

Move, Breathe, Reset

Simple Ways to Help Children Calm Their Bodies

Why This Matters

When children experience big emotions, their bodies often react before their words. Movement, breath, and sensory input help children release tension and return to a calmer state. These activities are not meant to stop emotions—they help children move through them safely.

Big feelings are expected. What helps most is an adult who offers support early and without pressure.

How to Use This Guide

- Offer activities as choices, not demands
- Try activities before emotions escalate
- Join in when possible, children follow adult modeling
- Keep activities short and playful

Repeat favorite activities regularly. This guide works best when activities are practiced during calm moments, so children recognize them later.

ABC

If a Child Doesn't Want to Join

That's okay. Regulation works best when children feel choice and control.

Adults can:

- Model the activity themselves
- Offer a different option
- Stay nearby and calm
- Invite again later

Watching is still learning.



A Note for Adults

Movement is not misbehavior. It is often the path back to calm. When adults stay steady and supportive, children learn that their emotions are manageable and that support is always available.

Reflection

Which activities help this child most—and how can I offer them earlier next time?

Movement Activities (For Releasing Energy)



Animal Walks

Move like a bear, snake, or turtle. Choose slower animals when children feel overwhelmed.



Shake and Freeze

Shake arms and legs, then pause and freeze when cued. End with a longer freeze to help bodies settle.



Slow March

March in place slowly, lifting one foot at a time. Count softly together.

Breathing Activities (For Calming the Body)



Balloon Breaths

Move like a bear, snake, or turtle. Choose slower animals when children feel overwhelmed.



Belly Breathing

Place hands on bellies and watch them rise and fall with slow breaths.

Calming Body Activities (For Grounding and Safety)



Wall Pushes

Push hands into a wall for several seconds, then relax.

Curl Into a Ball

Hug knees and rest quietly for a short moment.



Starfish Rest

Lie on the floor with arms and legs stretched out and breathe quietly.

