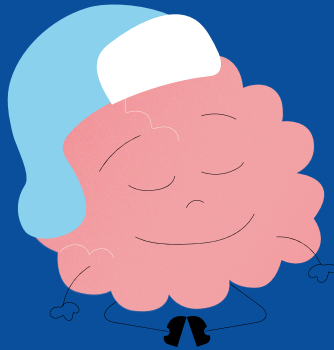




# Calming Yourself Booklet

For Parents & Teachers



# What is a calming yourself booklet

These booklets are designed to be used by parents and teachers, as a way to calm a child down at times of anxiety and stress. The tasks and techniques within are designed for children to calm down, find reassurance and find motivation for the rest of the day. Please bear in mind that the techniques listed here are not exhaustive.

There are other strategies that may be used to calm and motivate children. These are just a few of our favourites.

The techniques we will be talking about in this booklet are as follows...

# Contents

To Do Lists .....	04
Positive Reinforcements .....	05
Reasoning .....	06
Listening .....	07
Reflection .....	08
Mirroring .....	09
Gratitude .....	10
Routine .....	11
Meditation/Breathing .....	12
Yoga .....	13

# To Do Lists

At times of stress, a child may feel overwhelmed by all the things that need to be completed. By asking them to write a 'To Do List,' or writing one on their behalf, the stress that is complicating their mind will be neatly laid out. This helps them to see exactly what needs to be done, and hopefully make it a lot more manageable.

Following this you may tell the child to cross off the list as they complete each task and reward themselves on a job well done (e.g., 'After each task take 20 minutes to play').

This encourages positive reinforcement, motivating them to work on, and clearly see positive results for good behaviour.



# Positive Reinforcements

Positive Reinforcement has been proven to motivate and encourage children much more effectively than any other method.

This is where the child is praised and rewarded for doing a task (e.g., Tidying up toys, completing homework).

In the case of calming, and motivating a child, you may wish to say something like, 'If you get all of this work done, you can have an extra 20 minutes of play time.'

Negative Punishment is commonly used instead of Positive Reinforcement. This is where a child is threatened with a punishment for not doing a task (e.g. 'If you don't clean up your toys, you aren't allowed any ice cream'). Consistent use of Negative Punishment can bring up unnecessary stress for a child, and slowly impact their mental well-being.

When motivating a child, negativity should be avoided, and positivity encouraged.

# Reasoning

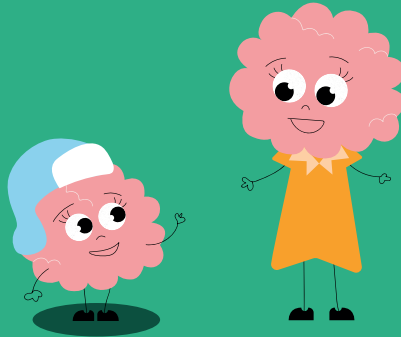
We are all aware that some children are prone to ‘Stroppy’ behaviour. Often there is no reasoning with a child if they don’t get their way. Where it is important a child learns that they will not always get their way, it is also important for a child to know why they aren’t getting their way, and it isn’t just the parent or teacher being mean.

When this is the case, it may be worthwhile sitting down with the child at a table, with a piece of paper and a pencil each, and asking them to write down why they are upset. It is also okay if they would prefer to draw a picture to show why they are upset.

Tell the child that you are also going to write down why you did what you did, or why you acted the way that you acted. After an allocated amount of time (3/5/10 minutes), tell them it’s time to show them to each other. Start off by reading out what you have written, or showing them the picture you’ve drawn, explaining to them why whatever happened, happened, with an emphasis on how much you love and care about the child. Then ask them to share what they have written or drawn and ask them to explain the situation from their perspective.

# Listening

Sometimes all a child needs is to be listened to. It is important that they are actively listened to, understood, and not talked over. In some cases, a child may feel judged, and what they say is overlooked. Therefore their engagement and participation in conversation should be actively acknowledged and encouraged. Even when the general conversation revolves around more adult conversation topics, be sure to answer their questions, and ask them questions in return.



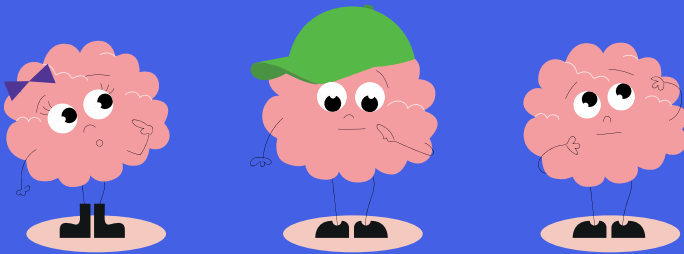
When it comes to calming and motivating a child through listening, make sure to hear and understand what they are really saying. If they are getting frustrated trying to articulate themselves, try and help them out by suggesting words for them, and providing explanations that they will understand. This will help them to see you understand how they feel, and you are trying to help them to communicate themselves using their emotions.

# Reflection

If a child is being affected by sadness, it may be worth sitting down with them and reflecting over times that they were happy. Talking to them about their good memories.

Extending from this you may want to ask them to write about or draw a picture of a time when they were happy. Then they can read it out, describe it, or explain it.

The aim of this is to shift the child out of this upset place and replace it with a fond memory. Allowing for them to be in a better place mentally, where they can then be motivated to get on with their day.





# Mirroring

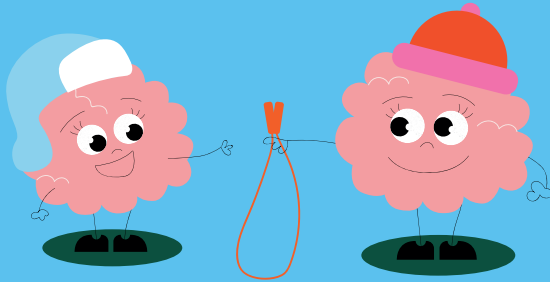
Mirroring is a self-reflection, de-escalation technique that helps children feel understood and accepted. This concept requires the adult to take a step back from the situation and mirror the behaviour of the child, through the action that is causing them stress. This causes the child to reflect on how they are acting. This helps them evaluate their own situation and realise what it is they need to feel better and calm down. This builds a child's self-awareness and self-acceptance.

It can also be helpful to use the senses, as well as the words the child uses to address the problem e.g. 'What I hear you saying is that it's unfair that you have to go to bed, but your sister doesn't' or 'You look very frustrated, you're breathing very heavily.' After this ask the child directly what the problem is, make sure the child feels heard and understood, and when they are done explaining ask 'Is there more?'

This can open the door to a bigger discussion over separate problems that have been an issue for them.

# Gratitude

Another technique that can be used if a child is annoyed or upset, is to talk to them about gratitude. Explaining that Gratitude is focusing on all of the good things we have and being thankful for the important things in our life. This will allow them to pause and appreciate that although they are sad or angry there are still reasons to be happy.



An exercise that will go along with this is to sit down with the child when they are upset and tell them some things that you are grateful for. You can then ask them some of the things that they are grateful for. Alternatively, you could write them down or draw them and then share them with each other.

# Routine

Routine is a big part in the development of young people. It provides consistent structure and stability throughout the week. Often when an established routine has been upset, this throws children off, making them unsure of how to cope, causing irrational or irritable behaviour.

Obviously, there are times when routine breaks down, this is unavoidable. This is why there should be a coherent morning and evening routine for children, so that they can start, and end their day with confidence and familiarity.

This clears the child's mind, getting rid of the messiness of the day, allowing them to settle down for the night and get an appropriate 9+ hours of sleep. As long as a child is starting and ending the day correctly then there will always be a certain base level of calm within their day.

# Meditation/Breathing

Meditation is a very useful technique to calm children at times of stress and anxiety. It allows them to switch off their brains for a moment and completely relax.

Having a designated time to meditate in the day could allow children to cherish the calm. Taking a regular time out from possible over thinking and worrying, just to sit in how they are feeling and allow for some healthy introspection, by silencing the noises of the outside world.

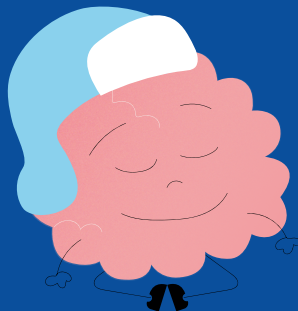
There are loads of kid's meditation tracks that can be found on the internet. They don't have to be long, a quick 5 minute pause to focus on breathing is all that is needed to re-charge and motivate children through the day.

If you find that a short, guided meditation track isn't working for a child, you could encourage them to do a small breathing exercise instead. Breathing in for 3 seconds, holding it for 2 seconds, and breathing out for 5 seconds. This is a less formal method of meditation that allows children to focus on their breathing and calm themselves down just the same. By trying to focus on and count the breathing it becomes an activity rather than static introspection.

# Yoga

If you are working with excitable children who can't sit still long enough for breathing exercises and meditation, Yoga is a worthwhile alternative. It is an active way to restore calm, allowing your mind and body to completely relax. There are many Yoga poses to try with children, as I'm sure you are aware children are a lot more flexible than adults!

Yoga would be encouraged as a cool-down activity, after play time and before work time. As it focuses on the breathing it allows for a healthy, calm state to take over the body, stretching your muscles and giving children the opportunity to leave playtime behind them and understand that now is the time to concentrate on work.



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