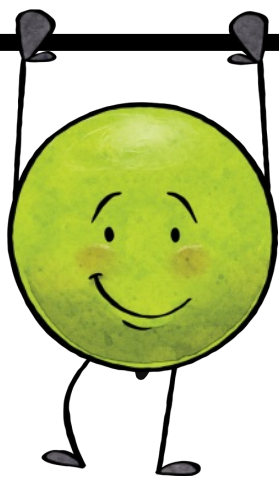


TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	AUTHOR PAGE
05	INTRODUCTION
09	CALM DOWN PLAN
21	CALM DOWN STRATEGIES
26	QUICK ANGER MANAGEMENT
27	WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?
28	CIRCLE BACK



HI THERE, I'M TINA



My name is Tina Williamson. I'm the published author of the growth mindset activity journal for kids *Amazing Me*, and the founder, writer, and creator of the positive parenting website Mindfulmazing.

I'm obsessed with helping parents and educators uplift their students and ultimately, create happier days and kids. I share strategies and advice for raising responsible, mindful, and resilient kids.

As a parent or educator, I bet you want nothing more than to help the kids in your life to grow up to be calm, confident, and compassionate. I totally get this.

And I'm here to tell you, children CAN be raised in a positive environment full of love and support.

Today our resources are used in thousands of homes and schools worldwide (and we are growing every day!). So welcome to the community.

“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.”
— **Marian Wright Edelman.**

Best,
Tina

FOUNDER, MINDFULMAZING

DISCLAIMER

The materials presented on Mindfulmazing's website and in Mindfulmazing's products and printables are **not** an attempt to practice medicine or provide specific medical advice, including advice concerning the topic of mental health. The information provided by Mindfulmazing is for the sole purpose of being informative and is not to be considered complete. **The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment.** Always seek the advice of your mental health professional or other qualified health providers with any questions you may have regarding your condition. Never disregard professional advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read on Mindfulmazing's website. **If you believe you or another individual is suffering a mental health crisis or other medical emergencies, contact your doctor immediately, seek medical attention immediately in an emergency room or call 911.**

HOW CAN I HELP MY KIDS STAY CALM?

***Many many many* kids struggle with emotional regulation.**

Did I emphasize many? Kids can go from 0 to 100 for seemingly **no** reason at all. Like that time you tried to help them put on their mitts after they *asked* for help with their mittens.

Who are these little angels who can turn into little monsters in a matter of seconds?

I know, I know. I would love nothing more than to show up in your home with a warm chamomile tea and a shoulder to cry on.

But here's the thing.

We are the captains of our homes and classrooms. It's up to us to guide our ship in the right direction. (I like heading for sunny blue skies, not the dark threatening ones.)

Helping our little ones appropriately manage big emotions will benefit them right now and throughout **their entire lives.**

It's up to us to teach the kids in our lives how to do this. What a big important job we have. And from one mom and mindfulness teacher who has weathered it all, I'm SO excited to dive in with you!



THE IMPOSSIBLE...

It's no joke that you have a tough job. You are juggling an enormous array of tasks, like getting healthy meals on the table, managing sibling squabbles, dealing with big feelings, being a chauffeur, and so on.

And if you are an educator you are also juggling a mountain of things, like meeting curriculum requirements, managing BIG feelings, dealing with parental expectations, helping kids with special needs, creating lesson plans, and so on.

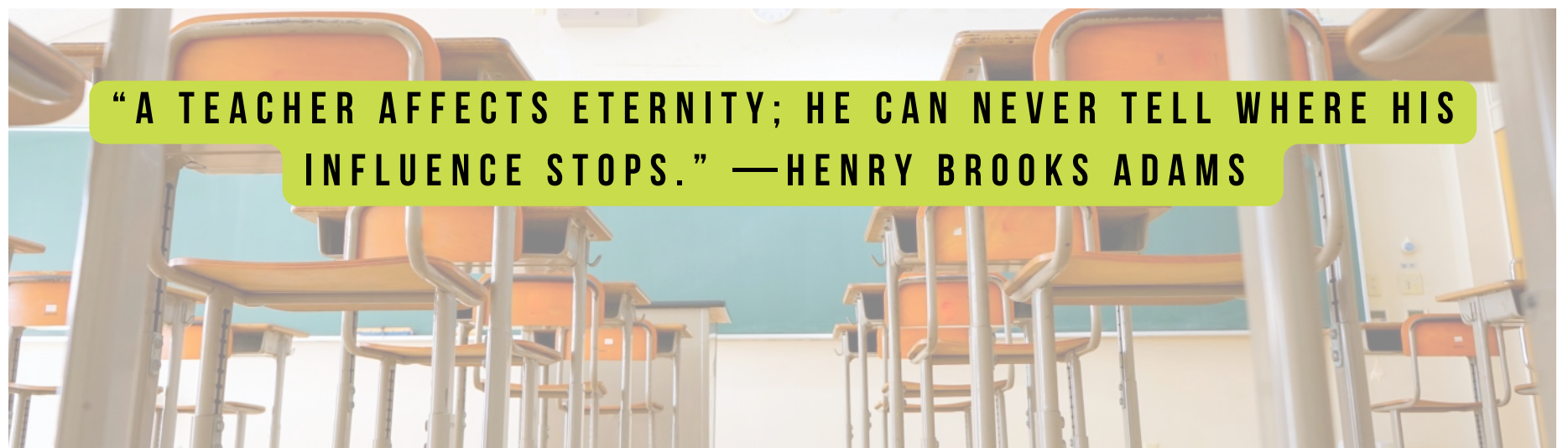
And you likely didn't train to be a psychologist, so sometimes dealing with behavior issues can seem impossible (especially on top of the zillion other tasks you have).

Unfortunately, we all know that stressed, angry, worried, frustrated, sad, or upset kids find it harder to excel. And this means that helping kids manage these BIG emotions is actually an extremely important part of parenting and teaching.

I know that you don't have any extra time; schedules and demands are already pushed to the limits, so you need a plan. A fast and simple plan! Coping strategies are super effective and can make a BIG difference in the climate of your home and classroom as well as the future and well-being of your kids.



“A TEACHER AFFECTS ETERNITY; HE CAN NEVER TELL WHERE HIS INFLUENCE STOPS.” —HENRY BROOKS ADAMS



WHERE TO GO NEXT?

There are many strategies to help kids remain calm. Some strategies work better than others, and some don't work at all (I'm certainly guilty of using food to bribe my little one into behaving).

The good news is that there are many effective strategies we can use as parents or educators to help our kiddos succeed. (And we don't need a degree in psychology to employ them.)

Self-regulation is the ability to control our emotions and behaviors, and it's something we start to learn as children. And when kids are small, they actually have little to no self-control. That part of their brains hasn't yet developed. (That's why we must tailor our calming down plan according to age.)

And kids actually don't always understand appropriate from inappropriate; they rely on us to teach them. They need signals from us to understand that what they are doing is inappropriate. When they get these signals, it helps them decipher acceptable behavior going forward.

But more than just sending signals, there are many other ways to help kids develop lifelong coping skills that will help them be calm now and later. In the following pages, we will look at ten things YOU can do as parents and educators to create a calmer environment, and then we will look at several calming strategies to teach kids to help them succeed.

If we can prioritize teaching kids calming strategies in our homes and classrooms, imagine the mindful generation we will have a part in creating.

Exciting.

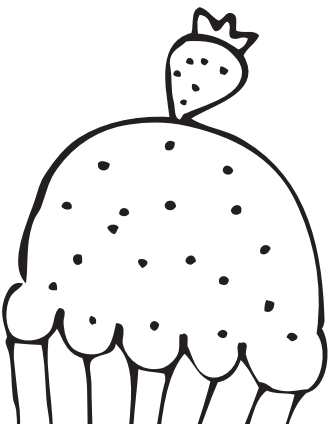
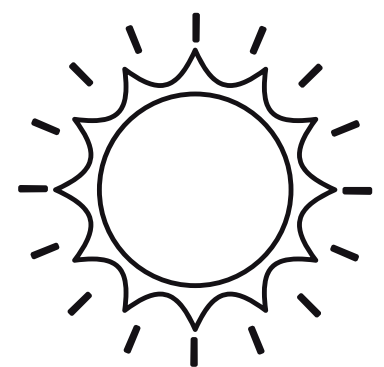
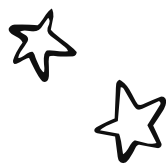
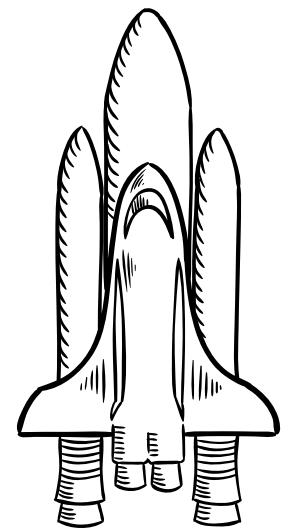
I can't wait to dive in!

Let's get to it!



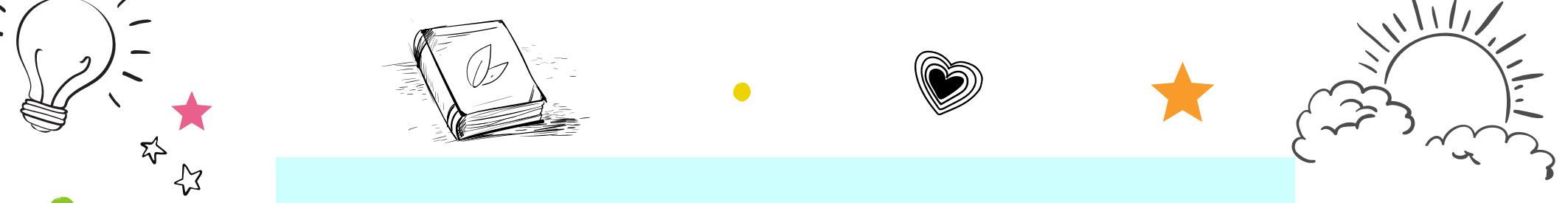
CALM DOWN PLAN

12 STRATEGIES TO HELP RAISE CALM KIDS AND TEACH
EMOTIONAL REGULATION

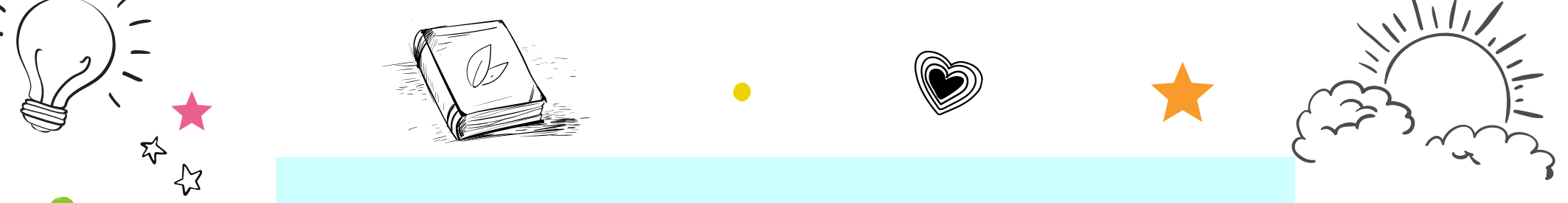




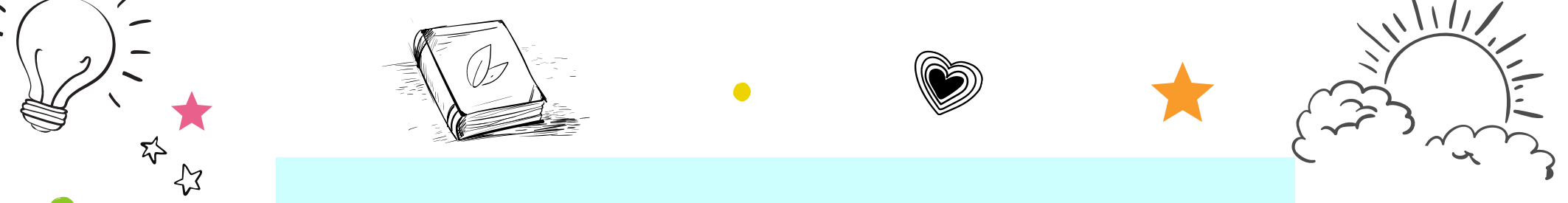
DON'T OVERSCHEDULE



Are you guilty of jam-packing too much into the day? Perhaps you need to space out activities or erase some of the unnecessary things from the schedule. Many kids struggle with transitions, and overflowing schedules can leave them feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, which means they won't harness their energy positively!

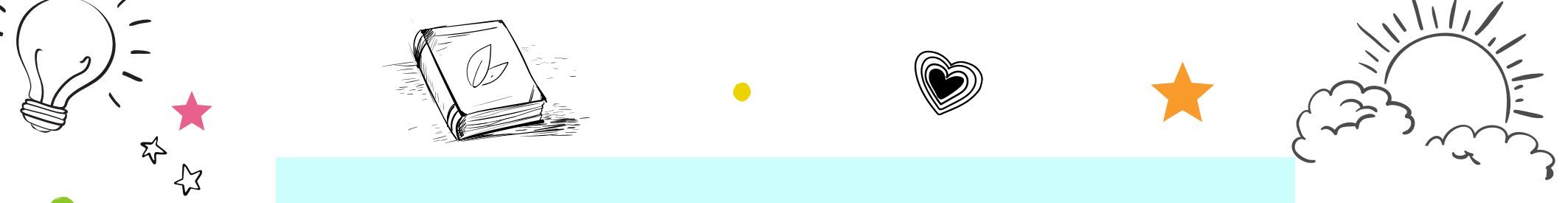


We as adults are often guilty of feeling like our kids need to be entertained in some manner during every part of every day. Kids need downtime, just like we need rest. They need to chill, pretend play, be silly, and just, well — be kids.



So reconsider whether it's a good idea to have a soccer game back-to-back with a music lesson, or a math quiz back-to-back with a reading test. Are your expectations sky-high for the age of your kids? Research suggests that downtime is needed for every 45 minutes of mental activity. A break is needed at the time interval of twice their age. So if your kids are six, a break is needed every twelve minutes.

Transitions Strategies

- 
- Give warnings before switching activities.
 - Use routine charts and timers.
 - Make transitions fun and upbeat (master the magic art of distraction). Perhaps flutter like butterflies to gym class or hop like kangaroos to the car.
 - Offer sensory breaks.
 - Be consistent and stay calm.
 - Always offer choices.
 - Give praise and avoid threats.
 - Use brain break cards to provide a fun and quick activity during transitions.



ROUTINES

Embrace routines

Try to keep your daily routine as consistent as possible. Kids thrive on consistency. They actually like structure. (Even if they don't know it.)

Kids often fear everything from loud noises or a new vegetable, to monsters under the bed. A predictable routine gives kids a security blanket in a BIG scary world of unknowns. When you create routines, you lessen the likelihood that a child will feel like they've lost control, leading to them struggling to regain control. This helps kids feel safe and develop coping mechanisms, which will help them tackle change and unknowns as they arise going forward—leading to calmer, happier kids.)

And would you rather coast through your days calmly, knowing precisely what task to do next? Or, would you rather run around your house like your hair is on fire?

Consider using a routine chart to minimize parent-child struggles. Routine charts help:

- Break down tasks into easy-to-follow steps
- Provide structure
- Teach independence (kids know what is expected of them)
- Prevent meltdowns
- Provide helpful reminders (that don't come from you)
- Build stronger connections
- Ease transition troubles
- Teach time management and how to establish healthy habits (all while decreasing anxiety)
- Create a set of rules (that aren't yours); it's on the chart, so it's the law

Visual schedules are especially helpful for children with ADHD, autism, sensory issues, or other special needs.



TEACH ABOUT EMOTIONS

Many people grow up without knowing what they're feeling or why they feel that way.

Kids who don't know they have an emotional language are at a disadvantage—and so are we as adults! We can't communicate with kids about their emotions if they don't know what emotions are.

So how do you teach kids about emotions? Give them lots of words to describe the way they feel. If your child is sad, talk about sadness in detail. What it feels like, and where it lives in their bodies. If the student doesn't know that "sad" is an emotion, how can they possibly understand how to process this feeling when it arises? Go through this process with all the emotions.


Flip through picture books and ask the kids to describe what they think the people are feeling. Play emotional charades, and use your feelings charts and flashcards. There are many opportunities to teach about feelings.

help your kids:

- Understand that there are many different emotions (anger, sadness, worry, embarrassment, excitement, happiness, guilt, etc.)
- Understand that our feelings vary in intensity from mild to strong (I love using feelings thermometers for this)
- Understand the role thoughts and situations play in triggering our emotions
- Identify emotions in themselves and in others
- Express what they are feeling and begin to take steps to use coping strategies




ACKNOWLEDGE & EMPATHIZE




When kids are upset, struggling, angry, sad, or frustrated, it's easy to want to move immediately into solving these problems for them. But when we see a child struggling in the home (or anywhere), the first step should be to acknowledge the emotion and provide some empathy. Provide this empathy before problem-solving, distracting, or giving advice.

This doesn't take long; it might look like this:


- 
- I can see you are upset right now. I'm sorry you are feeling this way.
 - It's hard when your friends don't share; that must make you feel really frustrated.
 - I hate it as well when someone makes fun of me. You must feel very sad.
 - I can see you are angry, and I get it; it's so hard when things don't go our way.

Be mindful of your surroundings when you say these empathetic phrases. You don't want to embarrass the child or bring more attention to an already upset child. Once you've acknowledged the feeling and provided some empathy, you can move on to problem-solving.



What is so amazing about using empathy is that the child hears that you care about them and notice how they feel. **Essentially, they feel like they matter.**

You are also confirming that emotions are perfectly normal. Using this emotional vocabulary increases the likelihood that your child will be better able to express how they are feeling on their own next time.



Reminder: Showing empathy doesn't mean we are excusing or allowing inappropriate behavior. It's the first step to correcting this behavior. It helps de-escalate an upset child. Think about how hard it is for a young child to behave perfectly all day long! Especially when their brains aren't fully developed.

Be their support system!



CHECK-IN

Remember: A child misbehaving is NOT a bad child. This behavior is the way kids ask for help. Often, kids dealing with something difficult will "act out" to cope with their feelings. They are doing their best with the skillset they have to communicate their needs, and we need to put on our investigative caps and figure out how to help them. Kids will often act out if they need some attention, are bored, feel sad, anxious, or tired. The most important thing here is to remember that your kids need something from you.

When kids act out, learn to recognize the "five Cs":

1) Check-in: Ask them if they need something. Kids who act out often think that nobody is listening to them, so check in and see what they're feeling and needing.

2) Connect: Once kids feel like they've gotten our attention, help them calm down by connecting with them. Hold their hand or sit with them to let them know they're not alone.

3) Counteract: Give kids something soothing to do, like coloring, listening to music, or reading a book together.

4) Clarity: Remind your kids that it's okay to feel how they feel.

5) Check out: Kids often need a safe space to process what's happening and calm down, so give them that space. If you can't be there for them at that moment, let them know it's okay to go into the calm-down space you have created in the home.

The five Cs are a great way to help kids who are upset. Teach kids that it's okay and normal to experience difficult moments. Provide a safe outlet for kids to express their feelings and hamper any destructive behavior.



WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS

Read the cues

Common signs kids are getting angry include:

- Frowning
- Red-faced
- Clenched fists
- Pacing
- Quickened breathing
- Squinty eyes
- Entering the silly zone
- Easily agitated
- Rude comments or defiant behavior
- Overly emotional, sad, or anxious
- Frustrates easily

If you notice these signals in your kids, something could be brewing — the stress of the day building.

Ask, “Are you upset? Is everything okay?”


Teach them to recognize the physical signs of their emotions.

Employ some calm-down strategies BEFORE the eruption. (This is much easier than during a full-blown hurricane.)

Teaching kids to understand and name their emotions is critical in helping them develop emotional intelligence.




POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT



Praise is a powerful tool that can increase intrinsic motivation to *want* to succeed. Don't fall into the trap of only calling out bad behavior. Notice the good and make a point to tell your kids or students when they *are* succeeding.


In time, they will seek this type of reinforcement and therefore aim to *do* good.



Be sure to also praise the effort and avoid blanket sayings like, "Good job." Be more specific, "I like how hard you worked on that math assignment, and it shows in your grade."


If you decide to use a reward system (some kids are motivated by rewards) be careful not to overuse the rewards. We don't want kids to think they get a reward every time they do something that is expected of them.

Perhaps introduce the rewards slowly and save them for extraordinary behavior or designated times.



For example, if you see your child displaying exceptional behavior (like being kind, helping someone, staying calm), you can place the child's name in a draw for a non-material daily or weekly reward.

Non-material rewards ideas:

- 
- Assist the teacher in taking attendance
 - Choose what you will have for lunch
 - 10 minutes of free time
 - Help with the morning announcements
 - Choose your seat for the day
 - Be the lunch monitor
 - Help pass out worksheets for the day
 - Read to the class
 - Choose the writing prompt or brain break activity for the day
 - Be the teacher's assistant for the day



TEACH COPING STRATEGIES

Calming Strategies

Adults can help kids calm down by providing a toolbox of calm-down strategies to pull from when they are upset.

We have an entire section on calm-down strategies in the next chapter so that you can refer there for particular exercises. But a few of my favorites are breathing exercises and visualizations. For example, you could tell your kids or student to picture the color blue when feeling mad or have them breathe in slowly, hold it for three seconds, and exhale with the same count.

I'd suggest creating your calm down strategy plan at the beginning of the year and then referring to it often. You could create a class rules poster or a poster that sits on the child's desk or hangs on the wall in their room. The poster could include rules for what to do when feeling upset.

- Take a slow breath in for four, hold for four and exhale for four.
- Repeat calming thoughts in your head: *I am safe, I can calm my body.* I suggest kids keep a few of these printed in their pencil cases.
- Do a brain break to reset the brain.
- Use a "would you rather question" from the brain break cards.
- Hold a soothing object (fidget toy, plasticine, soft teddy).
- Ask the child to write about how they are feeling.

Refer to the Calming Strategies section for lots of awesome ideas to fill up your child's emotional regulation toolbox.



EDUCATE YOURSELF

Kids need help learning to recognize what is too much or not enough, and we need to understand how to help our students balance their senses and emotions.

Some kids will get overstimulated quickly: everything feels like too much, and they may be unable to process the information coming in through their senses. This style of processing information is called "sensory seeking," and the kids who do this will be overstimulated easily. You might call these kids "high sensation seekers."

Other kids are sensory avoiders: even the lightest touch makes their skin crawl, and their system feels like it's under attack or that something terrible is about to happen. You might call these kids "low sensation seekers."

Educators and parents can help high sensation-seeking kids by helping them calm down. If they're having trouble, the world feels overwhelming, and they may act out to try to escape from it. They need a safe space where they can come back into their bodies again. Small moments of connection and closeness for sensory-seeking kids can be quite calming. Consider things like fidgets and kick bands to let out some excess stimulation.


On the other hand, low sensation seekers may feel under attack when they get too much sensory input, so they'll do anything to avoid it. If we dull our kid's environment too much, we might unintentionally communicate that their body is weak or inadequate, leading to an emotional shutdown. We've got to find the balance between sensory seeking and sensory avoiding strategies for kids like this. Consider using noise-canceling headphones or a quiet break area to reset their senses.

This same concept applies when it comes to hunger. Hungry kids might be hyper and bouncing off the walls. Overtired kids might act cranky or whiny. And kids who've used up all their emotional energy might act like nothing matters to them anymore.

Get to know your kids, and whether they are sensory seeking vs. avoiding. Then you can begin to read their cues better and how to best help them.




AGE-APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR



Children under the age of three simply cannot reason because the part of their brain (prefrontal cortex) responsible for understanding consequences and making sound judgments has not yet developed.

So, redirection can be used for children in this age group instead of reasoning or giving consequences.



And by redirection, I mean, if a child is acting silly and not listening, steer them away from whatever activity they are doing and steer them in the right direction.

If they act up because they want attention and seek it with negative behaviors, shower them with positive reinforcement. And I get it; believe me, when kids are acting like little demons, it can be hard to smile and take it. But when they spit out, "I hate you," perhaps say, "What I'm hearing is that you are very frustrated right now."



Choices

Give kids choices wherever you can.

You'll be surprised how giving kids choices will ward off many mini (or big) meltdowns.

You can often reason with older children and help them understand why you are setting boundaries or enforcing a consequence.




What's the bottom line? Always try to understand your student's age and level of development and tailor your positive discipline strategies for their age.




BOUNDARIES

Set Clear Boundaries



Kids need to know what is expected of them. Do you expect them to line up to come into the classroom? Be hands-off at recess? Wash their hands before lunch? Speak respectfully? You need to make these boundaries super clear. (Sitting down for a weekly class or family meeting is a great way to do this.)



Setting boundaries doesn't mean that your students or kids won't push those boundaries because these are, well, kids, and that's their job. But boundaries are essential to creating a safe and loving environment and integral to teaching and parenting.

Important: Setting boundaries doesn't mean kids won't be upset when boundaries are upheld. They might be downright angry, but it's all part of learning and creating that safe environment.

An example of how this might look:



1

"We need to use kind words with our friends." When you notice your kids not using kind words, it's time to step in and enforce the boundary.

2

"When we don't use kind words with our friends, we lose our extra playtime at the end of lunch." Uphold the boundary you have set so that tomorrow, hopefully, kinder words will be used.



3

Wait until the child is calm before discussing the situation. You could explain that you understand why they are upset because it's hard to lose playtime, but we need to use kind words.

Remember: Setting and upholding boundaries doesn't mean kids won't be upset, but the next time the situation arises, hopefully, it's less intense until (hopefully) in time, it's nonexistent.



BE THE CALM...

The truth is, kids are kids, and they all misbehave sometimes. But what we can definitely do is manage our reactions to their behavior.

We need to model appropriate behavior to kids. After all, kids learn what is and isn't appropriate behavior by watching us.

Even if your kids or students just smeared permanent marker all over the wall, or dumped the entire container of glitter eyes on the floor or are screaming in your face that they hate you, or rolling their eyes when you ask them to take a seat, or negotiating every.little.thing, YES, you STILL have to remain calm.

You might be strong-willed yourself, and this could quickly become a battle of wills.

So many times when my child becomes defiant, angry, or argumentative, I can feel my blood pressure rising, and I'm on the verge of a full-on meltdown myself.

So I could lock myself in the closet (been there many times), or I can say this one magical phrase. After I say it, I can feel my blood pressure returning to normal, the dark clouds part, and I see the situation from a new perspective.

I will not buy a ticket to this show

If you take nothing else from this calm down mini-guide, please take this: The best way to help kids is to change your reactions to their behavior — good or bad.

Your kids keep throwing out the bait, and you keep taking it! Stop taking the bait. So the next time you are being challenged to a nonsensical argument or someone is rolling around on the floor kicking and screaming, repeat (as many times as you need to), "I will not buy a ticket to this show." Or, "I will not get on this wild horse." Or, "I will not get on this train."

Then, after creating this separation, you can employ some calm-down strategies of your own (like counting, breathing, or taking space).

CALMING STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES TO TEACH KIDS HEALTHY WAYS TO CALM DOWN
IN THE FACE OF BIG EMOTIONS.



CALMING

strategies



BREATHING EXERCISES

When we feel anxious or angry, our breathing becomes quick and shallow. This makes it almost impossible to calm down, our bodies are rigid and tight, and our brains are not getting enough oxygen. When kids are getting upset, they need to breathe. Instruct:

- Breathe in for 3
- Hold for 2
- Exhale for 1
- Repeat
- Slow it down

Or, if you just want to keep it simple, take ten deep breaths together. If your child resists, just start on your own, say out loud, "1- Deep breath in, 2- Deep breath out, 3- Deep breath in." Watch as your kids become calmer, even if they don't participate.

COUNTING

"I bet you can't count to 100..."

What kid can resist a challenge? Counting is known to diffuse anger. It's an age-old tactic everyone uses.

Our minds need to focus to count, so by doing so, we are sending calming signals to the rest of our body.

Looking for a fun variation?

Have your kids count backward from 10. You can do this in your head, or you can do this out loud. I prefer out loud. When you reach one, start over (count for one minute).

For this exercise to be effective you need to adopt slow, controlled breathing. (see point one above)



CALMING

strategies

STANDING FORWARD BEND

Instructions (model this pose for kids to follow along):

- Stand with your feet touching or hip-width apart, whichever feels better for you.
- Standing tall, inhale, and as you exhale, melt towards the floor. Sweep your arms down on either side of your body, forward fold from your hips.
- Tuck your chin towards your chest, relax your shoulders, and extend the crown of your head toward the floor. Create a long spine.
- Ensure your bend comes from your pelvis and not from your back. Imagine your pelvis as a bowl of water; rotate forward to tip the water from the front side.
- Shift your weight forward onto the balls of your feet. Keep your hips over your ankles.
- Straighten your legs as much as possible, but a slight bend in the knees is okay.
- Let your arms hang, or hold your elbows and rock back and forth. If you can, bring your fingertips in line with your toes.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Sway your neck from side to side, and release the tension.



CALMING

strategies

BLOW INTO HANDS OR PUT HANDS IN POCKET

This is especially helpful for kids who get aggressive when angry, which is a common trait in kids with ASD or ADHD.

Asking kids to place their hands in their pockets, intertwining their fingers, and pretending they are stuck together stops them from lashing out.

You could also have them sit on their hands or clap.

The point is anything to keep them from using their hands in a negative way.

Blowing into your hands is also another excellent method to calm down quickly.

And for a couple of reasons:

1. You take deep breaths.
2. You need to focus on what you are doing
3. The warm air on your skin can help calm you down.



ULTIMATE DISTRACTIONS

Ages 3 to 7 – Make up a really silly word or say something goofy.

“What are we going to have for dinner? A mushroom worm pie?”

You may find that kids burst into laughter and forget about being angry.

Ages 7 to 12 – Ask them a question.

“Who’s your favorite musician?”

“What are you going to do this weekend?”

“What is your favorite candy?”

Everyone loves to talk about themselves, kids included.

CALMING

strategies



WEATHER SYSTEM

Help kids verbalize what they are feeling instead of reacting.

For example: sunny = happy, stormy = angry, winter = lonely, rainy = sad (Be creative and create new variations)

So next time your student is blustery and chaotic, they can say, "my body feels stormy; it feels like a quickened heartbeat, the urge to scream or hold your breath." The logic behind this is that when you verbalize your emotions in such a way, you take away the power of the emotion.

Kids can then begin to process and understand their emotions. And the most important takeaway is that just like the weather patterns, our emotions (no matter how strong) will pass.

STARFISH FINGERS

Ask your kids to hold up one hand and spread their fingers wide.

Then, with your finger of the opposite hand, trace all your fingers, counting from one to five.

This is a soothing and rhymical exercise.

It almost immediately calms down kids.

You could do this in groups as well!



CALMING strategies



CALM DOWN CORNER

It's all about creating a cozy space where upset children can go to calm down.

A calm down corner is a place for kids to do just what it says — calm down. Pause and reset. Kids can go to this safe space, pick a non-stimulatory activity and bring their excitement levels back to normal (green zone).

Going to this space is not a punishment — it's a happy place and an effective tool to help kids curb unwanted behavior.

There are many posters and worksheets in the Calm Down Corner Kit to create an epic calm down corner.

Benefits:

- Teaches emotional regulation
- Gives children self-awareness and self-management (helps kids practice identifying feelings and practice calm down strategies)
- Helps control impulsive behavior
- Allows kids to feel okay with their big emotions
- Adds structure and consistency
- Promotes self-esteem
- Helps prevent meltdowns
- Helps kids develop stronger communication skills

calm down corner



WHAT TO PUT IN YOUR SPACE

Make it soft and cuddly. Build the foundation of your corner with soft and weighted items. Layer the floor with blankets and pillows. Consider a yoga mat, patio cushion, or chair. I'd suggest making this space as private as possible away from the hustle and bustle of the home or classroom.

Visual:

Visual sights might include a soft glow lamp, twinkling lights, and your calm down corner posters. A kaleidoscope, perhaps?

Sensory Activities:

Sensory activities soothe many children. We have what we call our angry shaker. I went to the dollar store, bought a tube-style container, put beads in it, and my son shakes it when angry. You could add sand, slime, or beads to your corner. Perhaps your child would like to rip construction paper to express their anger. Or color really hard.

Fidget Toys

Squishy balls, water wiggles, fidget spinners, stress balls. Putting a non-breakable snow globe in your space is also a great idea.

Calming Activities:

Consider paper and markers for drawing or scribbling. Small kids may like small stuffed animals, a coloring book, or toy cars. Noise-reducing headphones block out overwhelming sounds. Headphones are deep pressure and calming in themselves. And soft music is a great idea. Don't forget your calm down cards, breathing cards, and, last but not least, the calming posters from your kit.

QUICK ANGER MANAGEMENT TIPS

One of the best ways to diffuse a tantrum or meltdown is to create a fun distraction or a different outlet to allow kids to let out all those BIG feelings. These quick strategies are sure to help you in some hairy moments.

- Lazy 8 breathing
- Deep breathing – Count to ten, inhale for three, exhale for three
- Color breathing – Imagine your breath as a color, inhale happy colors, exhale anger and anxiety
- Star breathing – Trace the sides of a star while breathing
- Blowing bubbles
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Meditation
- Yoga Cards
- Squeeze a ball or put your hands in your pockets
- Change scenery
- Step outside
- Go for a walk
- Sing a song
- Tell a story from your childhood (kids LOVE LOVE LOVE this, it works every time on my son)
- Play with playdough
- Make a Mr. Angry Sock – take a tennis ball, put it in a sock, draw an angry face, and when your kiddo is mad, they can bang Mr. Angry Sock on the floor or outside
- Dance
- Walk on your tiptoes
- Jump ten times
- Run around the room three times
- Name five things you see, smell, hear, feel or taste – GO!
- Big bear hug time
- Freeze – pause and stop what you are doing for two minutes
- Tear up some paper
- Drink a glass of water
- Walk like a dog across the room
- Count to ten
- Count backward from five
- Repeat positive affirmations three times
- Have a tickle fight
- Say a very silly word
- Make a silly face with the kids
- Squeeze and relax your fists
- Wash your hands
- Trace your fingers with your opposite hand – take turns doing each other's hands.
- Sit in silence for two minutes
- Skip rope
- Use a weighted blanket
- Put on a weighted vest
- Try an indoor swing (I love this)
- Use Essential Oils – Lavender is my go-to
- Rock in a rocking chair – I love this one; so pretty and calming
- Grab your favorite fidget toy
- Grab your calm down charts/emotion charts
- Take a bath
- Read an anger social story
- Use an anger thermometer
- Do wall pushups
- Jump on a trampoline
- Do ten jumping jacks
- Use anxiety management worksheets
- State your emotion (Fun variation, report your emotions like a weather system)

THINGS YOU SHOULD & SHOULDN'T SAY TO AN UPSET CHILD

Things You Shouldn't Say to an Upset Child

- Don't worry
- This is all in your head
- Why is this upsetting you so much? It's no big deal
- Calm down
- It's going to be okay
- There's nothing to be afraid of
- What's wrong with you?
- You better snap out of it, or else
- You're just a worrywart
- You have no reason to be worried
- This is so silly, don't worry about this
- You're fine
- Don't cry

And while it's not our intention to harm kids with these phrases (we actually want to help), these phrases are all so unhelpful. Saying "calm down" has actually never likely made anyone feel calm – ever! It typically has the reverse effect.

If you perceived something as a legitimate threat, would any of the above statements make you feel better? Whether or not this perceived threat makes sense to you, it is very real to your child, and you need to treat it as such.

Things You Should Say to an Upset Child

You are not alone. I feel scared about that too.

Let kids know it's completely normal to worry. Anxiety can feel lonely. A lot like a lone star high in the sky looking down at a bustling world on a starless night.

Let's change the ending to that story.

Help your kiddo find and see different solutions, and retell their internal dialogue with a new ending.

Tell me when two minutes have gone by.

Distraction, avert focus onto something else and off of the snowballing thought.

Let me worry about this for you.

Can you offer to take on the problem and tell your student you will brainstorm solutions?

Beat it, Mr. Worry Bully.

One of the best anxiety squashing techniques we have used is to name our worry, draw it, and then talk to it.

This feeling will pass.

Like everything else, start teaching kiddos mindfulness; within that, they will learn that everything passes, bad feelings (and good feelings too).

Let's take five deep breaths together.

Perhaps you've noticed that when you inhale a big, slow, deep breath, you feel calmer, more relaxed, and less anxious?

I know this is hard. Tell me how you are feeling.

Acknowledge and empathize with your child that what they are feeling is difficult and valid.

You are in a safe place, and you are loved.

Enough said!

Why do you think that?

Instead of saying, "Oh, don't be silly, everyone loves you," which doesn't validate the root of why they might be feeling that way, you can say, "Why do you think no one likes you?"

Tell me about it. Can I do anything to help?

Let your students openly talk about their fears instead of trying to repress them. Like you, kids need time to process their feelings and thoughts.

How big is this worry on a scale of 1 to 10?

Putting quantifiable numbers to worry can help a child realize their worry isn't the end of the world.

What do we know about this?

Gather up all the facts we can about the worry.

Think of something happy.

One of the best ways to redirect an upset mind is to let it settle on a different thought.



Role-playing is a good time to let kids know that their behavior wasn't acceptable, why it wasn't acceptable, and teach the skills they need to do better the next time such a situation arises.

These skills take a while to learn, so understand that young brains are still growing and developing; young kids cannot control their emotions.

But be rest assured, warrior educator, you will begin to notice a BIG difference with time and practice.

LESSON

We shouldn't try to teach lessons to kids while they are still upset.

But what we should do is circle back when they are calm. (Like waaaaayyyy later when they are calm.)

All kids struggle with emotional regulation on some level. And although we need to be firm that certain behaviors aren't acceptable, it's still our job to help them learn the skills to handle the situation better, **not make them feel shameful.**

Start with the calm down posters, have kids point to how they were feeling. We move on to whatever action arose from that feeling. Finally, discuss how they could have handled the situation differently.

You could role-play the scene back, which teaches how to notice signs of anger and react differently.

Daily Feelings Check-In:

We shouldn't just reserve lessons for when kids act out. We need to get comfortable talking about feelings all the time. I recommend using a daily feelings check-in. This will also help you work through any personal trepidation about all this feelings talk.

During a calm moment, ask some feelings questions. This could be during a break in the curriculum or day:

- What was the best part of today?
- Did anything make you feel sad today?
- What are you looking forward to about tomorrow?