

GLOSSARY OF CALM DOWN ACTIVITY IDEAS:

Red Light Activities

- **Deep slow belly breaths. (Square or Pizza)** - Square breathing, we breath in deeply filling our bellies first for count of four, hold for four, exhale fully for four, rest for four and repeat. Pizza breathing, we hold our hands out in front of us as though we are holding a warm slice of pizza (or anything else we want to imagine). We breathe in deeply through our nose as though we are smelling the pizza and then blow out through our mouth as though to cool the pizza off.
- **Slow count to 10 (or 12 if we need it)** – As is sounds counting slowly up or down
- **Find my calm down spot** – Identify a calm down spot for each family member. If it's a corner in a child's room they can keep some of their most comforting items there, drawing supplies, put pictures on the walls (be creative). For adults keep favorite book(s), knitting, or own comfort objects. It may be valuable to broker an agreement that you will all honor each other's calm down spots and not follow each other there so anyone can get a little space when they need it. Adults may want to set a timer and promise to re-engage with the child, reminding the child that they want to be with them again once they (the parent) is able to calm themselves down. Adults and caregivers can model how to use the calm down space.
- **Limp Noodle** – Crunchy Noodle – Alternate clenching your whole body like a stiff crunchy noodle then relaxing and flopping like a limp noodle... repeat
- **Balloon Blow up** – as it sounds blow up a balloon
- **Listen to Music (AND Dance like crazy)** – headphones may be advisable
- **Hit or throw a pillow, Stuffed Animal Bowling** – hitting a pillow is tried and true, throwing a pillow at a closed door or the bed or a couch, or setting up stuffed animals and bowling a pillow into them.
- **Call someone (Ally phone list)** – it may be helpful for each of you create a list of allies. Those people you trust to reach out to when your family just won't do anymore. It takes a village and its nice to know we don't have to be everything to everybody, even in home. Identify, list, and be grateful for out of home supports.
- **Percussion Corner** – my daughter actually had a small drum set in the basement. Before that though we had some old tupperware, a cardboard oatmeal canister, and various boxes (as long as they lasted), that sat upside down, sometimes there was a pot lid too and some of my brother's old drum sticks (though Lincoln logs or any other right sized stick might work well too.
- **Stairway Stomp** – as it sounds. We would sometimes together or on our own stomp up and down the stairs. Not in the middle of the night and not forever but we called this going on a stairway stomp.
- **Eyes closed** – either just close eyes and keep them closed or scrunch eyes and face tight alternating with opening them as wide as possible.
- **Work it out** – jumps, lifts (e.g. loaded school backpack), push a heavy item
- **Muscle by muscle** – sequentially squeeze then release muscle by muscle moving at least once through the entire body. Don't forget the face, mouth and jaw.

Yellow Light Activities

- **Ask for a break** – anyone can ask for a break. If the other(s) will not willingly allow a break try setting a timer and finding a space you can retreat to. Be sure to ALWAYS

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honor your kiddo's request for a break if they ask. We used to keep two pulsometers in a bowl by the stove. When taking a break, we could check our pulse before beginning a discussion again to make sure we were calm first. (less than 90 beats per minute)

- **Walk it out** – taking a walk can be a great way to calm down. If someone can't go outside safely alone then pacing around the house can help.
- **Blow Bubbles** – yes! More breathing.
- Snuggle up- get a hug or give a squeeze (people, pillows, animals, blankets). We promoted “self snuggles” in our house too.
- **Rock in a chair** – great option for self snuggles too.
- **Take a bath** – who doesn't like a warm bath?
- **Look at a book** – Any book is fine. I and one of my kids both had specific books that were calming to us. Another of my kids only found books calming if they could be thrown so other options for her.
- **Draw, Write or Color** – some suggest trying to draw write or color about the big feelings, scribble art can be good. We sometimes kept some oversize pieces of paper on the walls with chalk nearby in one corner so scribble art with full body movement was an option.
- **Drink water** – water and air. Take a deep breath and hydrate.
- **Play with something squishy, soft (or that just feels good)**. A bucket of buttons was soothing to one child. A friend had a bag of beans that opened so you could run the beans through your fingers or close it and toss it back and forth.
- **Smell something nice**
- **Hang out with an animal**
- **Be a blanket burrito** – lay down on one edge of a blanket and roll yourself up in it. Grabbing both upper corners to pull it as snug as you want.

Green Light Activities

- **Teach a family member** a calm down skill you like today – pick any of the skills you want and show a family member how you do it. Maybe they want to show you one they like too?
- **Belly breath with a buddy** – practice deep belly breathing. You can both lay down and put a stuffed animal on both your stomachs and see who can make their animal rise the most.
- **Laugh Olympics challenge** – who can laugh the longest, the loudest, the fastest? Who is best at getting other family members to laugh. Try getting silly then exhaling as far as you can until your breath starts to huh huh huh and let your selves laugh at each other.
- **Family meditation** time find a family meditation on YouTube – e.g. body scan meditations for teens and adults (FABLEFLY- Whole Child).
- Choose one or more **mindfulness activities** from the ‘20 Simple Mindful Activities (ALL AGES)’ list.