

Calm-Down Corner Complete Setup Kit

Everything You Need to Create a Safe Space

Grades K-5

UM Printables

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1. Teacher Guide: Setting Up Your Calm-Down Corner

A calm-down corner is a designated safe space in the classroom where students can go to self-regulate their emotions before they escalate into disruptive behavior. It is a proactive, trauma-informed tool that teaches emotional intelligence, rather than a punitive 'time-out' area.

Step 1: Choose the Right Location

- Select a semi-private area away from high-traffic zones, but still within your line of sight.
- Ensure it is comfortable but free of overstimulating toys. A soft rug, a bean bag, or a single chair works well.
- Keep the space organized so students can easily find what they need.

Step 2: Stock the Space

- Feeling Posters: Hang these at eye level so students can identify their emotions.
- Coping Strategy & Breathing Cards: Place these on a ring or in a small basket for easy flipping.
- Calm-Down Plan: Have blank templates available for students to fill out once they are calm.
- Sensory Tools (Optional): Stress balls, fidgets, or a small sand timer (2-5 minutes).

Step 3: Teach the Expectations

A calm-down corner only works if students know how and when to use it. Explicitly teach the following routines during a calm whole-class time:

- When to go: When you feel your body getting hot, your heart beating fast, or you feel like you might yell or hit.
- How to go: Walk quietly to the corner. Do not interrupt the teacher or peers.
- What to do: Choose a breathing exercise, pick a coping strategy, and use the timer.
- How to return: When the timer is up and your body feels calm, quietly return to the group. If you still need help, ask the teacher.

Step 4: Practice and Reinforce

Have students role-play using the corner when they are happy and calm. Praise students when they successfully use the space to regulate their emotions. Never use the calm-down corner as a punishment (e.g., 'Go to the calm-down corner because you are being bad'). It should always be presented as a helpful choice.

I Feel Angry

What it feels like in my body:

- My face feels hot or turns red.
- My muscles get tight (clenched fists or jaw).
- My heart beats really fast.
- I feel like I want to stomp my feet.

What it makes me want to do:

- Yell or say mean words.
- Hit, kick, or push others.
- Throw things.
- Crumple up my work.

It is okay to feel angry, but I must:

Use my words to say I am mad, take deep breaths, or walk away to the calm-down corner.

I Feel Sad

What it feels like in my body:

- Tears come to my eyes.
- My body feels heavy and slow.
- I feel like I have no energy.
- My stomach might hurt.

What it makes me want to do:

- Cry or put my head down.
- Want to be alone or hide.
- Not want to talk to my friends.
- Not want to do my work.

It is okay to feel sad, but I must:

Let my teacher or a friend know I am sad, ask for a hug, or draw a picture of my feelings.

I Feel Scared

What it feels like in my body:

- My tummy feels like it has butterflies.
- My breathing gets fast and shallow.
- My hands or legs might shake.
- I feel like I want to run away.

What it makes me want to do:

- Hide or run away.
- Cling to a teacher or parent.
- Refuse to try something new.
- Freeze and not move or talk.

It is okay to feel scared, but I must:

Tell a grown-up I feel scared, hold a comforting object, or try a counting breath.

I Feel Frustrated

What it feels like in my body:

- My face feels scrunched up.
- My jaw is clenched.
- I feel stuck or like I cannot do it.
- I feel like I want to give up.

What it makes me want to do:

- Say 'I can't do this!' or whine.
- Crumple my paper or break my pencil.
- Refuse to keep trying.
- Argue or complain.

It is okay to feel frustrated, but I must:

Ask a teacher or friend for help, take a quick break, or try a different way to solve the problem.

I Feel Overwhelmed

What it feels like in my body:

- My brain feels too full or noisy.
- Everything feels like too much.
- I feel dizzy or confused.
- I want to cover my ears or eyes.

What it makes me want to do:

- Shut down and not do anything.
- Act out because I cannot think straight.
- Cry even when nothing big happened.
- Run away from the work area.

It is okay to feel overwhelmed, but I must:

Walk away to the calm-down corner, close my eyes for a moment, or ask for one direction at a time.

3. Coping Strategy Cards

Print, cut, and laminate these cards. Place them on a binder ring or in a small basket in the calm-down corner so students can easily flip through and choose a strategy.

Count to 10

Slowly count from 1 to 10 in your head. Take your time. If you still feel upset, count backwards from 10 to 1.

Squeeze a Stress Ball

Grab a stress ball and squeeze it as hard as you can for 5 seconds, then let go. Repeat 3 times.

Take a Walk

Ask the teacher if you can take a short, 2-minute walk down the hallway or around the room to reset your body.

Drink Cold Water

Get a drink of cold water. Focus on how the cool water feels going down your throat.