

calm-down cheat sheet

WHAT YOU DO

- ☐ Keep child safe and show you care...that is priority!
- ☐ Position yourself to be less threatening...sit down.
- ☐ Work with them at their eye level and about an arm's length away.
- ☐ Do not touch them in any way unless you ask first and they want you to. (Ex: rub back, scratch back, hold on lap, hold hand, etc.)

WHAT YOU SAY

- ☐ Be quiet, calm, and present in the moment.
- ☐ Use few words and speak calmly and kindly.
- ☐ Assure them, "I am here." "I can help."
- ☐ Do not try and process the emotions or event until they are calm and regulated. You may need to wait until even the next day to process it.

AVOID...

- ☐ Telling them to calm down, stop yelling or crying, or saying, "It's not that bad."
- ☐ Any discussion, reasoning, or logic until the child is calm or regulated again.
- ☐ Touching them, moving them, holding them, restraining them...unless it's needed to keep them safe.
- ☐ Giving any kind of consequences or taking things away when child is dysregulated.

Calm-Down Strategies

calm-down strategies

In the moment, it can be difficult to know what to do. Here's a list of ideas for when a child is dysregulated.. When a tool doesn't work one day, that does not mean it won't work another day. Be willing to try different strategies to see what is effective. Remember: some things we do, just won't work while a child is dysregulated and need to wait until calm. (Ex: taking things, saying no, etc)

- Get on child's level
- Don't yell or scream
- Respect personal space
- Avoid making demands
- Don't try to reason
- Validate their feelings
- Answer questions briefly
- Use few and simple words
- Decrease stimulation
- Be non-judgmental
- Calm your body language
- Use a distraction
- Avoid using word "no"
- Be aware of breathing
- Take a movement break
- Avoid over-reacting
- Encourage them to use a skill
- Let them know, "I'm here for you."
- Remind them they're not in trouble
- Give them positive remarks
- Offer to change what you're doing
- Use active listening (reflect back)
- Remind them of your care
- Apologize for what you did wrong
- Re-state what they are saying
- Be willing to find a solution
- Ignore the irrelevant behavior
- Be respectful in your tone
- Don't try for the last word
- Say, "I see your point."
- Avoid processing until calm
- Listen to understand not debate
- Keep escape route to door open
- Act calm (words and body)
- Slow down your talking
- Lower your voice
- Say, "Let's talk about it later."
- Encourage the child
- Use humor or a short joke
- Show that you are listening
- Call another adult to help
- Give two choices
- Walk away and take a break
- Say, "I can help."
- Talk about something they like
- Offer to take a walk with them
- Offer to pray with/for them
- Agree to disagree
- Ask, "Would it help if...?"
- Let them have some time alone
- Point out what you agree about
- Say, "I want to help you."
- Ask if they need a hug
- Don't take items away from them
- Encourage them to get a drink
- Remove the audience
- Show a photo they like or enjoy
- Ask to call someone else to help
- Let them walk around or move
- Offer them a snack
- Give a lemon drop/lemonade
- Don't interrupt them--listen
- Try talking about favorite things
- Show empathy and understanding

Calm-Down Strategies