

National Stress Awareness Day: Calming Activities for Kids

Infants (0–12 months)

1) Calm Swirl Sensory Bottle

How to do it:

- Make a sealed bottle (water + glitter glue + a few large floating shapes).
 - During tummy time or holding time, slowly roll it left/right.
 - Say soft words: “Slow...swirl...calm.”
-

2) “Breathe With Me” Rocking Rhythm

How to do it:

- Hold baby safely and rock slowly.
- Breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 3 seconds.
- Hum or quietly repeat: “In...out...safe.”

Tip: Your calm breathing helps baby’s nervous system settle.

3) Soft Touch + Name the Feeling

How to do it:

- Use gentle touch (back pats, hand on tummy if appropriate).



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Licensed Under [CCBY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- Narrate: “That was loud. You’re safe. I’m here.”
 - Offer a comfort item (pacifier, lovey, blanket if allowed).
-

Toddlers (1–2 years)

1) Balloon Belly Breathing

How to do it:

- Put hands on belly: “Fill the balloon...now let it out.”
 - Try 3 slow breaths.
 - Praise effort: “You calmed your body!”
-

2) Animal Calm Walks

How to do it:

- Choose an animal and move slowly:
 - **Turtle walk** (slow steps)
 - **Cat stretch** (reach up, reach down)
 - **Butterfly arms** (cross arms and tap shoulders)
 - Do one animal for 30–60 seconds.
-

3) Calm-Down Basket

How to do it:

Offer 2 choices:



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Licensed Under [CCBY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- squeeze ball
- soft fabric scrap
- board book
- sensory bottle (sealed)
- stuffed animal

Say: “Your body looks upset. Pick a calm tool.”

Preschool (3–5 years)

1) Five-Finger Breathing

How to do it:

- Trace one hand with one finger.
- **Up the finger = breathe in, down = breathe out.**
- Repeat for 5 fingers.

Tip: Pair with words: “Smell the flower...blow the candle.”

2) Tense and Relax Game (Lemon Squeeze)

How to do it:

- “Squeeze your hands like you’re squeezing lemons...hold...hold...”
- “Now drop your hands and relax.”



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Licensed Under [CCBY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- Repeat 2–3 times, then shake out arms.
-

3) Feelings + Tool Match

How to do it:

- Show 3 feelings cards (sad, mad, worried).
- Ask: “What tool helps?”
Tools can be:
 - breathe
 - hug a pillow
 - calm corner
 - ask for help
 - drink water

Tip: Practice when calm so kids can use it when upset.

School-Age (6+ years)

1) Box Breathing (Square Breathing)

How to do it:

Draw a square in the air:

- Inhale 4
- Hold 4



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Licensed Under [CCBY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- Exhale 4
- Hold 4
Repeat 2 times.

Tip: Let kids choose 3-count breathing if 4 feels hard.

2) Grounding: “5–4–3–2–1 Senses”

How to do it:

Name:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste (or 1 slow breath)

Great for worry, overwhelm, or transitions.

3) Stress-to-Strength Journal Quickie (2 minutes)

How to do it:

Kids write:

- “Right now I feel...”
- “My body feels...”
- “One tool I can use is...”



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Licensed Under [CCBY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

- “One thing I can do next is...”

Tip: Offer drawing as an option for reluctant writers.

Easy Classroom Supports (Work for All Ages)

- Predictable routines and visual schedules
 - Transition warnings (“2 more minutes, then clean up”)
 - Calm corner with 3–5 tools (not a punishment)
 - Quiet music or dim lighting during reset times
 - Choice language: “Do you want to sit or stand?” “This table or that table?”
-

Quick “Calm Corner” Starter List

- sealed sensory bottle
- feelings chart
- breathing card/poster
- soft item (pillow/beanbag if allowed)
- fidget (age-appropriate)
- books about feelings



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Licensed Under [CCBY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)