

Positive Guidance for Young Children: Take a Break and Calm Down

Young children are learning to manage their behavior and feelings. At times, they may be “out of control” and need an adult to help them calm down and learn how to express their emotions in appropriate ways.

Take a break

Sometimes children need some time to manage their feelings. Some adults call this “time-out.” When a child engages in dangerous behaviors such as biting and hitting, a caregiver may need to remove the child from the situation to help them refocus on safe and appropriate choices.

Stay close by

Remain near the child during a break, especially when their emotions are strong. Help the child become calm so they can rejoin the group or activity.



Show them how to calm down

Teach strategies such as deep breathing, hugging a stuffed animal, or counting to 10.

Make a plan

Talk about what will happen next on the schedule, after you have addressed the challenging behavior and the child has calmed down. Compliment the children on the

appropriate behaviors they display to help them learn what you expect.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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