

LADC Behavior Handout



Calming Strategies

Learn about ways to help your child calm down when anxious, sad, or angry.

Teach your child one of the new calming strategies this week and make sure to practice during a time when their body is already calm.



Calming Strategies

Every child has emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, or happiness. Sometimes those emotions become so intense that they affect your child's behavior. We need to teach our children emotional regulation. One necessary strategy to help them regulate their emotions is to teach them coping skills or calming strategies.

There are many different types of calming strategies that you will learn! You know your child best, so try the strategies that you think your child is developmentally capable of doing and the strategies that you think will help them to be the most successful! We don't want them to get frustrated while doing calming strategies because the strategy is too hard for them!

All strategies should be practiced when the child is calm so that they can learn the new techniques. Reinforce their practicing behavior to get them excited about the strategies. You must practice when they are calm for them to ever be successful implementing a calming strategy when they are emotionally unregulated.

Taking Deep Breaths

One of the most common and effective strategies is deep breathing. Often when children are emotionally upset, whether that is scared, anxious, angry or sad, deep breaths can help to calm the child internally. There are many ways to make deep breathing more fun for your child.

Blowing Out Candles

Hold up five fingers for your child. As you hold them up, you can have them help you count them to five or you can count the candles for them! After counting the candles, have them take a deep breath and blow out each "candle". Each breath they blow out, put one of your fingers down until all of the "candles" are gone!

Blowing Bubbles

Have your child take deep breaths and blow bubbles. Also, the distraction of watching the bubbles float away or popping the bubbles can help calm your child.

Blowing Up A Balloon

Have your child pretend to blow up a balloon (using the hands expanding as the pretend balloon). Each breath they take, pretend that the balloon gets bigger by expanding the hands. Then when the balloon is "really big", you can pretend having it let all of the air out by making the sound with your mouth.

Belly Breathing

You want to teach your child how to belly breathe. It is important that when they are breathing, they are breathing with their stomach rather than their chest. You can teach them that when we breathe in, we want our belly to push out and get bigger and when they breathe out, the stomach goes back to normal! Help them practice by having them lay on the ground and place a stuffed animal on their stomach. As they breathe in, they want to see how high up they can get their animal to go, and as they breathe out, they want to see their stuffed animal ride back down.

Smelling Spices

Have your child practice breathing in through their nose by smelling spices like cinnamon! Practice breathing in slowly as long as they can!

Bee Breath

Have your child breathe in as deep of a breath as they can, as they breathe out, have them make a buzzing noise like the bee is flying. Encourage your child to see how long they can make their bee fly by buzzing or “exhaling” for longer!

Steam Engine Breath

Slow and steady, have your child take a deep breath in through their nose, allowing their stomach to expand as they breathe in. On the exhale, have them make the “shhhhhh” noise like steam coming out of the train. As they let their steam out, they can move their arms like the wheels of the train. How far can they make their engine go?

Other Calming Strategies

Tense and Relax

Have your child slowly tense and relax different parts of their body. When squeezing their hands, have them imagine squeezing all the juice out of lemons. In order to tense their shoulders have them pull their shoulders up to their ears and pretend they are a turtle tucking down into their shell. To tense the shoulders again, have your child pretend to be a cat stretching by bringing their arms all the way up trying to touch the ceiling and have them try and reach back as far as they can. Finally, to tense their feet and legs, have them imagine stepping in the mud puddle and trying to get their feet to reach the bottom of the mud by pushing their feet hard against the ground. By tensing and relaxing the body, one is able to get out some of the muscle tension. Based on muscle physiology, when you create tension in a muscle and then release it, the muscle has to relax.

Calming Visuals

Provide your child with a calm down bottle or a sand timer that they can visually look at while calming down. This helps to provide a time frame of how long they should calm down and also visual stimuli. If you don't have one of those on hand, there are plenty of apps on phones that can do the same thing.

Sticky Hands

Have your child pretend that they have “sticky” hands and press them together. Have them push them together as hard as they can for 20 seconds. You can help count it out with them. Now tell your child to slowly peel their hands apart and see if they feel any more stickiness. Repeat the process.

Grounding Techniques

Sometimes you have to help your child ground themselves in the present by having them focus on the moment using their five senses. You could have them look for 3 things that are blue, 2 things that are yellow, and so forth. You could have them name 2 sounds they hear, 4 things they can feel, and 5 things that they can see. By helping the child come into the present moment, they are better able to move past the emotion.

Remember to practice when the child is calm before using when the client is upset to make it more successful!