

# Bryn Mawr Elementary School



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## SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S MESSAGE

Week of April 13th-April 17<sup>th</sup>

Message & Activities: [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

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Dear Families,

Welcome to another week of virtual learning! Each week we'll take a closer look at one of the social emotional learning standards. One of the core components of social emotional learning is self-awareness. This skill gives us the ability to focus on ourselves and how our actions, thoughts, and emotions affect others. Just as we teach reading, writing, and math, social emotional learning is recognized as valuable and necessary to further student growth.

Classrooms in our district provide students with a calm down corner for students to use when they're experiencing strong emotions. Students know that utilizing the calm down corner in their classroom is a non-punitive strategy. A calm down corner is a comfortable and calming space for children to go when they need some space to calm their bodies and take some time to process or reflect on their strong feelings. This week we'd like to share how to create a calm down corner at home. This may look different for every family. As the parent you know what will be realistic and what will work best for your child. It can be an actual corner that you create, it can be a calm down container with tools to help your child self-regulate, or an individual item, like their blanket or stuffed animal.

Please read on for more ideas about creating a calm down space. We have also included a video. In the video calm down corners are referred to as "peace corners". You will also find some extra resources you could print out and use at home.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxBv1w4SQyw>

Warm regards,


Lucero Alegre, School Counselor

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## COUNSELING, SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Week of April 13th-April 17th

| <u>SUBJECT</u>     | <u>ACTIVITY</u>  |
|--------------------|--|
| FAMILY<br>ACTIVITY | <h1 data-bbox="396 583 1425 730">How to Create the Perfect Calm-Down Corner</h1> <p data-bbox="764 758 1062 800">by <i>Rebecca Eanes</i>.</p> <p data-bbox="391 806 1435 926">(This article is part of the <b>Positive Parenting FAQ</b> series. Get free article updates <a href="https://afineparent.com/positive-parenting-faq/calm-down-corner.html">here</a>.) <a href="https://afineparent.com/positive-parenting-faq/calm-down-corner.html">https://afineparent.com/positive-parenting-faq/calm-down-corner.html</a></p> <p data-bbox="383 947 1409 1125">A calm-down corner (or area as it doesn't have to be in a corner) is a place for angry and upset children to go to engage their minds and release their anger. I used this when my children were little in place of time-out because <b>time-out didn't work for my sensitive son</b>. Here, I'll show you how to make the perfect calm-down corner for your child that you can put together today and start to use right away.</p> <h3 data-bbox="383 1146 545 1178">The Purpose</h3> <p data-bbox="383 1199 716 1524">Becoming and remaining calm during anger is an important skill for children to learn. When we are angry, something significant happens in our brains. We experience an "amygdala hijack" and the primitive part of our brain is activated.</p> <p data-bbox="383 1545 675 1608"><i>This is the fight, flight, or freeze response.</i></p> <p data-bbox="383 1629 1442 1734">When we are in our primitive brains, we have limited access to logic and reasoning. We are quick to react without thinking it through. We just aren't able to think clearly. If you want a more scientific explanation of what happens to the brain when you're angry, <a href="#">check this out</a>.</p> <p data-bbox="383 1755 1435 1860">The purpose of the calm-down corner is to get out of fight or flight, and engage the thinking part of the brain again. Until the anger has subsided, a child can't really learn the lessons we want to teach about why their behavior is unacceptable and what they should do</p>  |

instead. (The reason why time-out doesn't work for many children is because it is perceived as a threat or causes further feelings of anger and fear which just keeps the child locked in their primitive brain!)

### **The Feel**

This is not a punitive space that the child is banished to for a set number of minutes. Young children will most likely need help from an adult to calm down. This should be a soothing and inviting space – not at all threatening. Objects in the space should be familiar and engaging.

### **When to Use It**

- During a tantrum
- When a child is being aggressive
- When they are fighting with siblings
- When they are showing the beginning signs of anger (clenched jaw, reddening face, raising voice). Teach children to recognize these signs.

### **What's in the Corner?**

Everyone's corner looks a little different because it should be tailored to suit your individual child, but I'll show you mine! Here are the major components of a great calm-down corner.

**\*Comforting:** My son loved his penguin Pillow Pet, so that provided a comfortable place to sit with something that he enjoyed. You can **use pillows**, cushions, blankets, or even a **rocket ship!**

**\*Sensory:** Some children are soothed with sensory activities. I made a batch of colorful rice scented with a drop of lavender essential oil. There were hidden gems and a couple of spoons for digging around in the rice with. Alternatively, my youngest had small balloons to pop. That would scare some kids, but it really helped to shift him out of anger. Others may like to rip construction paper or blow into a crushed plastic bottle.

**\*Calming:** I made one of the calm-down glitter jars that are all over Pinterest and both of my kids loved to shake it and watch it swirl around. The goal is to shift the mind to something besides the upset, and watching the glitter focuses the mind and brings it to the present moment.

**\*Engaging:** I had board books to look through and also paper and markers for drawing or scribbling. Your child may like small stuffed animals, a coloring book, or toy cars.

### **After They Are Calm**

This is when you let her know that her behavior wasn't acceptable, why it wasn't acceptable, and teach the skills she needs to do better the next time such a situation arises. This may mean role-playing the scene over with her, each taking turns being the child who got angry to show her how to notice signs of anger in her body and how to manage those feelings. Teach her how to handle whatever incited the anger. If she got angry at her brother over a toy, teach conflict resolution skills.

These are skills that take a while to learn, so understand that her brain is still growing and developing, and she may not yet be able to control herself all the time. With time and practice, she'll be able to start using the calm-down corner all on her own and self-regulate.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **My child hates the calm-down corner! What do I do?**

Don't use it! If it doesn't feel safe and soothing, it isn't going to serve its purpose. *Anywhere there are the open and tender arms of a parent, there is a calm-down corner.*

#### **She won't even look in the box because she's kicking and screaming! How do I get her to use it?**

Visit the calm-down corner during times she isn't angry or upset. Be super positive about it and all the fun stuff it has. Let her become familiar with the jar and make sure it contains items she likes and finds comforting and engaging. Change out the books and sensory materials every so often so it's interesting.

#### **I have more than one child! I can't leave all my other children alone while I soothe the angry one for 20 minutes! How do I handle this situation?**

There are a few options and no easy answers to this one! You could set up more than one calm-down area, which is something I did for a while and used when they were having a spat. I literally just went back and forth between them, and luckily it worked out well. Alternatively, you could invite your other child(ren) into the space as well and they can be looking through the books while you hold the upset child and watch the swirling glitter in the jar together. Of course there may be times when you just cannot sit and help a child through it at that particular moment, and so you'll encourage them to sit independently until you are able to assist if they need it. Parenthood is rarely clear and easy-peasy. We just do the best we can!

#### **Wait, Isn't This a Reward for Bad Behavior?**

Look at it like this. Do you know those times when you're really getting mad and you feel like you're about to blow your top on your kids so you excuse yourself for a time-out in the bathroom to get yourself under control? Those few moments in the bathroom aren't your reward for getting angry, they're your coping skills for this normal human emotion.

This is teaching children coping skills. Because their brains are still underdeveloped, they need our help. They need us to *be their logical thinking brain* that helps them return to calm and reason until they are mature enough to do it themselves. Young children often can't do it alone.

# I FEEL...

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
|    | lonely<br>disappointed<br>sad  |
|    | silly<br>excited<br>hyper      |
|    | frustrated<br>annoyed<br>angry |
|    | tired<br>sick<br>hungry        |
|    | worried<br>anxious<br>scared   |
|    | happy<br>calm<br>focused       |
|   | shy<br>confused<br>embarrassed |
|  | brave<br>proud<br>hopeful      |

# I CAN...

TAKE DEEP  BREATHS

TREAT MYSELF & OTHERS WITH  KINDNESS

CREATE ART  OR BUILD  SOMETHING.

USE POSITIVE  SELF-TALK

 ASK FOR HELP

 EXERCISE

FOCUS  ON THE GOOD

STRETCH OR  DO YOGA

BRAINSTORM  SOLUTIONS &  TRY AGAIN

GET A DRINK OF  WATER

 TAKE A BREAK

TALK  OR WRITE  ABOUT IT

## I FEEL...



lonely  
disappointed  
sad



silly  
excited  
hyper



frustrated  
annoyed  
angry



tired  
sick  
hungry



worried  
anxious  
scared



happy  
calm  
focused



shy  
confused  
embarrassed



brave  
proud  
hopeful

## I CAN...

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STRETCH OR  DO YOGA

BRAINSTORM  SOLUTIONS &  TRY AGAIN

GET A DRINK OF  WATER

 TAKE A BREAK

TALK  OR WRITE  ABOUT IT



**COUNSELING  
SOCIAL /  
EMOTIONAL  
ACTIVITY  
FOR  
3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 5<sup>th</sup>  
GRADE**

### Reviewing the Never-Never Rules

**SECOND  
STEP**

All 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in the Renton School District are taught the Second Step: Child Protection Unit. This unit includes a lesson on **The Never Never Rules**, a compilation of rules to help keep themselves and our community safe. These safety rules help students learn how to be self-managers, and reinforces responsible decision making and problem-solving skills.

Activity:

1. [Review the Never Never Rules](#) with your student
2. Listen to [the Never-Never Song](#) as a family
3. Pretend your student is in a situation when a Never Never Rule is broken. Have them practice how to refuse and say “no” to an unsafe situation.
4. Talk with your student about the importance of reporting unsafe situations to you and other trusted adults.



Discussion Questions:

1. Which Never Never Rules have you used this week?
2. What would happen if everyone decided not to follow the Never Never Rules?
3. Who can you teach the Never Never Rules to at home?

If you have any questions about The Second Step: Child Protection Unit, please reach to me, by email ([lucero.alegre@rentonschools.us](mailto:lucero.alegre@rentonschools.us) or google voice 425-272-5708).

