

## How to Make a Calming Area

Remaining calm becomes difficult when people are flooded with emotions or stimuli. Calming down corners provide a safe place to relax and process upsetting events. While self-calming skills are useful for people who have autism, sensory issues, anxiety, or anger challenges, all children can benefit from the ability to take a break.



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### Part 1: Creating the Corner

- 1.** Set aside a corner in the building. Pick a place that will be quiet, with little activity from people passing through. Barriers (walls, plants, furniture) that block off parts of the room are especially helpful.
- 2.** Make the area comfortable. Pillows, blankets, weighted snakes, stuffed animals, beanbag chairs, and soft rugs all make the place feel more relaxing.
- 3.** Find ways to minimize sensory input. Try a radio with a white noise CD, sound cancelling headphones, chairs with large backs to block the view, curtains, and other ways to isolate the corner.
  - Some people like to curl up underneath or behind objects. Try creating a makeshift tent or using furniture in unconventional ways.

**4.** Add a few sensory tools. This could involve...

- Audio: a radio with soothing nature sounds or instrumental music
- Visual: drawings with the user's favourite colour, snow globes, photo albums, blankets/pillows in calming colours
- Tactile: fidget toys with various textures, and soft stuffed animals or pillows
- Olfactory/Gustatory: lollipops, hard candies, candles, sweet-smelling lotions or soaps, chewy toys or jewelry
- Proprioceptive: weighted snakes, beanbags, deep pressure, brushes.



Part 2: Teaching Children to Use the Corner

**1.** Take the child aside and show them the corner. Explain that this corner is a place you put together just for them, and that it is there for them whenever they are feeling overwhelmed or upset. Make it clear that they can go there whenever they want.

**2.** Accustom the children to the idea of the corner. Depending on the individual child, it may take time for them to understand the concept. Here are some ways to help the children understand:

- Allow the children to explore the corner when they are feeling calm. Keep it open-ended and let them play with the toys.
- Talk about self-regulation with the children. Explain that going to the corner can help them feel better.
- Use social stories to demonstrate correct use of the corner.
- Teach the children calming strategies (e.g., breathing techniques, and/or mindfulness exercises).

**3.** When the child appears upset or overwhelmed, quietly ask if they would like to use the calming down corner. If the child says yes, lead them to it. Once the child is accustomed to the corner, they will usually agree to go if they are upset or even decide on their own that they need to use it.

- Remember that the calming down corner is not a time-out or punishment, but a voluntary opportunity to take a break and calm down.

**4.** When the child is in the corner, give them quiet time. Avoid talking to them or making noise nearby. Leave the area and supervise from a distance. If background noise can't be avoided, turn up the white noise in the corner or offer the child noise cancelling headphones.

**5.** Let the child leave the corner when they are ready. Congratulate them on using the corner so calmly and ask if they are feeling better now. Then talk about any problems that preceded the incident and resume the day.