

**Lesson 14:**

**Calm Down: What I Do When I Have BIG Feelings**

**Purpose:** To develop positive ways to cope with escalating feelings, including anger, excitement, and joy.

To give children practice in using a calm-down method.

Fostering Resiliency:

Social Competence		Problem-Solving Skills		Autonomy				
Communication	Caring	Sees different sides/ideas	Ability to think flexibly	Ability to try different solutions	Self-control	Clear sense of separate identity	Self-discipline	Independence
●					●			●

*Activities:*

- **Discussion**
- **Calm-Down Poster**
- **Song: “Calm Down”**
- \* **Family Letter**

*Follow-Up Activities*

## HELPFUL HINTS

### DEALING WITH ANGER

1. When a child is experiencing strong feelings, validate his feelings by letting him know that you can SEE and HEAR that he is angry. Continue listening without judging, questioning, arguing, or evaluating. Identifying feelings with words beyond “good” or “bad” is new for young children. When a child is helped to label his feelings, he may experience the relief of being understood.
2. Uneven, shallow breathing patterns usually accompany anger. Remember, the child will be better able to deal with the situation when his breathing pattern is relaxed and evened out. This may take a little time.
3. When a child is really aggressive and angry, it is often effective to listen actively to the anger, sadness, or hurt by acknowledging it and to label the feeling. (*“I can hear you’re angry because you’re shouting.”*) This will help children learn to identify and put words to the feelings they are experiencing. This may be helpful in reducing acting out behaviors.
4. Honoring a child’s feelings by naming the feeling and empathizing with the situation may help a child understand that feelings are a natural part of daily life.
5. Underlying anger are other feelings such as frustration, rejection, loss, lack of security, and disappointment.
6. An angry child who feels understood, may be open to taking steps towards managing the strong feelings in a safe and healthy manner, such as using the calm-down steps. This works best when the child has learned the steps prior to being in a situation that evokes anger. That way a child can practice what was previously learned.

*Angry Child:* (Ready to throw a block, shouting) *“I want to play!”*

*Teacher:* **“Stop! Put the block down.”** (Teacher assists if necessary.)

*Angry Child:* *“I can play if I want to!”*

*Teacher:* **“You look really angry to me. Being left out is no fun. I know it would make me feel angry and sad.”**

*Child:* *“Yeah!”* (Pause, teacher remains attentive, and gives the child some breathing room.)

*Teacher:* **“I don’t like feeling angry for long, but it’s not always easy to calm down.”**

*Child:* *“I know.”*

*Teacher:* (Teacher practices the calm-down steps with the child.) **“It looks like you’re starting to calm down, is that right?”**

## LESSON 14

### Fostering Resiliency:

#### Calm Down: What I Do When I Have Big Feelings

- Communication
- Self-control
- Self-discipline

#### *Purpose:*

To develop positive ways to cope with escalating feelings, including anger, excitement, and joy.

To give children practice in using a calm-down method.

#### *Materials:*

- \*Calm-Down Poster (in materials kit)
- \*Song: "Calm Down" (CD)
- \*Family Letter

#### *Activities:*

1. **Discussion:**
- a) "We have talked about a lot of different feelings - happy, sad, angry. Today we are going to talk about some more things we can do when we have big feelings - when we are very excited, very happy, or very angry. There are some steps we can take to calm down and handle our feelings."
- b) "Let me tell you a story about some strong feelings I had and what I did. Once when I was a child, a special guest was coming to the class with a big bag which had surprises for all the children! I was so excited, I started to talk fast, and loud, and my voice got high when I talked about the special guest coming. I couldn't sit, (teacher stands and acts out her excitement) I started bouncing on my tiptoes, and I felt myself getting more and more excited. My voice was high, and my breathing was short and jerky. Then I noticed what was happening, and I thought, '*I need to calm myself down and get control of myself.*' I know that excited feeling, and if I don't calm myself down, sometimes I get out of control and hurt myself or someone else by accident. Do you know how I got myself to calm down that day? I used the *Calm-Down Steps* a teacher taught me. Not everybody knows these

***Calm- Down Steps***, but I'm sure glad I do; they have helped me a lot. Would you like to learn them? Okay, stand up, and listen carefully. When you feel yourself getting too excited, or too mad, or too silly, this is what you can do.”

- c) “First we will - ***take three deep breaths-really deep from your nose down to your toes.***” Have the children stand and take a slow, deep breath, (*breathing in through the nose, and slowly blowing out through the mouth*) then another, then a third. Tell them to breathe slowly from the bottom of their toes. Walk around the room to be sure each child is doing it correctly.
- d) “Next let’s -***count to five-*** very slowly. Let’s practice it together.” Count slowly to five. Then put the two steps together: “***Take three deep breaths (in through nose - out through mouth)*** and count slowly to five. If you still need to calm down, take three deep breaths and count to six. If more time is needed take three deep breaths and count to seven.”
- e) “Next we will whisper, -***Calm down-*** to ourselves. Let’s practice that. Now let’s practice all three together.”
- f) “These are the first things we can do to calm down so we will be able to think about what to do next. Sometimes you may want to talk to a grown-up about how you feel once you have calmed down. Sometimes there is not a grown-up to talk to and you might talk to a special friend, even if that friend is imaginary or a stuffed animal or a doll.”

□ 2. **Calm Down Poster:**

Show the class the poster of the three calm-down steps. Go over each step, pointing to the poster. Show them where you will post these steps in the room for them to look at when they need to. You may want to put the poster in Al’s Place as a reminder for the children.

Create example situations where the children (group) can act out being excited, mad, sad... and then have them do the calm-down steps. Use situations from school and home. Refer to the poster as a cue. Have the children lay down flat on their backs as they do the slow, deep breathing and watch how their stomach responds to the breathing.

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

- Place the steps for calming down on the wall in or near Al's Place. Encourage children to go to Al's Place when they need to calm down or be by themselves for a short time. Even though the children cannot read them, they will remember the steps from the lesson and the pictures. Through the day you may have to remind them that Al's Place is an option. Young children may not initiate these relaxation steps on their own at first. But it is important to lay the groundwork and help them benefit from these techniques even if they do not initiate them. It is always helpful for the teacher to model using the calm-down steps for herself. Emphasize that when we have strong feelings, it is usually most helpful to first calm down so we can think of what to do next.

□ 3. **Song: "Let's now learn a calm-down song."**

**Sing: "Calm Down"**

*\*Take three deep breaths  
(3 breaths).*

*Now count to 5:*

*1, 2, 3, 4, 5.*

*Now calm down,  
calm down, calm down.*

*\*Take three deep breaths  
(3 breaths).*

*Now count to 5:*

*1, 2, 3, 4, 5.*

*Now calm down,  
calm down, calm down.*

*\*Take three deep breaths  
(3 breaths).*

*Now count to 5:*

*1, 2, 3, 4, 5.*

*Now calm down,  
calm down, calm down.*

□ 4. **Family Letter:**

Show a copy of the family letter to the children. Read it to them and tell them to bring it home and show it to their families.

*Follow-Up Activities:*

- During the circle time at the beginning of the day, help the class identify times when they might find themselves getting angry or impatient during the day and they might need to use the calm-down steps (e.g., after recess, waiting in line, when they want to play with something someone else is playing with). You might also coach the children when you see them angry or having other big feelings. An example of a conversation might be:

**Teacher:** *“Jamal, it looks like you’re really angry. Let’s try to calm down. First, take a deep breath. Good. Can you take another?”*

**Jamal:** *“She took my toy!”*

**Teacher:** *“How did that make you feel?”*

**Jamal:** *“Mad! I was playing with it.”*

**Teacher:** *“Can you count to five very slowly to help yourself calm down some more?”*

**Teacher:** *“Now tell yourself to calm down.”*

**Jamal:** *“Calm down.”*

**Teacher:** *“Calming down is not always easy. You’ve done a nice job. Now let’s see if you have ideas about what you can do.”*

- **Happy Place:** Tell the children that another way they can deal with big feelings is to imagine a happy place where they feel safe. During art time, you might have the children draw pictures of those places and tell the class where they are. You can put those pictures in Al’s Place and when the children go there, they can find their picture and imagine they are in their Happy Place. This is one way to drain angry feelings, or cope with feeling sad, or handle other escalating feelings.

*Family Letter  
Reminder*

*Please don't forget to send  
a Family Letter home with  
your children today!*