



How to Help a Child Calm Down

THE WELLNESS CONNECTION REPORT

Greetings! In this week's topic, I would like to share some preventive tips and concepts on how to support young children to stay calm effectively!

The scientific community has gathered a significant amount of evidence over the past 20 years about how our brain functions and the impact it has on our behavior. It is widely accepted that, as humans, "we think, we feel, and behave." This concept of how we behave is not fully mastered until our mid-adult years, approximately 25 years of age. Thus, we must educate and teach our children how to manage their emotions in a socially acceptable manner.

Many young children, specifically, have difficulty managing their emotions. [Tantrums](#), outbursts, oppositional behaviors, arguing, fighting: these are some common behaviors that may occur when kids experience powerful feelings that overwhelm them. While [some kids have learned](#) to act out because it gets them what they want, other kids have trouble staying calm because they are highly sensitive biologically and emotionally.

The good news is that [learning to calm down](#) instead of acting out is a taught skill. Individuals who are more "highly sensitive" than their peers "feel things more intensely and quickly, and are slower to return to a calm emotional state." These intense feelings can also make a child more vulnerable to impulsive behaviors.

As parents or caregivers, you can start by helping children understand how their emotions work. Kids don't go from calm to sobbing on the floor in an instant. That emotion builds over time, like a wave. [Kids can learn control](#) by noticing and labeling their feelings earlier before the wave gets too big to handle.

The following are evidence-based preventative strategies that are effective in supporting young children.

1. **Validate the child's feelings:** Validation is a powerful tool for helping kids calm down by communicating you understand and accept what they're feeling. Validation is showing acceptance, which is not the same thing as agreement.
2. **Role Model managing difficult feelings:** For younger children, describing your feelings and modeling how you manage them is useful.
3. **Clear expectations:** This is another key strategy to help prevent kids from getting dysregulated, make your expectations clear, and follow consistent routines. "It's important to keep those expectations very clear and short.
4. **Give options:** When asked to do things they do not feel like doing, giving kids options may reduce their outbursts and increase compliance.
5. **Coping ahead:** [Plan in advance](#) for something that you predict may be an emotionally challenging situation for your child, or both of you. It means talking, when you are both calm, about what's coming, being direct about what negative emotions can arise, and strategizing how you will get through it.

This is a summary of an article by
Carloine Miller
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<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-children-calm-down/>

6. **Problem solving:** If a child has a tantrum, parents are often hesitant to bring it up later. It's natural to want to put them behind you, but it's good to revisit briefly, in a non-judgmental way. Revisiting an earlier event helps the child think about what happened, and to strategize about what could have been done differently.

7. **Five special minutes a day:** Even a small amount of time set aside reliably, every day, for mom or dad to do something chosen by a child can help that child manage stress at other points in the day. It's a time for positive connection, without parental commands, ignoring any minor misbehavior, just attending to your child and letting them be in charge. It can help a child who's having a tough time in school, for instance, to know they can look forward to that special time. This five minutes of parental attention should not be contingent on good behavior.



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