

10 Ways to Teach

Kids

to Calm Down

- **Go For a Walk**

- **Find Your "Chill Spot"**

- **Take a Breath**

- **Count to 10 (or 100)**

- **Listen to Music**

- **Be Grateful**

- **Laugh**

- **Hug**

- **Loosen Up**

- **Sit Quietly**

10 Ways to Calm Down

There are many ways people have found to calm down. Finding what works for you and helping your child learn what works for them may involve some trial and error. Think of it as an experiment in calming down, and tell your kid it's an experiment, too. Start by saying something like this: "I'm trying to learn to calm down when I'm angry so I don't say things I regret later. I'd love for you to practice with me, because I think it will help you with your friends at school." Then, try one or more of these 10 ideas:

1. Go to a "chill spot"

Instead of making the need to calm down a negative thing (like a "time out"), we can turn it into a positive by designating a place (or multiple places) where we go to calm down. We can call it a "chill spot" or whatever name sounds good, and it can be our bedroom or a patio chair outside or a comfy sofa in the living room. Talk about it when everyone is calm and explain what the "chill spot" is for. You and your child can share your respective "chill spots." Remember to make it a pleasant spot (not the chair facing the corner in the garage). Maybe even set up some "chill" supplies at the designated spot (a book, colouring, or any other calming activities). The next time you're having a stressful "moment" (if you're like me, it will probably happen within the next day), model going to the chill spot yourself before you ask your child to use it. Before yelling or reacting in sarcasm or anger, just say, "I'm going to my chill spot for a few minutes. I need to calm down." They will learn volumes from your modelling and probably look forward to their "chill spot" opportunities.

2. Go outside for a walk or run

Going outside and getting some exercise are both great ways to calm down. Kids with ADHD who exercise for 10 minutes get more benefits than medication. This is a great activity to do together. I advise no talking for at least 5-10 minutes while walking or running, so that the calming can occur and the brain clears of cortisol and floods with endorphins.

3. Take some deep breaths

I've been learning to breathe this year. When we're upset, we tend to do a kind of shallow breathing that keeps us agitated and anxious. Slowing down our breathing can help our body physiologically calm down, which leads to a calmer mental state. Where the body goes, the mind follows. So, during the stress response caused by a negative situation or interaction, we really need to just breathe deeply for a little while. This can be standing up, sitting down, or lying down. Again, when talking with our kids about how breathing can help us calm down, we can practice together and find the "best position" for ourselves.

4. Count to 10 (or 100)

I do this sometimes in my head (not out loud). Just pausing before responding can help prevent things from coming out of the mouth that we later regret. Teaching our kids this skill can be a life changer.

5. Listen to some soothing music – (not angry music!)

Have a playlist handy on your phone that's your happy/calming music. Have one for your child, too, if they're young, or encourage them to create their own calming playlist

6. Think of something you're grateful for

Any gratitude practice can help you calm down, because you can't hold the two physiological/mental states of anger and gratitude at the same time. If you jot down a note of a few things you're grateful for or pen a thank you letter, you'll feel much more calm after.

7. Look at a funny meme or video

I keep a Pinterest board of funny things (maybe only to me!). Again, if you can laugh you'll offset the negative emotions and be able to calm down. Plus, a hearty belly laugh is just good in general.

8. Hug

This is a simple thing that might be appealing to your child as a way to calm down. Holding them still and breathing with them, while giving a loving hug, can help them calm down.

9. Loosen up

Stretch or do a yoga pose like "child's pose" or, my personal favourite, "corpse." Doing these things can help you breathe and bring a calmness to your body that will reverberate in your mind.

10. Sit quietly and have a drink of water, cup of tea, or piece of fruit

This could be part of going to the chill spot, or it can be its own calming technique. Just sitting quietly and sipping a cup of water is a way to extricate from whatever stressful encounter or situation is at hand. Empower your child to figure out what works best for him/her to calm down. And continue practising together. The valuable life skill of being able to calm down will lead to better relationships and success, at home and at work, throughout your child's life.

