

AAIS

Creating a Calm Box



What is a Calm Box?

A Calm Box is a valuable and inexpensive resource created easily using a variety of everyday items. It is individualised to include items calming for the young person to use and based on the child's needs and preferences.

At times, certain situations may lead to a build-up of anxiety that can result in emotional outbursts and occasional behaviour of concern or inappropriate responses. Whenever a child feels overwhelmed with an intense emotion such as anger or frustration, they can utilize the Calm Box to assist with emotional regulation.

Emotional regulation is a developmental process and should be viewed as a continuum with varying emotional states ranging from well-regulated to extreme dysregulation. If dysregulated the child may find it challenging to separate their emotional response from the thought process required to reach a satisfactory resolution to a social situation that may have caused confusion or anxiety. A well-regulated child is more likely to be receptive to a learning environment and better equipped to work through big emotions more effectively.

The goal of using a Calm Box is to have it ready for use before the child experiences extreme emotions. Enabling children to practise using the kit during calmer times means that both you and your child will be able to identify which objects are of most value during times of distress or uncertainty. It is also important to recognize that every child is different so resources that may work for one child may not necessarily be as effective for another child.

Within this booklet, you will find some ideas on what may be useful in the creation of your own Calm Box; these can be adapted to ensure they are both age appropriate and individualized.



Possible ideas to include in a Calm Box

Bottle of Bubbles



Sensory input ideas



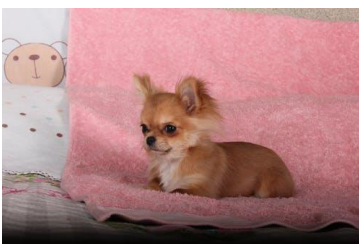
Weighted vest/blanket
(DIY can be just as effective!)



Headphones



Photo of a favourite pet



Colouring pencils



Stretching/Yoga poses



Mindfulness/
meditation ideas



Timers



Favourite cartoon figure



Fidget toys



Play-Doh or Blu tack



Emotions Chart/
social stories



Car Air Fresheners



Favourite comic or book



Mindfulness Colouring



Fidget Toys

There are a range of fidget toys available to purchase that may assist in alleviating stress. Some suggestions are included below:



Tangle toys



Fidget Spinners



Therapeutic Putty



Pipe Cleaners



Stress Balls



Fidget Cubes

Sensory Input Ideas

Lego Calm Bottle

To make this, you will need:

- Clear hair gel
- Warm water
- A tall bottle
- LEGO bricks
- Fine glitter
- Glue or tape to secure lid (optional)

Method:

1. Combine one part hair gel to six parts warm water. Leave to cool completely and settle.
2. Pour most of the gel/water mix into the bottle.
3. Add a little fine glitter and your LEGO bricks. Push the bricks below the surface to remove any air bubbles.
4. Fill the bottle right to the very top with the remaining mixture.
5. Put on the lid, shake vigorously and test your bottle. If the bricks fall too slowly, empty the mixture back into a bowl and add a little more warm water. Let cool again and re-test. If the bricks fall too quickly, mix in a little more hair gel. Let settle and re-test.
6. Once you are happy with the flow of your sensory bottle, secure the lid – a waterproof glue or wide, clear packaging tape should assist.



Colour Change Bottle

To make this, you will need:

- Bottles
- Water
- Jugs
- Baby oil (or another clear oil)
- Water-based food colouring
- Oil-based food colouring
- Spoon or mixer
- Super glue

Method:

1. Pour some water into the bottle until it reaches the halfway point.
2. Add a few drops of water-based food colouring to the water. Then put the lid onto the bottle and shake it to mix the colour into the water.
3. Pour some baby oil into a jug, then add a few drops of oil-based food colouring. Always use contrasting colours for the best effect.
4. Use a mixer to mix colour into the oil.
5. Carefully pour the coloured oil into the bottle (use a small funnel if you need to), on top of the water. It will sit on top of the water until the bottle is shaken.
6. When the contents settle, seal the lid on to the bottle with strong glue or a hot glue gun to prevent leakage when shaken.



Super Easy Play Dough Recipe

To make this, you will need:

- 2 cups plain flour (all purpose)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (baby oil and coconut oil work too)
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 1 to 1.5 cups boiling water (add gradually until it feels just right)
- food colouring
- Few drops glycerine (adds stretch and shine!)
- A few drops of lavender, peppermint or lemon etc (if you want a scented dough)

Method:

1. Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl.
2. Add food colouring TO the boiling water then into the dry ingredients.
3. Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough.
4. Add the glycerine (optional).
5. Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until all of the stickiness has gone.

** This is the most important part of the process, so keep at it until it is the perfect consistency!**

6. If it is still a little sticky then add a bit more flour until it is just right.



Fidget Spinner

To make this, you will need:

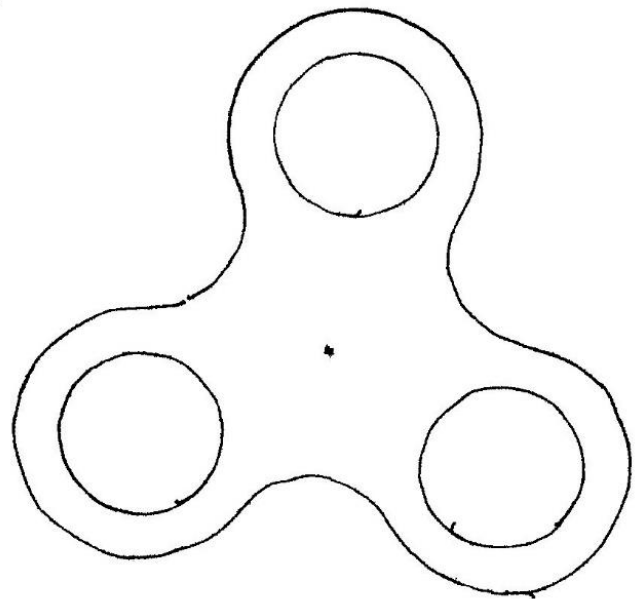
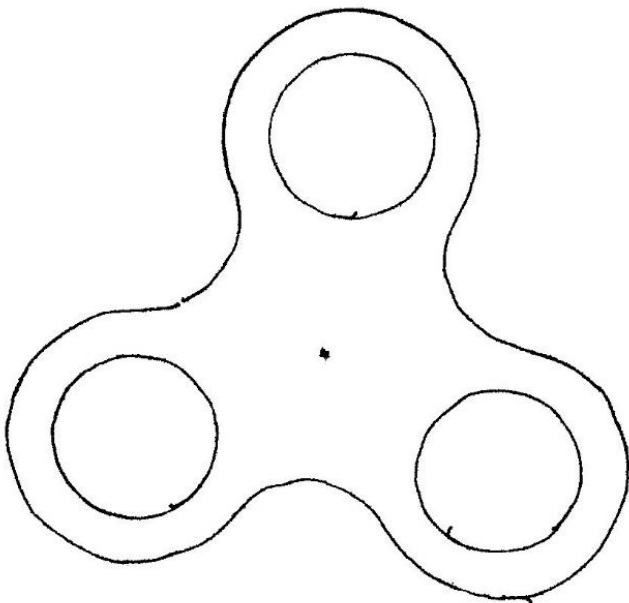
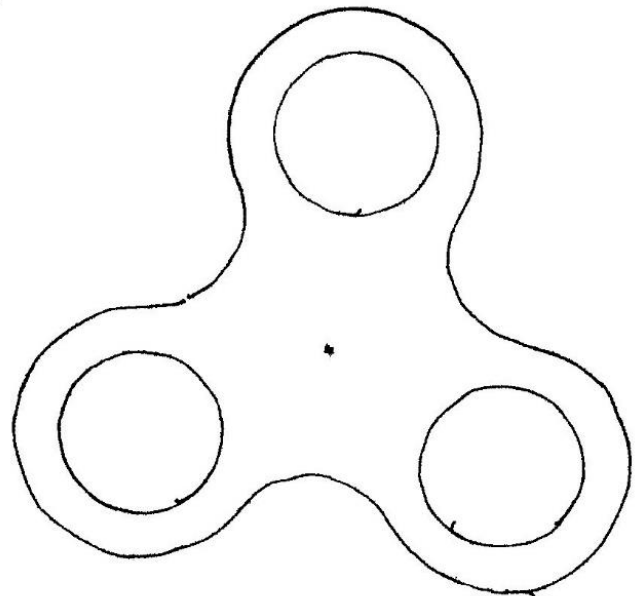
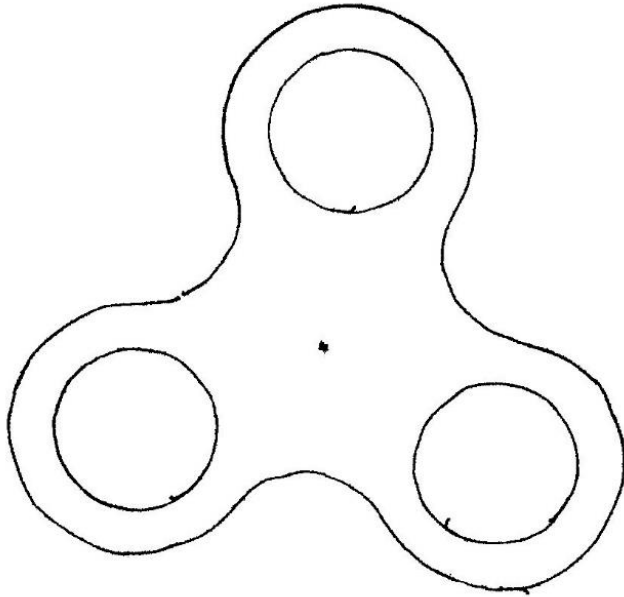
- Cardboard (any card will do, if it is a bit thin glue two layers together)
- 3 x coins - 1p or 5p (you can replace these
- With buttons but they need to be heavy)
- Strong glue or strong glue dots (to avoid mess!)
- A pin
- Scissors

Method:

1. Cut out the template.
2. Trace onto your cardboard – you can use an old cereal packet but you will need two layers glued together) Then cut it out.
3. Now you can decorate it whatever way you want.
4. Use your template to help locate the centre of your fidget spinner and make a hole with a pin.
5. Using small scissors, make the hole bigger – until your toothpick fits in comfortably and loosely.
6. Test the spin. If it keeps getting stuck, make the hole a little bigger.
7. Now cut out 2-4 cardboard discs (if using cereal box cardboard you will need 4 in total, glue two together).
8. Again take your pin and make a small hole. Use your toothpick to widen that hole, so the toothpick fits in tightly.
9. Glue the first disc to the end of your toothpick.
10. Insert the toothpick into your fidget spinner. Take your second disc and slide down the other side of the toothpick and glue in place.
11. Snip off any protruding toothpick.



TEMPLATES



Stress Balls

To make these, you will need:

- Balloons
- Bicarbonate of soda
- Hair conditioner
- Spoon
- Bowl
- Scissors
- Funnel (made from a plastic bottle)
- Dry wipe markers

Method:

1. Mix 2 cups of bicarbonate of soda with about one half of a cup of hair conditioner. (You can add more conditioner to make them more squishy or less to make them more firm.)
2. Once it is mixed together, cut off the top end of a plastic bottle to make a funnel.
3. Attach the balloon to the bottle opening and fill it with your stress ball mixture.
4. Once the balloon is full, make sure you do not have any air bubbles and then tie it closed.
5. Wipe your balloon clean, and then it is time to decorate!
6. Tip: Most ordinary/permanent markers will smear and smudge...a dry wipe marker works best.



Mindfulness/Meditation

There are many online resources and apps widely available; most of which are free to use. Please see below some apps/websites that may be helpful to have downloaded on a device to be accessed readily by the child.



Autism NI Anxiety Resource Pack -

<http://autismni.org/anxiety-resource-pack.html>

Autism NI have created an 'Anxiety Resource Pack' which includes a Body Outline chart, the 5 Point Scale, the Sticky Slimy Thoughts chart and a list of coping tools that individuals can choose.

Stop, Breathe and Think –

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>

Guided meditations, breathing exercises and mindfulness.



Headspace for Kids-

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>

Meditation for Kids.

Chill Panda –

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/chill-panda/>

Uses the camera on your mobile to detect your heart rate and provides relaxation and calming exercises.



Calm –

<https://www.calm.com>

Strategies for sleep, meditation and relaxation.

Smiling Mind -

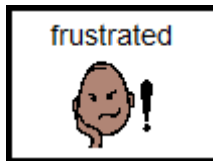
<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

Meditation program.

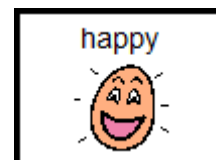
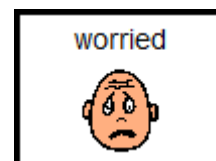


Emotions Chart/ Breathing

How do I feel?



How others feel?

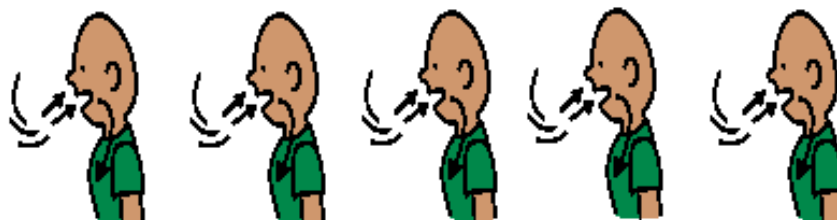


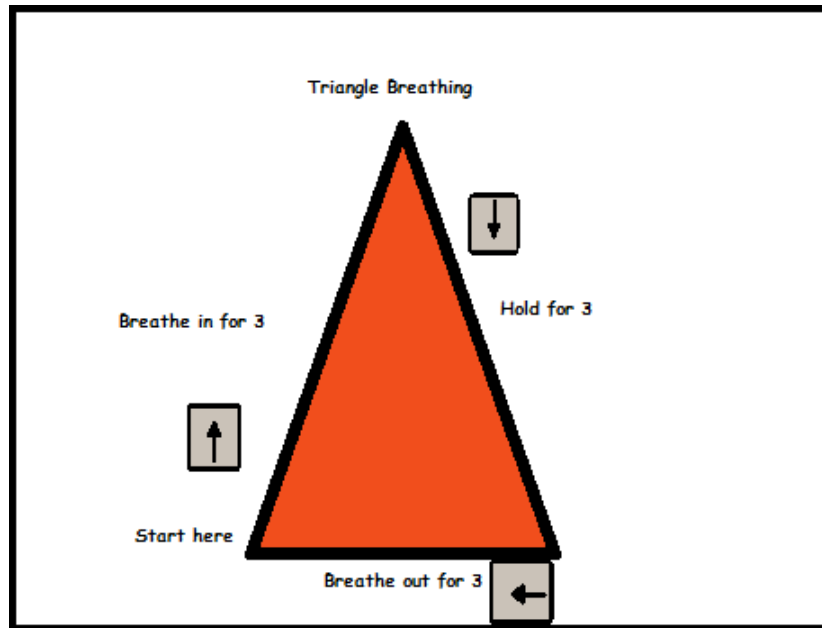
What can I do?

I can go to my calm box and use something in it that will help me feel calmer.

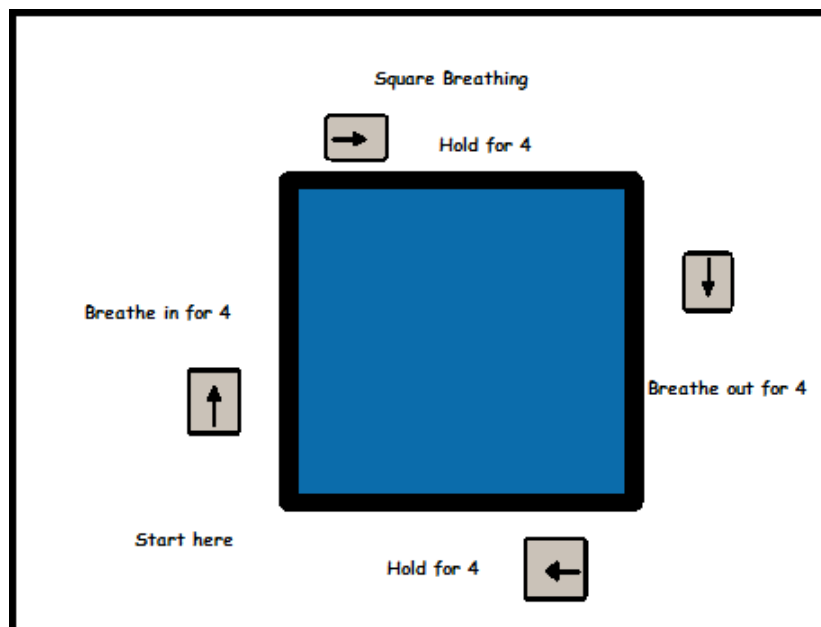


To help me calm down, I can take 5 deep breaths

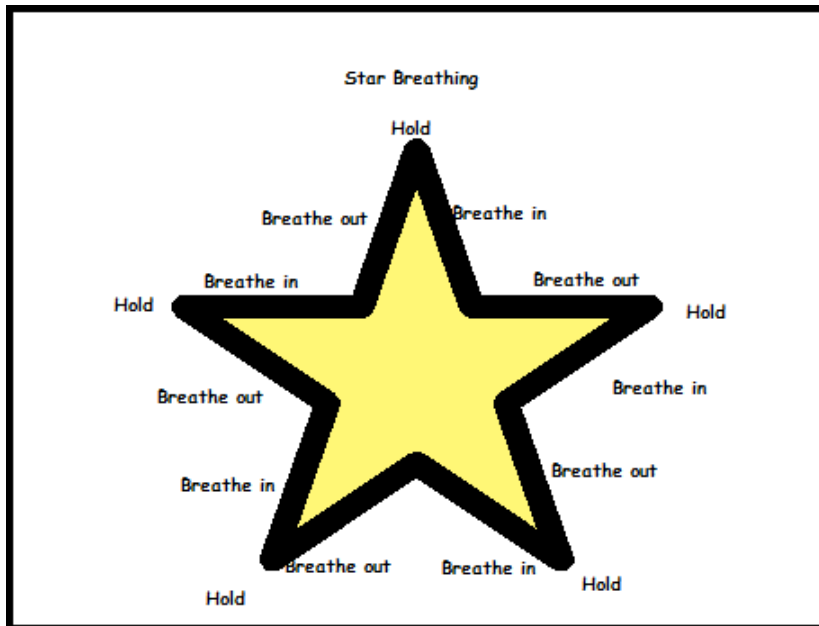




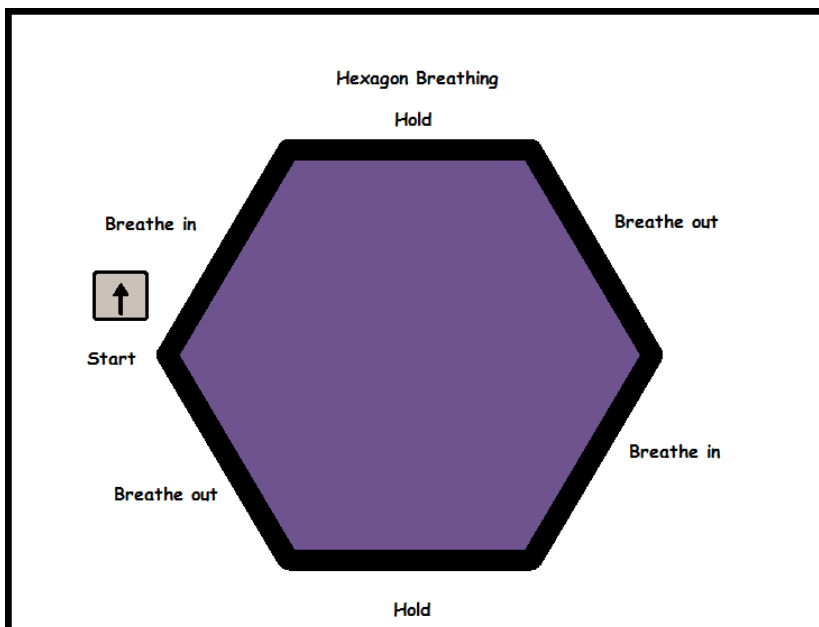
Start at the bottom of the triangle. Breathe in for three counts whilst you trace the first side of the triangle. Hold your breath for three counts and trace the second side of the triangle. Breathe out for three counts as you trace the final side of the triangle.



Start at the bottom of the square. Breathe in for four counts as you trace the first side of the square. Hold your breath for four counts and trace the second side of the square. Breathe out for four counts as you trace the third side of the square. Hold your breath for four counts as you trace the final side of the square.



Start at any *Breathe In* side. Trace your finger over the "breathe in" side of the point. Hold your breath when your finger gets to the tip of any point. Breathe out as you trace your finger over the other side of the point. Finish when you get to where you started.



Start at the left side of the hexagon. Trace your finger over the *breathe in* side as you take a deep breath in. Hold your breath as you trace the second side of the hexagon. Breathe out as you trace the third side of the hexagon. Then repeat.

Social Story/Calm Cards

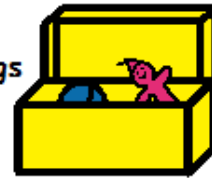
Using my Calm Down Box

When I feel frustrated or angry
I need to ask for a break.



I can take 5 deep breaths and go
to my Calm Down Box.

I will be allowed to use some of the things
that are in my box.



Once I am feeling calmer, I will return to
the activity I was doing.

The resources below and on the next few page could be used to assist the child when identifying things that might help them to feel calmer. These are a great way for the child to notify the adult of what they feel may be of benefit when feelings are overwhelming.

I need

to help me calm down.

