

# 10 Keep Calm

**OBJECTIVES**

- To point out problematic situations where students can use self-control to calm down before reacting
- To teach students to regulate their emotions and maintain control in problematic situations
- To practice the *Keep Calm* exercise

**MATERIALS**

Whole-class display of the steps in Keep Calm (Worksheet 4.10.1)  
Copies of the "Keep Calm Reminder Cards" (Worksheet 4.10.2)  
*(optional)*

**INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES****1. Review Topic 9.**

Go over the vocabulary from the last lesson, with a focus on Trigger Situations and Feelings Fingerprints. Encourage students to share their observations and experiences.

**2. Conduct a Sharing Circle.**

Ask students to share a time when they find it helpful to calm themselves down.

Make the point that it is possible to handle almost every type of problem or difficulty better if you are able to stay calm. Say something along these lines:

*To help us learn to be better at keeping calm, we are also going to learn a specific four-step strategy called Keep Calm. This strategy can help you think through a problem before you try to do something about it.*

**3. Introduce the Keep Calm exercise.**

Say:

*The key to keeping calm is to slow down your breathing. Athletes, performers, and people in the martial arts have used*

## TOPIC

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*To help us learn to be better at keeping calm, we are also going to learn a specific four-step strategy called Keep Calm. This strategy can help you think through a problem before you try to do something about it.*

#### 3. Introduce the Keep Calm exercise.

Say:

*The key to keeping calm is to slow down your breathing. Athletes, performers, and people in the martial arts have used*

*methods of controlling their breathing to achieve a high level of concentration and calmness that can help them perform their best.*

Provide examples of sports figures or fictional characters your students will relate to, then continue:

*Learning to regulate the way that you breathe increases your ability to think clearly and to do things with more skill and control.*

Ask if anyone has ever heard of Keep Calm. If so, have them help you explain the four steps in using this skill:

1. Tell yourself to STOP.
2. Tell yourself to KEEP CALM.
3. Slow down your breathing with two long, deep breaths.
4. Praise yourself for a job well done.

#### **4. Demonstrate the steps to the class.**

Direct students' attention to the whole-class display of the skill steps. Follow this procedure: Present a situation in which you could be irritated or nervous. Describe the situation, then model the following:

*First, I would tell myself to STOP.*

*Then I would tell myself to Keep Calm.*

*Then I would take two long, deep breaths. First, I would let out all the air in my lungs through my mouth. Then I would take a slow and smooth breath of air in through my nose to the count of five. I would hold that breath for the count of two and then slowly let the air out through my mouth to the count of five, while I say to myself (inside my head), "Keep Calm." I would do the breathing again.*

*Then I would say to myself, "Good job." Using self-control can be hard work, and you need to praise yourself.*

Demonstrate the procedure, counting with your fingers to five while taking a breath in, and to two while holding your breath, and again to five while breathing out. Bring your hands down to your sides while you are releasing the breath through your mouth—indicating that you are saying, "Keep Calm." Smile after completing the breathing to indicate you are telling yourself you've done a good job.

#### **5. Conduct a practice exercise.**

Have the class practice Keep Calm in the same way.

Look for students who are doing the procedure correctly. Be specific in praising—you can say things like "Nice, smooth breathing." If children need correction, describe what to do in positive terms. For example, say, "Slow down your breathing" rather than "Don't go so fast."

## **6. Discuss use of the exercise.**

Have the class generate situations when Keep Calm may come in handy. Most situations fall into three main categories:

- When you are nervous. (Examples include things like being about to take a test, going up to bat, or giving a speech or other type of performance.)
- When you really need to concentrate. (Examples include things like working on a test, getting back in the mood to work after recess, or feeling distracted by noise in the room.)
- When you are angry or frustrated and about to lose your cool. (Examples include things like beginning to yell during an argument.)

## **7. Conduct additional practice.**

Present students with situations to role-play, either acting out a situation yourself or showing a video or pictures and then having students add examples of their own to those presented. Have students practice using Keep Calm to help them in these situations:

- Feeling fidgety and talking in class
- Feeling nervous about a test or a report
- Being lost in a shopping center
- Going to a new school
- Competing in a sports event

## **8. Introduce a Reflective Summary.**

As outlined in the Introduction, ask students to reflect on the question "What did you learn from today's lesson?" Reinforce key themes, then go over any follow-up work.

## **9. Follow up.**

The following steps will help make sure that the students have a chance to continue working with the new concepts.

### Assignment

Encourage students to find a time when they can use Keep Calm and try it. Let them know that you will expect an example of how they used Keep Calm at the next lesson.

### Take-Home

If you wish, send Keep Calm cards home with students. Parents and guardians can find many situations in which the skills will be useful.

### Plans to Promote Transfer and Generalization of Skill

#### **Social Studies and Current Events**

Instruct students to seek examples of people taking deep breaths before performing certain tasks. Encourage students to observe athletes, politicians, surgeons, or others in real life or on TV. Have students keep track of observations of deep breathing used for calming.

#### **Language Arts**

Instruct students to identify points in stories during which a character could use Keep Calm. Have students predict what might have happened if the character had used Keep Calm and how that might differ from what did occur in the story.

#### **Art Project**

Have students submit posters illustrating the steps of Keep Calm.

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### **TIPS FOR TEACHERS**

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1. Some children may need a real-life example of what it's like to be nervous or antsy or to lose their temper. This can be illustrated in several ways. Use a mirror to show differences in physical appearances before and after using Keep Calm. Jogging in place to increase breathing can be used to show the contrast before and after Keep Calm.
2. During problem situations that come up during the week, encourage children to use the Keep Calm technique before discussing the situation with their teacher or classmates. If you wish, you may distribute Keep Calm Reminder Cards (Worksheet 4.10.2).
3. It may be a good idea to remind children about Keep Calm before potentially stressful situations, such as joining a new class or attending special classes like art, music, and physical education. The technique is especially useful for students with special education needs who are joining a regular classroom.

4. Some students will learn to use their Feelings Fingerprints as a sign to use Keep Calm. Others will be prompted by Trigger Situations or other sets of cues. Regardless, the skill will be learned to the extent that children are prompted and reminded to use it in salient everyday situations, such as when moving from class to class, before a test, before an important meeting, or when they are upset at home.
5. Here are some sample prompts to use when a child is upset or is beginning to lose control:
  - Use your Keep Calm steps.
  - Stop and think about what's happening.
  - Let's Keep Calm and get focused.
  - Let's take a look at what's going on. Tell me what you see. (Or "what you saw, what happened, how you are feeling.")
  - Take a deep breath and Keep Calm—then we can talk about it.
6. Testimonials about the use of Keep Calm (or times when Keep Calm could have been used) are highly valuable for students to share. These should be solicited regularly to promote future use of self-control. Students should be helped to use Keep Calm to prepare themselves for actual or possible Trigger Situations.

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