

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS AND USE IDEAS for Calm Down Choice Chart

We are all challenged by cabin fever, our own moods and behavior, the moods and behavior of those we care for and live with, not to mention the loss of previous routine (sometimes painstakingly developed). No single thing will make this easy but maybe some ideas can help smooth some bumps. This calm down choice chart includes some ideas and reminders of things any family member can try to calm down as tempers heat up. Perhaps we can negotiate some form of peace accord agreeing that every family member will:

- 1) Review calm down choices, as a family, during a relaxed fun time when everyone is feeling “good to go”
- 2) Visit the calm down choice chart at least ____ times a day. (Every family member every day, even if it’s a calm day. Calm days are good practice days and calm people are good role models for those of us who might not be calm ourselves)
- 3) Identify whether they feel at a RED, YELLOW, or GREEN light.
- 4) Choose a skill to practice.
- 5) Remind each other KINDLY to check in with the calm down chart and choose something to try when tempers rise.
- 6) Discuss the chart, as a family, during a relaxed time once every two weeks or so to see what is working best for each family member and discuss if there are ways calmer family members can best support anyone who is less calm lately.

NOTE: Calm down choices can be added, deleted, or moved around from one category to another. This is just a starting list of suggestions. As a family you may wish to start with just a few options at each level to simplify or variety may be more important, and you might keep all the ideas or even add some.

SAMPLE

KIND REMINDER to check in and choose a way to try to calm down:

“Oh wow, I see you ... *breathing fast, clenching your fists, talking faster and louder (or any evident indicator of excitement)* ... It looks like you might be getting upset. I don’t want to fight or upset you, so I am going to... *take five deep breaths way down into my belly, go do a round of stairway stomps, throw a pillow three times hard into the couch (or any other thing you feel might help)*. You can join me if you want to or choose something else from the choice chart that might help you calm down and we can check in after to see how we feel.”

When discussing as a family, during a calm time, it may be helpful to acknowledge that everybody gets upset sometimes. There is nothing wrong with having big feelings about things. Big feelings are a part of life. Our whole family can practice ways of having big feelings and taking actions that help us calm back down instead of spreading our big feelings around to everyone else in the family. It may help to normalize the experience of big feelings by reminding children that parents and caregivers get upset too and (especially now with everyone home so much) we want to make sure that family members can help each

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other find ways to calm down and make room for each other to do what we need to manage our big feelings. No one in our house is expected to be perfect. We only want to be able to help each other stay, do our best, and make up when we need to.

SELF REMINDERS are great too! Any time we catch ourselves talking faster, louder, breathing shallow breaths, or with our shoulders in our ears and our hearts beating fast, we can say right out loud something like:

“OOOPS! Dang it! Here I go getting upset myself when I want you to learn to be calm. This isn’t helping either of us. I’m going to take care of myself and calm down by doing _____. I will check back in with you in _____ or as soon as I am calmer myself.”