

Social and Emotional Connections

April 2018

Center for Creative Learning

During our second year, the CCL Character Education Committee is continuing to focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL). We are infusing SEL into our daily curriculum and interactions with students at the Center for Creative Learning. In order to build strong connections between home and school, this monthly newsletter contains activities and ideas you can try at home to promote social and emotional growth with your children.

Share your experiences with these activities and we will feature what you are doing at home in the next month's newsletter. Pictures and stories are great!



If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact:

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When “Calm Down” Doesn’t Work



Regulating emotions can be difficult for any child, those with more of a natural inclination toward intensity can have an especially difficult time.

When your child starts to scream or flail their arms, a natural response is to say “calm down”. The word calm implies not showing or feeling nervousness, anger, frustration, or other emotions. Helping kids calm down is wonderful, teaching them the tools so that they can achieve calm on their own is even better, but simply telling them to “calm down” isn’t teaching them anything. It’s saying, “you are not allowed to experience anger or other emotions at the moment, stop.” Following a step by step plan allows a child to experience emotions while teaching them how to regulate the behaviors that coincide with the emotions.

A Plan of Action to Calm Down in 5 Steps:

1. Acknowledge the feeling and name it. “I see you are mad.”
2. Stop any disruptive or destructive behavior. “Close the door gently please.”
3. Offer an alternative. “Take three deep breaths.” “Count to ten.”
4. Encourage communication. “Do you want to tell me why that made you so mad?”
5. Plan for next time. “How can we make it better next time?” or “If that happens again, what can you do instead of throwing something?”

According to behavioral therapists, if you want a child to change their behavior, it helps to have an alternate behavior to replace the negative behavior. Tell a child what you want them to do rather than what not to do. A basic example of this is when a toddler hits, to say “keep your hands to yourself” rather than “no hitting”. Why? Because by telling a child exactly what you want of them, there isn’t any assuming, figuring, or processing of language that needs to take place before the action. Saying “calm down”, requires a lot of language processing in addition to the prerequisite knowledge of how to physically achieve calm.

Alternatives to the phrase “calm down”:

1. I see that you are having a difficult time, let me help you.
2. Take a deep breath. I'll breathe with you.
3. That can be so frustrating, let's figure this out together.
4. I see that you are so mad, how does that feel in your body?
5. Count to 10.
6. Do you want to squeeze my hand?
7. Would you like a hug?
8. Tell me about it.
9. Use an indoor voice.
10. Let's take a short walk.
11. Your face is red, try taking a breath to help your heart slow down.
12. I hear what you are saying but I don't like to be yelled at. Can you say that in a quieter voice?
13. If you are feeling sad, you can tell me about it.

Some of these might actually seem difficult to use, and might take more patience to get out than the trusted “calm down”. But, in practicing this, it will become second nature and in the end, you will all benefit. It's not always easy, and there will be times that you will want to yell “CALM DOWN!” But just keep in mind that by helping your child work through some of the more difficult times, you are giving them the confidence to express themselves, and teaching them how to be able to deal with these situations when they aren't with you.



This month's information comes from an article that can be found on page 4 of the newsletter at the following links.

<http://themommyview.viewsfromastepstool.com/index.php/2016/07/06/saying-calm-down-doesnt-actually-work/>
<http://themommyview.viewsfromastepstool.com/index.php/2016/04/10/tips-calming-angry-child-plus-8-calming-tools-anywhere/>