

MAIN IDEA

- When kids get very upset or over-stimulated (including being overly excited or tired), they start to have a hard time regulating their emotions, which makes it harder for them to listen or make good CHOICES (aka “DO’s”)
- We **CAN HELP THEM LEARN THE SKILLS TO CALM THEMSELVES** by creating a **SAFE, CALM SPACE** that is slightly removed from the main area of the room and that has all sorts of cues and activities in one spot to help them calm down
- **KIDS LEARN THINGS THROUGH ASSOCIATION**, just like we get hungry at lunch time or tired at our usual bed time, **WE CAN HELP KIDS CONNECT HEALTHY WAYS OF COPING WITH FEELINGS** (ie. worried, scared, angry, frustrated, cranky, overly excited etc) **USING THE CALM CORNER** to help themselves calm down and make GOOD CHOICES (DO’s)
- When first introducing this, it will be necessary to **CUE, COACH and REWARD** kids for using the calm corner (see Rewards handout for options), it is like learning any new skill, it takes practice and effort, so if we want them to keep working at it, they need to see some payoff!

CREATING A CALM CORNER

1. It is best to **INVOLVE THE KIDS IN CHOSING ITEMS TO GO IN THE CALM CORNER** (suggestions on the side)
 - The key is to have *quiet activities* to help them calm down
 - It is also a good idea to have some *picture books about feelings*
 - A *picture feeling chart* is also a good cue for them or *cards with pictures of kids faces associated with different feelings* and ask them to *find the one that matches how they feel*
2. Choose a part of the room that is a **BIT REMOVED FROM THE MAIN AREA OF THE ROOM (involve kids if possible!)**
 - Decreasing stimulation helps people calm down, especially when feeling overwhelmed, but we don’t want it to be too far away because being close to others can be a source of comfort that can help them calm down
 - Totally removed or far away from others may feel like a punishment
3. **NEVER FORCE someone to go to the CALM CORNER**
 - This is so the children don’t associate it with a punishment, which will just make them escalate more and possibly be destructive in it
 - Give them a **CHOICE** between playing separately for 2 min or going to the calm corner
4. **CALM CORNER ITEMS STAY IN THE CALM CORNER**
 - This makes it more of a “treat” to go there, creates a positive association
 - Kids can visit the calm corner when they want to or feel they need to

CALM CORNER IDEAS

- A few small pillows
- A soft or fluffy blanket
- Child’s favorite stuffy or a small assortment of stuffed animals to cuddle with
- A box with coloring pages and crayons
- A pencil and note pad
- Stickers
- Picture books to look at
- Include some about feelings (suggestions below)
- Small puzzles
- Lego (older kids)
- A few cars, small dolls and dinky toys
- Pictures on wall of options they can use to calm down (see Emotion Coaching handout)
- Can put Velcro and make a game out of matching the feeling to healthy coping strategies
- **KEEP IT INTERESTING! CHANGE THE CALM CORNER ITEMS** periodically (more often initially to keep their interest)

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

- “Everybody Feels Angry” by Jane Bingham
- “Everybody Feels Happy” by Jane Bingham
- “Everybody Feels Scared” by Jane Bingham
- “Everybody Feels Sad” by Jane Bingham

TIPS FOR SUCCESS!!!!

1. CALM CORNER COACHING

- When first introducing this, **even if a child does not want to go there, you go and start reading a book** (preferably about feelings), **playing with some of the dinkys**, talking about which card matches how you think they are feeling and ask if you are right, coloring, playing with the stickers etc
- Invite them to join you or to get a hug or cuddle a stuffy
- When they show interest, **PRAISE them for using the calm corner PUBLICALLY** (in front of the other kids) and **REWARD them for calming themselves down by making GOOD CHOICES**
- When they are more used to it, you can try cueing them to:
 - **“What is the healthiest thing for you to do right now?”**
 - **Whose behavior are we responsible for? Whose choices can WE control?**

2. CALM CORNER MODELING YOURSELVES & OLDER KIDS

- **KIDS IMITATE what they see**, especially if it looks like it has some sort of pay off and especially if it is by people they look up to
 - ie. If a child sees other children get to keep what they want after they grab it from someone else and push them down, they are more likely to try that next time too!
 - ie. If a child sees someone getting lots of PRAISE and a jelly bean for using the calm corner, they will be more likely to try that too!
- **NOTE: It is especially important early on to reward EVERY INSTANCE of successfully calming themselves down** to make sure they get a **CLEAR and CONSISTENT message that is the DESIRABLE BEHAVIOR/ CHOICE**
- **YOU YOURSELVES NAME THE FEELING YOU ARE HAVING AND GO TO THE CALM CORNER** to teach them how to do it
 - ie. “I’m getting really frustrated right now! I am going to the calm corner for a few minutes!”)

3. CALM CORNER CUEING THROUGH PLAY

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY, So THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO GET KIDS HOOKED INTO A NEW IDEA OR WAY OF DOING THINGS**
- **Play also gives them a chance to REHEARSE and PRACTICE the skills when things are calm, so they are more likely to remember them when they are not** – it helps reinforce the pairings/ associations we want them to make between healthy coping strategies and feelings
- See sidebar for ideas

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

(continued)

- “Cool Down and Work Through Anger” by Cheri J. Meiners
- “Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids” by Carol McCloud
- “Little Yoga: A Toddler’s First Book of Yoga” by Rebecca Whitford & Martina Selway

CUEING THROUGH PLAY IDEAS

- **Pretend you are feeling different emotions** (overly excited, frustrated, sad etc) and ask the kids how they think you are feeling and what the healthiest choice for you would be for you when feeling that way
- **Pretend your car/doll/ stuffy is upset or excited etc** and cue to what they can do when they feel that way
 - **Talk about the bad choices as well as the good ones, and the consequences of both** – this ties in nicely with DO’s and DON’T’s and helps them develop decision making skills and to think ahead
 - Can even **draw out or write down the brainstormed ideas** of the character’s CHOICES and the likely CONSEQUENCES (Many kids learn best through VISUAL CUES or GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS)

CALM CORNER

CHILD CARE & PARENTING

March 6, 2012
