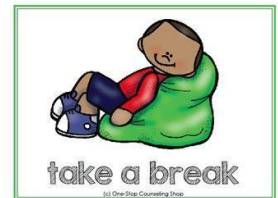




Calming Corner 101



Creating a Calming Corner is a great addition to any primary classroom. This is a safe designated space where children can regulate their emotions and provide an opportunity and an outlet for the chance to calm themselves down. We are all aware that children could have really big emotions that can quickly escalate into a tantrum or meltdown. This article will touch base on one preventative strategy that you could design and teach to allow children to calm themselves in a more appropriate way.

1 ~ Where Do I Start?

Find an appropriate location that could work in your environment.

- Private area; my recommendation is to stay away from the front of the classroom or where it is in direct eyesight of many students.
- Can be as simple as a rug/soft mat (to set a visual boundary) and a few books with a beanbag/chair/pillows, sensory toys, etc.

2 ~ Teaching Expectations and Limits

Being able to self-calm when emotions run high – or self-regulate – is a learned skill. It needs to be directly taught and students need to be allowed time to practice that skill.

- Model, model, model! Model various aspects of the calming corner including how students should transition there, how to use EACH item you have there, and how to transition back to class.
- Make sure to set limits including the time allowed to spend in this space. I always include a timer in my calming corner.
- Another important limit or expectation is to make it clear (in a caring way) that a student is still responsible for the work they are missing while in the calming corner. This is not an area to escape from work, but to allow you to regain your focus and take a brief break when emotions are running high so that students can be successful in completing their jobs.

3 ~ When Should You Use a Calming Corner?

Prior to escalation of behavior

- A calming corner is supposed to be an inviting and safe space for a student to enter when they feel disregulated.
- You will recognize warning signs for each individual child. Some of these signs may include: a clenched jaw, banging their books or items around, throwing items, scowl, head down, or work refusal to name just a few.

Over-stimulation

- A calming corner IS NOT a timeout area. It should not be used as a means of punishment or punitive exclusion from the activities of the classroom.
- When a child is overstimulated or super excited and needs to calm down, the calming area is a great opportunity for them to regain their composure BEFORE possibly getting into trouble.

Student Choice

- After explicit and direct instruction of how to utilize the space, time limits, and expectations; student choice is a great opportunity for independence.
- Many adults may have a hard time with this thought at first. Trust me, I understand completely. Some students may attempt to use the calming area to think they are escaping the task or work. This is why it is very important to include the explanation that the calming corner is to be used to help students be ready to complete work, and that successful work completion is the goal.
- In time, when a student is requesting to use this space, accept it, and embrace it! It is showing that your teaching of self-regulation skills is working and the student is identifying that they may need the space to either refocus or calm themselves down. Even if they are not physically showing any signs that you may see, please allow them to do so. The novelty will wear off if you are worried about them abusing the option!

4 ~ What to Include in Your Calming Corner?

There are so many amazing items that are out there to think about including in your calming area. You know your student(s) best and this will depict what you may need to include in your area to make it safe, inviting, and comfortable.

- Furniture

- Bean Bags
- Chair
- Pillows
- Rug or mat to set visual boundary

- Activities for calming

(Only keep a few and consider rotating in and out to keep them novel. EACH ITEM must be EXPLICITLY taught how you expect it to be used)

- Drawing Materials (Magna doodles are good)
- Journal or extra paper for writing
- Sensory Items
- Quiet, small, safe Fidget Toys
- Play Dough/Thera-putty
- Books
- Posters (purposeful/meaningful)
- Nature Scenes/Animal Pictures (Dollar Tree Calendars are great for these!)
- Small jigsaw puzzles
- Visual timer (Digital or sand)
- Can incorporate breathing exercises, steps to take to calm down, list of activities/expectations
- Glitter Jar/Bottle

(This was one of my favorite activities I completed with my students when I was an Emotional Support Teacher. Each of my students made their own sensory glitter bottle and were taught how and when to use it.)

5 ~ Don't Fully Rely on This Space Alone!

However amazing your calming space, unfortunately, it will not help students just being part of your room or space alone. Remember, you will have to teach the expectations and how to use the space appropriately.

- Be consistent! Consistency is also a teaching tool for students to know the expectations of the space. By staying consistent, children will know and catch learn how to utilize the space properly.
- Teach elements of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) daily.
 - Let's face it, our schedules are jammed packed with academics, standards, and more and more administrative expectations. However, many of these SEL activities pair very well with academics.
 - Discuss the emotions of characters in the stories you read. Along with conversations about emotions you can include regulation strategies of how the character can self-regulate.
 - Include dialogue, group conversations, books, scenarios of appropriate social interactions. Sharing, turn-taking, conversation skills, etc.

Example Calming Corner Photos:

