



Creating a Calm Zone at home

A calm zone or corner can be used to support your child to regulate during difficult times, such as after returning from school (or other difficult transition) or other challenging experiences.

- **FIND A ZONE**

Find a zone that is quiet and not too busy. It could be a corner in a room, or it could be an area in their own bedroom. Figure out what's going to work best for you and your family.

- **USE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE TO DEFINE THE ZONE AND MAKE IT COSY**

Start with creating a way to mark out the zone. Here are a few ideas:

- a child's tent
- rod with a curtain
- Hang a hook from the ceiling and attach a canopy.
- lay out a blanket or mat.

Next, focus on making the space cosy. Add some pillows or extra blankets, and a few stuffed animals in there.

- **ADD SOME CALMING TOOLS**

Create a calm down toolbox for your child to use in times of stress and frustration. Get a box or a basket, and put in items that will calm them. Some common items that help are stress balls, play dough, a book they like, or a toy that they enjoy playing with quietly.

The following should be considered according to the specific sensory needs and preferences of the individual. (Not all items would be advised or necessary within the zone)

1. Therapy ball/gym ball: available from sports shops. Bouncing or rocking on a therapy ball is very calming. Some students may also like to lie on the floor while you roll the ball over their back using firm pressure.
2. Soft comfortable seating such as a bean bag or large pillows, a quilt or blanket to wrap up in for deep pressure input.
3. Music: Access to an iPod or headphones linked to a CD player/computer will calm some.
4. Weights/resistance items: Lifting weights (e.g. a small set of dumbbells) or using resistance equipment (e.g. lycra bands) provides deep input to the muscles which is often calming. Sports shops will see such items (e.g. Decathlon). Ask for advice on appropriate items for your students, and ensure the weights aren't too heavy!
5. A box of fidget toys or stress balls.
6. Relaxing visual stimuli such as a lava lamp or bubble tube lighting.

Make coping skills cue cards so that your child can have a visual reminder of what calms and relaxes them. Include that in the box too.

- **EXPLAIN AND PRACTICE**

Your child will need an explanation of what a calm zone is and how to use it. Show them where the zone is and explain to them that this is a place they can go when they need a break or need to calm down when they get upset or frustrated. A social script will help to reinforce this and support processing and understanding.

Let them add in their own specific items like a special blanket or a special cuddly toy. You want them to feel as cosy and comfortable as possible in this space.

When they are in a calm frame of mind, have them go into the zone and see how it looks and feels. It's always best to practice using these strategies before a crisis arises.

- **USE THE ZONE THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

Use the calm area proactively throughout the day, don't wait for your child to be distressed or frustrated. The idea of the area is that your child will use often and prevent periods of frustration.



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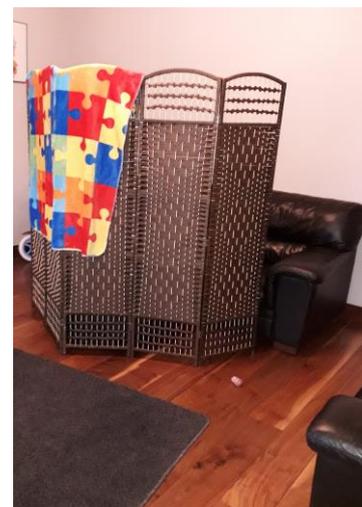


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