



Stress is normal for parents and kids, but you may find times you want to help your child navigate those feelings. Does your child have a favorite blankie they like to hold when upset? Be observant of things your child naturally does to self soothe.

Routines help your child to self-regulate and prevent meltdowns as well as manage their expectations. Make sure your child is getting enough sleep and eating on a schedule.

Think of “ABC” as a tool to help your child be aware of their emotions and to learn a healthy response – **Awareness** (identify their emotion), **Breathing**, **Calming** (stuffed animal, favorite blankie, calm corner)

Awareness

Help kids to identify their emotions! You can use an emotion chart (from yourvibration.com)

Breathing techniques

Young children, even toddlers, can learn breathing techniques as a way to self-regulate. Breathing helps calm them down when they are upset. It is also a useful tool for pain management such as when they are getting shots.

It’s best to teach children these techniques when they are calm. Do them routinely so they remember how to breathe when they are upset. Breathing is a great way to wind down before bed and can be easily incorporated into their bedtime routine.

1. Blow bubbles or a pinwheel – this is an ideal way to start teaching breathing to toddlers since they can see the bubbles as they breathe.
2. Five-finger breathing – this technique is engaging for children since it involves movement and the use of their hands.

Here’s how it works:

- Point with your index finger and place it at the base of the thumb on your opposite hand.
- Take a long deep breath in as you slide the index finger to the tip of your thumb.
- Take a long deep breath out as you slide your index finger down the other side of your thumb.
- Repeat this with all your fingers until you get to the opposite side of your hand

Square box

Trace the shape of a box. For each side, 4 seconds breathe in, 4 seconds hold breath, 4 seconds breathe out, 4 seconds hold breath and trace a box while doing this.



Managing Stress in the Early Childhood Years

Calming techniques

Teach your child mindfulness skills.

1. 5 senses grounding tool – Think of **5** things you can see, **4** things you can feel, **3** things you can hear, **2** things you can smell, **1** thing you can taste.
2. Coloring
3. Free play
4. Time in nature

Set up a Calm Corner in your home. You might want to put books, stuffed animals, blankets, and a soft plush rug in this corner. This is a place your child can go whenever they feel upset.

App Recommendations

- Stop, Breathe, Think Kids
- Calm
- Headspace
- Smiling Mind
- Breathe by Dr. Jud
- Bambu (Spanish)



Creating a Calm Space

Sometimes we all need space to help us feel calm. It may be a place in the space of a room or another empty space where a child can feel safe. Creating a private space for a child can allow time for quiet and relaxation. When kids are relaxed and calm this allows them to express their emotions. Try creating a “calm space” for your little one as a way to help them reduce their stress.



Here are Some Tips to Make a Calm Space*:

1. Work together with your child to create this space.
2. Set some rules for the space such as using quiet voices, using gentle words and motions, or moving your body slowly when in this space.
3. Consider a soft plush mat or a large bean bag to sit on.
4. Items to place in the Calm space (See Calm Kit ideas* to learn how to make some of these!)

Involving the Senses*:

Smell: Scented stickers / vanilla scented rice in a bag or jar

Listen: Plastic eggs or spice jars filled with items such as rice, lentils, dry beans, and other objects

See: Galaxy jar (plastic water bottle filled with corn syrup, water, a drop of dish soap, glitter, and other small objects)

Feel: silly putty, fabrics with different textures, pillows, fidget toys



Other Helpful Items*:

Calming items: blanket, stuffed animal, pictures of favorite things/people

Breath Focus: pinwheel, bubbles

Read and Imagine: books

Creativity: crayons and paper, mandalas to color, a puzzle, a journal

Movement: stretch bands, cards for different yoga/ stretch poses



* Small objects can be choking hazards. Exercise caution with use for children at risk and especially those 3 years old and younger.

