

How To Create A Calm-Down Space For Your Kids

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If you have an emotionally charged and/or anxious child (I have one of each!), then you are familiar with how difficult it can be some days to help them regulate their bodies and emotions.

That's where the calm-down corner enters. My kids can quietly slink away to their designated calming spaces during these times and later reemerge calm, refocused and happy. All thanks to setting them up with their own safe spaces with items that provide them with comfort, meet their sensory needs, and/or help them process difficult emotions.

What Is A Calm-Down Corner?

A calm-down corner is a safe space for kids to go when they need help self-regulating or calming their bodies and emotions. It is meant to be a place for them to relax, recharge or even release their pent-up anger or frustration. It is also a great way for kids with sensory issues to meet their sensory needs.

Picking The Right Space For Your Calm-Down Area

You will want to set up a dedicated space in your house for your child's calm-down area so that they know exactly where to go when they need it.

It should be away from distractions and can be really anywhere you want: in your child's bedroom, in the basement, under the stairs, in a closet, in a corner of a room — wherever you think your child will be the most

comfortable! I also like to make sure the space isn't cluttered, visually or physically, and is away from noisy or high-traffic areas of the house.



When To Use A Calm-Down Corner

Retreating to a calm down space is perfect for when your child is angry, frustrated, anxious, or overwhelmed. Or

even when they are having a tantrum or meltdown.

Watch your child's body and behaviour for signs that they might be overwhelmed and need a break. Those signs may include crying, screaming, hitting themselves or others, or having a meltdown. If you can see that your child is struggling to self-regulate, then simply validate their feelings and emotions and suggest that they enjoy some quiet time in their calm down corner. You can also suggest sitting with them and reading a book or blowing bubbles together as a way to invite them into their assigned space.

The space should feel welcoming and inviting to them. A calm down corner, however, is not designed as a place to send your child for a time out or for punishment so do not force them to use the space in that way.

We also like to use our calm down corner right after school to help the kids unwind and decompress after a long day at school. It's a great way to avoid the after-school attitudes and meltdowns that can occur otherwise.

What To Include In A Calm-Down Corner

When it comes to deciding what to include in your child's calm-down area, you want to include objects that your child finds comforting, engaging and calming. You also want to offer a variety of sensory items to help your child's body get the sensory input it needs to self regulate. Since each child is

different, each calm-down corner will be different. So keep their interests in mind when setting up the space.

Here's a list of things that you might want to include in your child's calm down space (please note that this list is not exhaustive by any means):

- a comfy place to sit like a bean bag chair, some pillows or a play tent
- fidget toys to spin, twist and manipulate
- noise-reducing headphones to block out sounds that are overwhelming
- chewy jewelry and toys to help kids get calming oral motor and proprioceptive sensory input
- stress balls to squeeze
- a favourite stuffed animal to hug
- something visual like a sensory bottle, kaleidoscope or even a string of Christmas lights hung up on the wall
- engaging one-person activities like activity books, individual board games (my son's personal favourite is the Rush Hour game), building blocks, doodling or journaling, etc.
- a bottle of bubbles or a bubble machine

Just remember to tailor the space to your child's needs and preferences! Each space should be unique.