

CALMING STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS



PRAY

- Lord, thank You for your wisdom and compassion.
- Lord, help me forgive and let go of my anger.
- Father, I receive Your heart for my child.



NAME YOUR FEELINGS

"I have some really big _____ (angry, frustrated, overwhelmed, anxious, discouraged, hurt...) feelings right now. But God is in this with me!"



RECITE A SCRIPTURE OR MEMORIZED PHRASE

- "God is here. God's grace is for me!"
- "Breathe in God's love; breathe out God's peace." (Insert different words as needed.)
- "Ah, I love this kid!"
- "God made you."
- _____ (your phrase)



BUY TIME (if safety isn't an issue)

- Approach your child slowly.
- Talk slowly.
- Take a step backward instead of charging in.
- "We're all pretty upset. Let's talk about this later when we can solve it better."
- "I need some time to think. I want to respond in a way that is truly helpful for you."



WALK IN YOUR CHILD'S SHOES

- What's it like to be my child right now?
- What is my child feeling right now? Have I ever felt similar emotions?
- What's important to my child?



LOOK FOR THE OPPORTUNITY

Pray, "Lord, what's the opportunity here?" (i.e., for unconditional love, building life skills, or teaching about God's mercy)



WHAT HAS WORKED WELL FOR YOU IN THE PAST?



CHECK YOUR FACE

- Start to regulate: slow breath, "I love this child, even now."
- Think "calm face, eyebrows up." (Compassion naturally shows on your face.)



MODEL DO-OVERS IN THE MOMENT

- Do-overs help practice the shift from "Fast, Large, and Loud" to "Slow, Low, and Listen"
- Be sure to celebrate God's mercy and how much better the do-over felt.



BODY CALMERS

- Box breathing: You can imagine the four sides of a box. 4-count inhale, 4-count hold, 4-count exhale, 4-count hold. If you're near a window or door, you can visually track its outline. (Tracking across the midline is calming).
- 5-finger breathing: With your hand in front of you, spread your fingers apart. Use the pointer finger of the opposite hand to trace up the outside of the thumb as you inhale slowly. Hold your breath briefly as you pause at the top of your thumb to notice a sight or sound around you. Trace down the inside of the thumb as you exhale slowly. Repeat these three steps for each finger: up/inhale, pause(hold)/notice, down/exhale.
- Do some strong, physical movements (i.e. pushups) and "model out loud" that they help you to calm down.

BE PROACTIVE



KEEP GUM OR A CALMING SNACK AVAILABLE

- Grab a piece of gum. (Gum has been shown to decrease stress reactions.)
- When you start to get upset, grab a piece of gum, hand one to your child, and just chew without talking until you're calmer.
- Sugar free lollipops, frozen juice pops, or a drink through a straw are other calming options.



POST A VISUAL REMINDER

- Post visual reminders for yourself. (Visual cues make it easier to start a new habit.) In a highly visual place, you could post: James 1:19, The Connected Families Framework, the steps to "Slow, Low, and Listen," or the [Four Messages Word Art](#).



LET YOUR KIDS KNOW HOW AND WHY YOU WANT TO CHANGE

- Explain that you want to want to take a big breath and use a gentle voice when there's a problem.
- Let your kids know you'll need encouragement because you will blow it, but you really want to change your habit. This helps you stay accountable to those goals and communicates, "It's safe in our family to be vulnerable and to make mistakes."



EMPOWER KIDS TO HELP YOU GET BACK ON TRACK

- Teach your kids respectful responses for when you start to raise your voice. and help them practice (i.e., prepare kids to respond and then pretend to get mad. Have fun with it!) Phrases like: "Let's take some deep breaths, Mommy/Daddy." or "Mom/Dad, can we take a break?"
- Help kids practice grabbing a Kleenex and "waving the white flag" when they see the need for a break.