

HOW DO I CALM MY KID?



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Here are five steps to help your child calm down from a strong emotion

STEP 1

NOTICE AND IDENTIFY THE EMOTION

Pay attention to what your child's behaviour is telling you about their feelings by watching and listening to what they are saying.

If you ask them to turn off the TV and they roll around on the floor whining. They may be feeling angry.

STEP 2

NAME AND CONNECT THE EMOTION

Label the emotion and connect it with the event. This teaches your child to understand what they're feeling and why. It shows them that you understand how they feel and that this emotion is OK, even if their behaviour isn't OK.

Say, 'I can see that you're feeling angry about turning off the TV'

STEP 3

PAUSE AND SAY NOTHING

Pausing and saying nothing for a few seconds gives your child time to take in what you've just said (count slowly to five in your head!). This might calm them, or they might problem solve.

They might say 'Could I watch more TV later?'

STEP 4

SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WHILE THEY CALM DOWN

If your child is very upset, they might need more time. Avoid saying things like 'Use your words' or 'Take a deep breath' as they are unlikely to respond to these suggestions until their emotions have passed.

Make sure that they're safe and you're safe. Staying calm and close to your child shows them that it's OK to show strong emotions.

Go back to step 1
'I can see you're really furious about this'.

Wait for the strong emotion to pass. Be patient. It can be very hard for young children to manage strong feelings.

ADDRESS THE BEHAVIOUR OR SOLVE THE PROBLEM

When calm help your child solve a problem or change a behaviour you don't like.

'It's OK to feel frustrated but it wasn't OK to shout at me and kick the wall'.

Suggest other ways to react to strong emotions.

'If you feel angry, go into your room and shout into your pillow. Come back when you're calm'

Reassure or comfort your child.

'That was a scary thing that happened' or 'I'm sorry to see you so sad. Let's have a hug'

Suggest some solutions for the problem.

'You could ask for them to share'

STEP 5

HOW DO I CALM MY TEEN?



HOW DO I CALM MY TEEN?

Teens often feel and express strong emotions and can be overwhelmed by them

Can feel really angry if something seems unfair

Feel really disappointed if something doesn't turn out the way they wanted

Don't always have the skills to think about things rationally

Can have trouble solving problems

Often do things without thinking them through

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PAUSE AND SAY NOTHING

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STEP 3

ADDRESS THE BEHAVIOUR OR SOLVE THE PROBLEM

If they are upset about a rule that you won't or can't change, acknowledge your child's emotions but avoid a debate.

'I know you're angry because you can't go to the party. But we can't drive you there and we don't know any other adults that can give you a lift.'

Ask your child whether they want some help with problem-solving. Identify the problem.

'You have an exam on Monday.'

If they are behaving in physically or verbally harmful ways, let them know this behaviour is unacceptable.

'It's not OK to speak to me like that', or 'We'll have to repair the wall this weekend and costs will come out of your pocket money.'

Give your child comfort and reassurance if they need it.

STEP 4

SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WHILE THEY CALM DOWN

Stay calm. Stay close to them if it's safe to do so. It shows them that you can handle whatever their emotions are, and that emotions don't have to be overwhelming.

Wait for the strong emotion to pass. Be patient. They are more likely to calm down if you stay calm and accept their emotions. Give them some space if they want it but let them know you're close by.

'I'm just going to sit outside your door.'

If they leave the house, match your response to their age and maturity.

You could follow them; or let them 'walk it off' for a few minutes then call them; or just wait for them to come back.

If their emotions don't seem to be passing, go back to step 1.

STEP 5