

Creating a Calm Down Corner



A Guide for Teachers

What is a Calm Down Corner and Why Would I Want One in My Classroom?

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Calm down corners are a great way to teach children emotional self regulation and positive coping skills. Some teachers are reluctant to include calm down corners in the classroom as they fear it will become a place that children want to hangout and that they will wind up rewarding children for bad behaviors. On the contrary, it provides children with the necessary space and time to get their brains out of fight or flight mode and back into learning mode. You can use the calm down corner whenever you feel it is appropriate. This might be when a child is frustrated with his schoolwork, arguing with another student, or throwing a tantrum.

Children need to learn to self-regulate so why not create a space that is filled with appropriate coping skills for them? Calm down corners are a great alternative to traditional time outs as it doesn't punish the child for their feelings but instead provides them with an outlet to learn to work through their emotions.

Unlike traditional timeouts you don't give children a certain amount of time they have to stay in the corner, instead they are able to leave whenever they feel calm and ready to learn. While timeouts can feel like a threat for kids, calm down corners feel supportive and comforting. This doesn't mean you leave the children completely alone to work it out. Once they feel calm, you can discuss why any displayed behaviors weren't appropriate and suggest alternatives for next time.



Tips for Creating a Comfortable and Supportive Calm Down Corner for Your Students



♥ Choose the space

The first step in creating a calm down corner is to decide which corner of the room to use. Generally, it is best to use a corner with little traffic so that children using the calm down corner won't be interrupted. If possible, you may choose a corner that has a window so the child is able to look outside. Borders for the corner are also helpful in creating feelings of safety and seclusion. You might try using furniture, plants, walls, tapestries, dividers or other items to create a border that separates the corner from the rest of the classroom.

♥ Create a Calm and Comfortable Environment

You'll want to create a space that helps your students relax. Choose calming colors, decor, and rugs. Consider including things like pillows, blankets, stuffed animals bean bag chairs, hammocks, or other furniture that is soft to lie down on.

♥ Make a visible list of strategies for calming down and hang it where students can 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.

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♥ Provide engaging, calming, and sensory processing activities

Children are unique and will calm themselves in different ways. It is a good idea to have a wide range of activities available in your calm down corner.

Some suggestions include:

- Bubbles (for deep breathing).
- Stuffed animals (Teach your students how to use their stuffed animal as a breathing buddy, simply lie down and place it on their belly and watch it move up and down with their breath).
- 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.
- Journals.
- Art supplies to draw pictures.
- Water and snacks.
- Timer for keeping track of calm down time.

♥ Get feedback from your students

Ask your students what they think of the calm down corner and give them opportunity to share their ideas of what they'd like to have in it. It is their space after all, so it helps to know what they think.

