

FREE FOR PARENTS

The Toddler Meltdown Rescue Kit

What to do, and what to say, when big feelings hit.

For parents of little ones, ages 2 to 5

WHAT'S INSIDE

- ★ What to say instead of "calm down"
- ★ Your 4-step meltdown reset
- ★ Calm-down cards to print and cut
- ★ A gentle "how big is my feeling?" scale

What to say when big feelings hit

The words that help, when "calm down" never does.

In a meltdown a child can't think their way calm, they feel their way there, with you. These small swaps trade the words that add heat for words that help them settle.

INSTEAD OF

"Calm down!"

TRY SAYING

"I'm right here. I've got you."

INSTEAD OF

"Stop crying."

TRY SAYING

"It's okay to let it out. I'll stay with you."

INSTEAD OF

"You're okay."

TRY SAYING

"That felt really big, didn't it?"

INSTEAD OF

"There's nothing to cry about."

TRY SAYING

"You really wanted that. That's hard."

INSTEAD OF

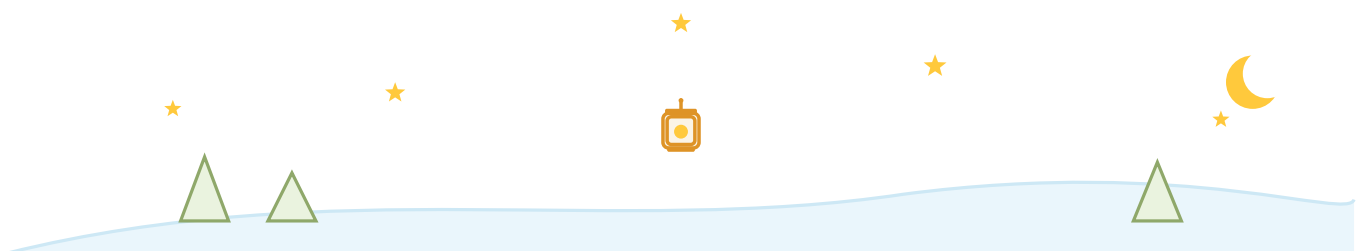
"Big kids don't cry."

TRY SAYING

"Even grown-ups get big feelings."

Say it low and slow, and get down to their level. Your calm is contagious, that is the real magic. You are not spoiling them by comforting them, you are teaching them that big feelings are safe with you.

Every child and every family is different, keep what suits yours. These are gentle, screen-free calm ideas to enjoy together, not medical, therapeutic, or behaviour advice.



Your 4-step meltdown reset

A simple path through the storm, for you and for them.

You don't have to fix the feeling. You just have to stay steady while it passes. Here is the order that works.

1 Get low and close.

Come down to their level. A calm grown-up nearby settles a little nervous system faster than any words can.

2 Name the feeling out loud.

"You're so cross the tower fell." Naming it tells them the feeling makes sense, and simply naming it begins to shrink it.

3 Offer comfort, not fixes.

A cuddle, a breath together, a quiet spot. The lesson and the tidy-up can wait, the feeling comes first.

4 Wait it out, together.

Big feelings always pass. Stay near, stay soft, and let the wave roll through without adding to it.

Grounded in current thinking on co-regulation: children learn to settle big feelings with a calm grown-up first, and on their own in time.

Set up a calm corner at home in 10 minutes

1. Pick the spot, a quiet, low-traffic corner they can reach.
2. Add one soft thing, a cushion or beanbag and a soft toy.
3. Put the feelings scale (page 5) up at their height.
4. Cut out the calm-down cards (page 4) into a little basket.
5. Name it together and try one calm move while everyone is settled.

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Six calm-down cards

Print, cut, and pop them in your calm corner.

Picture-led ideas your little one can reach for. Read them together until they are familiar. Print on card and laminate for repeat use.



Belly Breaths

Hand on your tummy. Breathe in slowly... and out, even slower. Three times.



Count to Ten

Count slowly to ten. Whisper it, or count on your fingers.



A Sip of Water

Take one slow sip of water. Notice how cool it feels.



Look Out the Window

Find three things you can see outside. Tell me about one.



Squeeze & Soften

Squeeze your hands tight... then let them go soft. Like a slow hug.



A Big Hug

Ask for a hug, or hug your soft toy tight. Feel your breath slow down.

How big is my feeling?

A gentle way to notice a feeling, not a behaviour chart.

Every feeling is okay to have. This helps your little one notice how big a feeling is, and what might gently help. Point to it together.

A little feeling

a small wave, a bit cross, a bit wobbly

What might help: **a breath, or a sip of water**

A medium feeling

a bigger wave, harder to settle on your own

What might help: **the calm corner, count to ten**

A big feeling

a huge wave, that is okay, it always passes

What might help: **find a grown-up, breathe together**

★ You are doing a lovely job. Truly.

If these helped, the full Calm Down Corner Kit adds a five-senses calm sheet, I-need-a-break cards and a my-calm-plan, six gentle pages in all. Have a browse when you have a quiet minute.

Browse the shop: lanternpathbooks.com

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