

## Topic 10

# Keep Calm

### OBJECTIVES

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- To continue to help children identify Trigger Situations
- To teach children a strategy for keeping calm and using self-control when faced with Trigger Situations
- To provide opportunities to practice the skill of Keep Calm
- To establish *Keep Calm* as a prompt to elicit use of the strategy

### MATERIALS

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Whole-class display of Keep Calm Steps (Worksheet K.10.1)

Keep Calm Home Activity (Worksheet K.10.2)

### INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

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#### 1. Review concepts of Feelings Fingerprints and Trigger Situations.

Begin with a Sharing Circle and review of Feelings Fingerprints and Trigger Situations. You might wish to refer to the silhouettes created by students in the previous activity. It is important that students understand Feelings Fingerprints and Trigger Situations, so be sure to review these concepts, especially for students who may have missed the lesson. Helping each other with the review helps students learn more deeply. Be especially sure to take extra time with any students in your class who have special education classifications. Sometimes, these students take longer to grasp the concept of Feelings Fingerprints; for them, identifying the Trigger Situations that set them off becomes even more important.

#### 2. Introduce the new skill of Keep Calm.

Ask students:

- Why is it important to know when you are upset and to notice your Feelings Fingerprints?
- What kind of things can happen when we have strong feelings?

- What can happen when we use Blaster behaviors? Shrinker behaviors? (Refer to examples of Blaster and Shrinker behaviors from Topic 5.)

Say:

Today we are going to learn what you can do before you do something that could get you into trouble or shrink away from standing up for yourself.

Explain to children that they are going to learn a very important skill called Keep Calm. By using Keep Calm, they will be able to have power over their own energy and use their energy to solve problems. It is a new skill, just like Speaker Power or Listening Position. When someone bothers them, when they are in a tough situation, or when they notice their Feelings Fingerprints, they can use Keep Calm to help them have more control. Say:

The key to keeping calm is to slow down your breathing. One of our Feelings Fingerprints might be breathing fast or having trouble taking a deep breath. Athletes, superheroes, doctors, astronauts, famous performers, actors, people in the martial arts, and others have used methods like Keep Calm to help them achieve their best under pressure (provide examples of people your students will relate to). We cannot think clearly when we are out of control. Keep Calm will help us with our control.

### **3. Introduce steps for using Keep Calm.**

Display Worksheet K.10.1 as you describe the steps of Keep Calm. Ask students to watch you use Keep Calm before they try it. Model the skill by demonstrating the steps to the class while holding up the pictures illustrating the strategy.

1. Tell yourself to STOP!
2. Tell yourself to KEEP CALM.
3. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose while you count to five. Then hold it while you count to two. Then breathe out to the count of five.
4. Repeat the steps until you are calm and relaxed.
5. Praise yourself for a job well done.

Explain that some people might have to repeat these steps a few times before they feel calm.

Then model what Keep Calm does *not* look like: Breathe with puffed-out cheeks, then hold your breath almost to the point of hyperventilating. A bit of silliness helps make the point in a memorable way.

#### 4. Conduct a Keep Calm practice.

Conduct a first practice to assess a baseline for how well students can implement the strategy.

Have everyone try the procedure. Continue to use the Keep Calm illustrations and repeat the step-by-step instructions at a pace the group can follow. Count for the breathing at a pace that all can follow.

Some students may have difficulty conceptualizing the breathing technique. Using "Smell the Pizza" is helpful for these children. (For those who don't know what pizza is or say they don't like it, ask them to think about a food they like to eat that smells very, very good.) Ask students to pretend that they are holding an individual-sized pizza (or other favorite food). Have them breathe in to smell the hot, fresh pizza, then ask them to blow on the pizza to cool it down.

Repeat the practice, counting more slowly once students get the basics down and can breathe deeply.

Look for students who are doing the procedure correctly. After each practice, be specific in praising details that some students might have missed. For example, say, "Nice, smooth breathing." If children need correction, state so positively, with information about what to do. For example, "Remember to slow down your breathing" rather than "Do not go so fast." Tell the children that using Keep Calm does not need to be loud or obvious to others.

Depending on how well the children are able to follow, repeat the breathing activity one to three times. Then practice the first three steps of Keep Calm. Have children repeat the steps of Keep Calm after you read them. Then practice each step individually. For example:

1. Say, "Stop." The children repeat, "Stop."
2. Say, "Calm down." The children repeat, "Calm down."
3. Say, "Take a deep breath through your nose to the count of five." The children repeat, "Take a deep breath through your nose to the count of five." Then everyone takes a breath to the count of five, holds for the count of two, and breathes out to the count of five.

Repeat the same procedure but in a whisper. Have children repeat the steps in a whisper.

Next, tell the children that they are going to try to go through the steps by talking to themselves on the inside.

Tell them that when you say "Now!", you will hold up the pictures to show what to do, but they should try to say each step to themselves and do it.

**5. Present a reflective summary.**

Ask students what they learned today. Ask them to look for a chance to use Keep Calm if they find themselves experiencing their Feelings Fingerprints.

Ask students for some examples of times when it would be a good idea to use Keep Calm. Write down those examples and make a poster of those times, including words and pictures, to display in the classroom as a reminder for students to use Keep Calm before situations go too far.

**6. Follow up.**

The following activities will give students a chance to continue working with the new concepts throughout the school day and at home.

**Take-Home**

Once children are able to demonstrate and practice the steps of Keep Calm and can respond to the prompt *Keep Calm* to stop and slow down their breathing, send home the Keep Calm Home Activity (Worksheet K.10.2). This worksheet provides parents and guardians with information about how they can review and encourage their child to use Keep Calm in home situations.

**Promoting Transfer and Generalization of Skill**

1. Have students practice their Keep Calm steps after coming in from recess or other times when moving from an active situation to one where they need to pay attention and focus, such as transitioning to a new subject or before a test.
2. Look for opportunities to prompt a child to practice the Keep Calm steps with you if he or she is experiencing frustration, upset, anxiety, sadness, or other feelings. Do this before engaging in problem solving.
3. Share with students when you recognize your own Feelings Fingerprints and Trigger Situations. Model using the Keep Calm steps and ask children to do it with you.

**TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

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1. Depending on the maturity, developmental level, and other student characteristics and abilities, the progression from counting out loud, to whispering, to silently going through the steps may take several lessons. The point is to move children to an understanding of self-talk. At this young age, the self-talk concept can be introduced, but children will need help and external coaching before the skill is internalized to the point of

independent use. The goal is to be sure that children understand this is a skill that eventually they will learn to do on their own when they need to use self-control. Another goal is to introduce this important concept and skill prompt that will be at the core of emotional regulation in grade-level lessons to come.

2. Continued practice of Keep Calm, repeating the steps over and over, is the best way for kindergarten-age students to begin learning the Keep Calm skill. It is not realistic to expect young children to use the skill without prompting, though some may begin to do so toward the end of the school year if they have had a lot of experience with prompts throughout the school day from various educators.
3. Continue to remind children that their goal is to use Keep Calm when they start to experience their Feelings Fingerprints and before those feelings are brought on by a Trigger Situation.
4. Irumu Breau, a school counselor in Winslow Township, New Jersey, developed hand signals to help teach Keep Calm in the primary grades. These signals were used throughout the district and shared with parents.

#### **Stop**

What you say: "Tell yourself to STOP!"

Hand motion: Left hand palm up, while right hand touches the left with a karate-chop motion.

#### **Keep Calm**

What you say: "Tell yourself to KEEP CALM."

Hand motion: With both palms facing the floor, push down twice.

#### **Two Breaths**

What you say: "Take two deep breaths."

Hand motion: Make the peace sign in front of your heart; move it out and back two times.

#### **Good Job**

What you say: "Tell yourself 'Good job!'"

Hand motion: Pat yourself on the back.

1. Tell yourself to **STOP!**



2. Tell yourself to **KEEP CALM.**



3. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose while you count to five. Then hold it while you count to two. Then breathe out to the count of five.



4. Repeat the steps until you are calm and relaxed.

5. Praise yourself for a job well done.



Dear Parents or Guardians:

Your child has been learning a valuable skill called Keep Calm, along with some other terms.

- **Trigger Situation:** A trigger is a situation that causes a person to have a strong feeling, such as nervousness, anger, fear, or excitement.
- **Feelings Fingerprints** are physical signs of stress, such as headache, feeling hot or flushed, clenching fists, or rapid heartbeat. Everyone feels stress in a different way, just as we each have different fingerprints.
- **Keep Calm** is a stress management technique that helps a person calm down to think clearly and problem solve. The steps in Keep Calm are as follows:
  1. Tell yourself to STOP!
  2. Tell yourself to KEEP CALM.
  3. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose while you count to five. Then hold it while you count to two. Then breathe out to the count of five.
  4. Repeat the steps until you are calm and relaxed.
  5. Praise yourself for a job well done.



**Keep Calm at Home**

Hold a family meeting and make a list of Trigger Situations, having everyone add one or more of their triggers to the list. Also, make a list of the Feelings Fingerprints that accompany these situations. Discuss ways that family members can help remind each other to use Keep Calm. Also, discuss any ideas for solving some of these problems so that some of the triggers can be avoided in the future.

*At our next meeting, your child may be asked to share ways he or she used Keep Calm outside of school.*

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(Parent/Supervising Adult: Please sign and return this section.)*

**Keep Calm**

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

We tried Keep Calm:  Yes  No

If you did, how did it go?

Parent/Supervising Adult \_\_\_\_\_