

# Creating a Calm Down Corner



A Guide for Parents  
and Families

# Frequently Asked Questions



## ♥ What is a calm down corner?

Calm down corners are a great tool for teaching children healthy emotional self-regulation and coping skills. They provide children who are angry, nervous, elated, or upset with a safe space to process their feelings, clear their minds, and release anger and other emotions in a constructive manner.

Calm down corners can be used in lieu of traditional timeouts. While traditional time outs can be seen as punishment or threat, calm down corners can feel supportive and comforting. Rather than punish the child for their feelings, they provide the child with an outlet to learn to work through their emotions, which is an important life skill they can take with them into adulthood.

## ♥ Why is a calm down corner important?

Calm down corners are important because they help children learn how to work through emotions and “calm down” when feeling angry or frustrated. When we become angry the primitive side of our brain takes over making it difficult to think clearly and rationally. Our brains go into Fight Flight or Freeze mode and we may react without thinking. This is where the calm down corner comes in. It provides children with the space and tools necessary to calm their minds so they can think clearly and avoid acting out of emotion or impulse.

## ♥ How does a calm down corner work?

A calm downer corner works by providing your child with a designated space and appropriate tools to help him self-regulate. The corner design and types of tools available will vary by age group and child personality. You may include things such as headphones and music, coloring books, bubbles for deep breathing, and stress balls to squeeze. Unlike traditional timeouts, you don't give children a designated time period to spend in the calm down corner. Instead, the child will choose to come out of his own will whenever he feels he has actually calmed down.

# Frequently Asked Questions



## ♥ When is it appropriate to use a calm down corner?

You can suggest the calm down corner to your child whenever you feel it is appropriate. Your child can use the calm down corner when he feels angry, frustrated, anxious, upset, or any other difficult emotion. You may also consider sending your child to this corner when he is acting out, throwing a tantrum, arguing with a sibling or friend, behaving inappropriately, or being too hyperactive.

## ♥ Wouldn't a calm down corner just reward bad behavior?

Sometimes parents and teachers are concerned to set up a calm down corner because they worry it will become a place that children just want to hang out and that they will be rewarding bad behavior. Fortunately, this isn't the case.

Calm down corners simply provide children with the necessary space and tools to cool off and get their brains out of fight, flight, or freeze mode. Adults aren't punished by parents for their irrational behaviors or emotional responses, instead they are left to work through it themselves and deal with any natural consequences of their actions.

Calm down corners help teach children these skills. That said, just because you choose to use a calm down corner, doesn't mean you have to forgo punishment. You can still choose to provide consequences for inappropriate behaviors after your child has calmed down.



# Tips for Creating a Comfortable and Supportive Calm Down Corner for Your Child



## ♥ Choose the space

Calm down corners can be set up anywhere in your home. While they are often referred to as calm down corners, they can actually be any designated space and do not necessarily need to be in a corner. The chosen area should be a calm and comfortable environment that is set aside exclusively for the purpose of calming down. If you can, choose a low traffic area where your child won't be interrupted. Some people choose to create a border for the space to create feelings of safety and seclusion. This border may be designed using furniture, walls, plants, tapestries, dividers or other items that can create a distinct border.

## ♥ Create a Calm and Comfortable Atmosphere

Create a space that feels relaxing to your child. Choose calming decor, colors, and rugs. You may consider adding comfortable furniture, pillows, blankets, bean bag chairs, hammocks, etc.

## ♥ Make a visible list of strategies for calming down and hang it in the space where your child can visually see it.

Some things you may want to include are:

- Deep breathing techniques (bubbles, hot chocolate breathing, belly breaths, breathing buddies, etc.).
- Count to 10.
- Squeeze a stress ball.
- Stretch. (It helps to have a visual poster of yoga poses)
- Think about something that makes you happy.
- Color or draw a picture.
- Write in a journal.
- Listen to music.
- Dance.
- Read a book.
- Play with a favorite toy.
- Give yourself a hug.
- Are you hungry or thirsty? Have a snack or drink.
- Imagine a peaceful calm place like a beach, forest, or waterfall.

# Tips for Creating a Comfortable and Supportive Calm Down Corner for Your Child



## ♥ Provide engaging, calming, and sensory processing activities

Some suggestions include:

- Bubbles (for deep breathing).
- Stuffed animals (Breathing buddies for deep breathing. Just place the stuffed animal on the belly and watch it move up and down as you breathe).
- Playdough, slime, or silly putty.
- Coloring books, drawing pad, and art supplies.
- Sandtray.
- Rice bins.
- Small balloons to pop.
- Calming essential oils to smell.
- Calming music, nature sounds, white noise, and set of headphones.
- Books, especially those about self-regulation and emotions.
- Mind jars (calm down jars): These are jars full of glitter and water that children can shake and watch the glitter to fall and imagine their thoughts and feelings stirred up like glitter but slowly calming down and becoming clear.
- Journal.
- Water and snacks.

## ♥ Get feedback from your child and ask for his help

This is your child's calm down corner so ask his opinion. Perhaps he even wants to help you create and design it. What furniture and decor would he find calming and relaxing? What strategies actually help him calm down? What would he like to have available in his corner? The more your child is involved in setup, the more likely he'll want to actually use it when the time comes.

## ♥ Come up with an aftercare plan

What happens after your child calms down? Will there be a consequence for any inappropriate behaviors? Would you like him to stop and think about what happened and why he felt or acted the way he did? Consider giving your child the time and space to talk directly with you about his feelings and behavior if he wants to do so. Journal writing is also a great reflection tool that can be implemented here.