



# KEEP CALM KIT

IDEAS TO KEEP OUR 4 - 11 YEAR OLDS CALM



# KEEP CALM KIT

Children can struggle to put their big feelings into words, which sometimes results in them **showing** us how they feel through inappropriate behaviours rather than **saying** how they feel.

Some children can really benefit from having access to a 'keep calm kit' containing items which enable them to release their big feelings physically but **safely**.



## CREATING & USING THE KIT

- Directly involving your child in the design and creation of the kit can give them a sense of ownership over the process
- Find a quiet space when you and your child are both relaxed and talk about how you've noticed your child gets big feelings like anger and frustration which tend to come out physically rather than verbally
- Give an example of the inappropriate behaviour you have observed – such as: *"I've noticed that sometimes you slam the doors really forcefully when you are feeling mad that you haven't got exactly what you want."*
- Set a limit: *"It is ok to feel angry but slamming doors is not safe behaviour."*
- Discuss safer options for physical release such as those listed to the right, and work with your child to identify some methods which he/she may find particularly helpful
- Rehearse using the techniques through role play
- Decorate the box and decide where it will be kept – it is important that it has a designated location so your child can readily access it
- Give your child specific praise for using the kit appropriately: *"You did a great job of calming yourself down by scribbling in your note book. I can see you're calm now because your body looks relaxed and you're using a gentle talking voice now."*

## ITEMS THAT MIGHT HELP\*

- ✓ PAPER AND CRAYONS TO WRITE/SCRIBBLE
- ✓ SCRAP PAPER TO RIP UP
- ✓ BUBBLE WRAP TO POP
- ✓ EGG BOXES TO JUMP ON/RIP UP
- ✓ PILLOW TO HIT/SQUASH/ CUDDLE
- ✓ PLAY DOUGH OR STRESS BALL TO SQUASH, PUMMEL OR TWIST
- ✓ BUBBLE MIX FOR BLOWING AND POPPING BUBBLES
- ✓ HANKY SPRAYED WITH A CALMING SCENT LIKE LAVENDER OR THE SCENT OF SOMETHING THAT HELPS THEM TO FEEL SAFE I.E. MUM'S PERFUME
- ✓ HAND CREAM FOR HAND MASSAGES.
- ✓ VISUAL REFERENCE TO EMOTIONS E.G. HOW ARE YOU FEELING CHART (SEEN OVERLEAF)
- ✓ MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES LIKE MODEL MAKING OR JIGSAW PUZZLES
- ✓ JOURNALING IS A GREAT WAY TO KEEP TRACK OF FEELINGS

\* WHY NOT MAKE YOUR OWN ITEMS, RATHER THAN BUYING?

# NAMING & VALIDATING FEELINGS

- A really helpful technique to develop children's awareness and understanding of their own feelings is to put them into words for example:
  - *You look really proud of your picture.*
  - *You sound really disappointed that you lost at snakes and ladders.*
  - *You're furious because Jake took the last packet of crisps.*
  - *You're really worried about making a mistake.*
- Naming and validating your child's feelings also helps them to feel that you understand them and can sometimes diffuse difficult situations
- Try naming your child's different feelings across all aspects of daily life as well as when they are using the keep calm box

CUT THIS OUT FOR YOUR BOX!



## HOW ARE YOU FEELING?



HAPPY



SAD



MAD



BRAVE



EMBARRASSED



FRIENDLY



SORRY



DISAPPOINTED



FRUSTRATED



SILLY



HOPEFUL



LEFT OUT



EXCITED



JEALOUS



CURIOUS



CRANKY



SENSITIVE



PROUD



INSECURE



GRATEFUL



LOVED



GUILTY



UNCOMFORTABLE



SHY



HURT



SURPRISED



SCARED



KIND



# RELAXING THE BODY

## ✓ PROPRIOCEPTIVE ACTIVITIES

These help the brain organize and regulate, so proprioception is the commander over all the other senses. We can bring balance to this crucial sense by doing activities that cause our muscles to tense and release. Such activities could include, Squeezing and twisting play dough or stress squeezers, carrying heaving items, weight lifting, crawling, being wrapped up in a blanket tightly.

## ✓ VESTIBULAR ACTIVITIES

Balance, vision and the ability to be calm or alert are linked with the vestibular sense. Try some of these activities to either calm your child or give them some mental focus, before tasks such as homework.

- **Jumping** up and down (trampolining)
- **Colouring**
- **Obstacle courses** - over and under objects
- **Dancing**, marching, twirling, skipping rope
- **Games** like: 'rock a baby' - child is wrapped in a blanket and swung from side to side either on your lap or by two adults holding either side of the blanket.

# GOOD TO KNOW

**WHEN WE ARE FEARFUL, WORRIED OR STRESSED OUR BODIES RELEASE HORMONES LIKE ADRENALIN AND CORTISOL.**

Cortisol is good in small amounts as this helps us to keep safe and move into action when we need to...it triggers our fight or flight response. However, sometimes, we struggle to get to a state of calm again. This might be due to loads of different reasons, things like trauma can cause our brains to feel under threat even when we are not. When our bodies experience prolonged periods in fight or flight, this can be taxing on our nervous system and detrimental to our wellbeing.

In order to calm down we need to activate our relaxation response brought about through the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). This can be activated through breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques and activities that relax to the body.

Deep breathing, in particular, is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body because it sends a message to the brain to calm down and relax. We can do this through: bubble blowing, blowing up a balloon, hand breathing, singing, games such as cotton wool football, or straw painting. These ideas could be put in your box.

**\* NOTE: NOT ALL ACTIVITIES WILL SUIT ALL CHILDREN, FIND THE ONES THAT WORK FOR YOUR CHILD.**