

# Calm Down Strategies

*Almost any practice can be a calm down strategy if it's appropriate, safe, and successful in calming a person down! This list is by no means comprehensive, but may be a good place to start. Asking children what already works for them when they are feeling strong emotions is also a great way to find out what kinds of activities help them feel calm. It's important that the strategy be the child's choice, or else it can feel like a punishment.*

## Walk away

- This one is great to use in combination with another strategy. Walk away before you say or do anything that might hurt others, and then use a different strategy to get yourself calm.

## Physical

- Breathing... in through the nose, out through the mouth is a helpful one to get kids to slow their breathing down.
  - See the pages below for more great breathing activities!
- Shoulder rolls
- Stretches
- Muscle tense and relax
  - Starting with the feet, tense muscles, breathe in, hold for a few seconds, and relax the muscles and breathe out
  - Repeat with muscle groups going up the body.
- Exercise- run/walk/push ups/jumping jacks

## Sensory

- Squeeze a stress ball/fidget
- Listen to music
- Squeeze clay or play-dough
- Visual aids such as looking at a timer, a bubble motion timer, making your own calm down jar
  - [Calm Down Jar Instructions](https://preschoolinspirations.com/6-ways-to-make-a-calm-down-jar/) <https://preschoolinspirations.com/6-ways-to-make-a-calm-down-jar/>
  - - basically, you take a plastic water bottle, put glitter, water and food coloring in it, and then seal the lid tight with hot glue or anything to prevent it from leaking. When you tip the bottle upside, the glitter will slowly fall or rise to the opposite side of the bottle.
- Yell into a pillow
- Cuddle a pet
- Give a hug or a high five

## Talking

- From [Dr. Michelle Borba: http://micheleborba.com/7-sure-fire-solutions-to-help-kids-control-their-anger/](http://micheleborba.com/7-sure-fire-solutions-to-help-kids-control-their-anger/)

### **Develop a feeling vocabulary**

Many kids display aggression such as kicking, screaming, hitting, biting because they simply don't know how to express their frustrations any other way. They need an emotional vocabulary to express how they feel, and you can help your kid develop one. Here are a few words to start with: angry, upset, mad, frustrated, agitated, furious, apprehensive, tense, nervous, anxious, irritated, furious, ticked off, irate. Once your child learns emotion words, encourage him to "talk out his anger."

Beware: Your child might yell, "I'm really angry!" Or blurt out: "You make me so mad." Do *not* discipline him. It's exactly what you want him to do so he learns to express his anger instead of lashing out or holding the anger in.

## Thinking/Imagination Strategies

- Counting to 5, 10, 30 etc.
- Positive self-talk-- something you can tell yourself when you start feeling mad. "I can calm down" or "I can control myself" might be helpful here.
- Imagine a calm/happy place or think about an upcoming exciting event (a lot of kids like to think about their next birthday or holiday)

# Trace and Breathe



Breathe **in** through your **nose**...

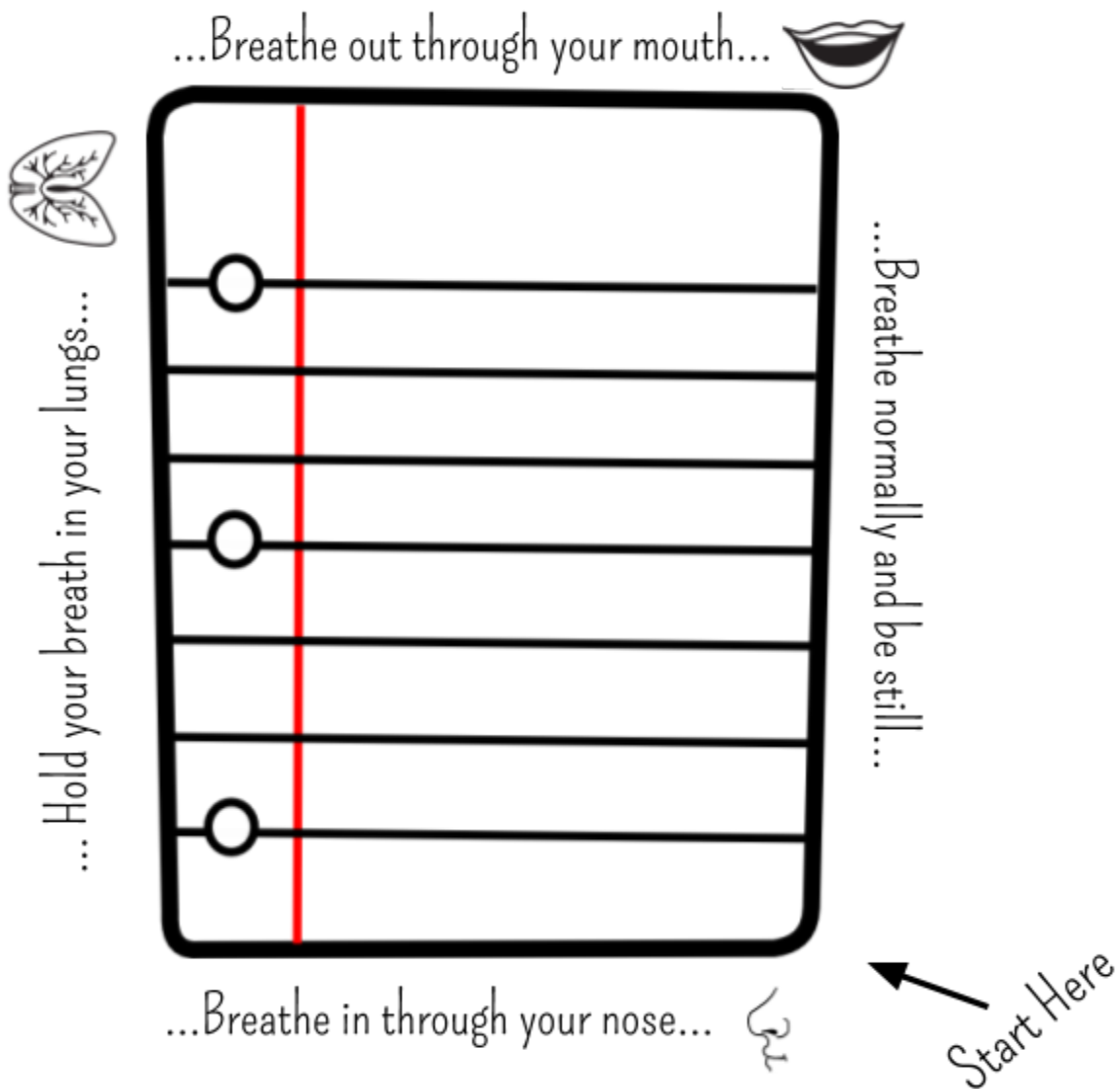


Breathe **out** through your **mouth**...



# Four Corners Breathing

Find a square or a rectangle. Start in the bottom right. Trace with your eyes or your finger. Follow the steps below.



# Big Belly Breaths

Step 1: Find a comfortable position. If sitting be sure to sit up straight so that your spine is not curved. If laying on the ground lay on your back.

Step 2: Put your hands on your belly. Take a moment to feel your breath as your belly naturally goes in and out.

Step 3: Now slowly breathe-in through your nose as you count to four in your head. You should feel your lungs fill with air and push up.

Step 4: Hold the air as you slowly count to four again.

Step 5: Slowly let the air out through your mouth and count to four again. You should feel your lungs move down as the air leaves your body.

# Big Belly Breaths

