

# Tantrum and Anger Management Using A Calming Kit

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Inside: Calming Down isn't Always Easy For Children.

Help your child manage tantrums, anger and frustration and learn self-regulation skills with a calming kit.

**“Got anything I can smash around here?” asked my daughter with a crinkly face and closed fists one day.**

Anger management and self regulation are skills that children need practice to master. Knowing when and how to calm down isn't so easy. Especially for children because they live so intensely in the present moment.

If you ever worry that your child's anger, aggression or tantrums seems to be just too much you are not alone. Many parents express surprise at how quickly their child can go from fine to furious in no time at all.

What's more, seeing your child display aggression can be a big trigger for parents to get into power struggles, fixing behavior, lecturing or disciplining mode.

**There is a good reason to stay calm when your child is getting worked up.**

When you stay calm you can help your child get back to a state of safety, calmness and gain better control of their own feelings and actions.

That day when my daughter was angry, she continued on explaining her feelings and I continued to listen:

**“I’m bursting with anger!! It’s about the boys you know!! UGH!! I want to smash them you hear me MAMA??!! SMASH THEM.”**



Then looking even angrier she added: ” Mom, **I walked away! I’m taking a breather!** I can’t believe them. Can you? I mean...ugh!!!....” She was actively venting her frustrations but not acting on her desire to hurt her brothers.

This was really good progress and such a good decision on her part.

Then, as if on auto-pilot, my daughter climbed into my lap. She buried her face into my shoulder and as some big tears streamed, all the tension and anger began to ease. Soon we got up, walked to our calm down basket and picked up a tinker toy.

This crisis was averted. I can promise you that my children are imperfect beings, they feel things intensely and sometimes they lose their cool. Over time we have worked on developing emotional intelligence, self-regulation and anger management skills.

## **Calming Down isn’t Always Easy For Children**

First of all, it’s important to remember that many children find it challenging to recognize their feelings and manage them in a timely way. It’s absolutely normal for children to become overwhelmed and angry.

**The goal with anger management and tantrum reduction is not to take our children's feelings away but instead to help them learn how to recognize and manage feelings in a productive way.**

**It is possible to guide your child towards recognizing feelings and making better choices.**



**It's quite normal for young children to get so angry or worked up that they might hit, bite, kick or otherwise act out their feelings.**

Self-regulation, or being able to manage feelings and behaviors well in these heated moments is a skill that takes time to develop. Much like riding a bike or learning to read, self-regulation is going to take a lot of practice. It will come with a lot of mistakes and confusing moments, possibly with tears, tantrums, aggression and ugly words.

As children learn how to deal with big feelings unhelpful behaviors will show up.

**Here is the key to helping your child learn to calm down instead of melting down:**

Teach calming skills when your child is calm NOT when your child is already angry.

This one change can actually go a long way at preventing reactivity and unhelpful behaviors.

My daughter choosing to sit in my lap instead of smashing her brother's head happened because we have practiced this in the past. We have pro-actively talked, practiced and tried out calming skills when she is calm. So she can remember how and when to use them when she is angry.

## **A simple way to help your child manage tantrums, anger and frustration is to have a calming kit.**

## **Calming kits can be an effective positive parenting tool for reducing aggression and encouraging better behavior.**

Building a calming kit to keep in your home is a great way to get started with helping children learn to understand and better manage emotions. Beyond limiting behavior, listening and validating your child when emotions run high, offering your child a chance to calm down by playing, tinkering or talking goes a long way.

Create a calming kit and use it with your child when they are CALM so they will also learn to use it when they are angry.

### **Feelings Charts To Build an Emotional Vocabulary**

Especially in the early years, when children are angry or upset, unhelpful behaviors tend to show up quickly. Dr. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson explain in their book "The Whole Brain Child" that children need to name feelings to tame them. I love this concept, and also see many young children struggling to name, let alone tame frustration, confusion and anger. Practice in this case really makes all the difference. Children with a rich emotional vocabulary do tend to manage their behaviors better. Because having words to express feelings is a big factor in reducing frustration.

Help your child learn the names of many feelings. There are lots of options out there for emotion or feelings posters. My children really like this one from Jellybean Jamboree by Susan Jelleberg. You can look at these any time really, when children are calm to build their

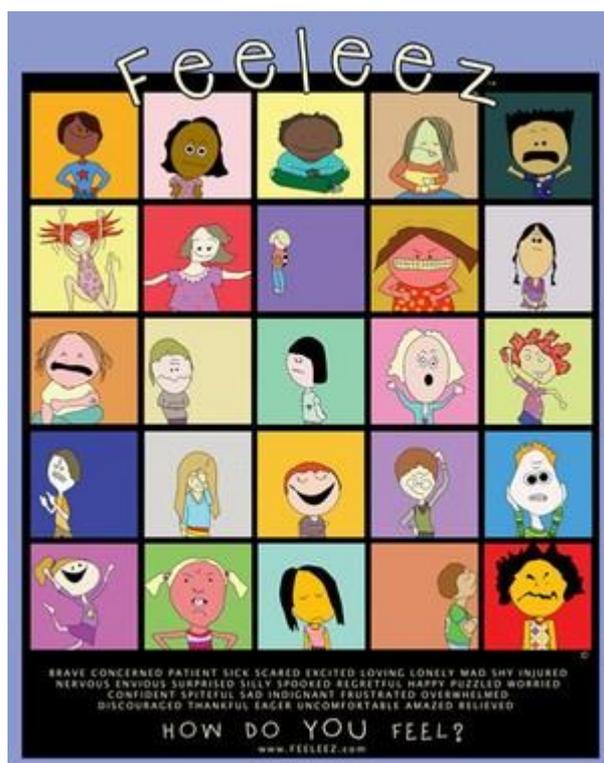
understanding of feelings and when they are worked up to better understand what they are going

### HOW DOES YOUR JELLYBEAN FEEL TODAY?



through.

Another wonderful poster is from [FEELEZ](http://www.feeleez.com) which also comes with a list of feeling words as



well.

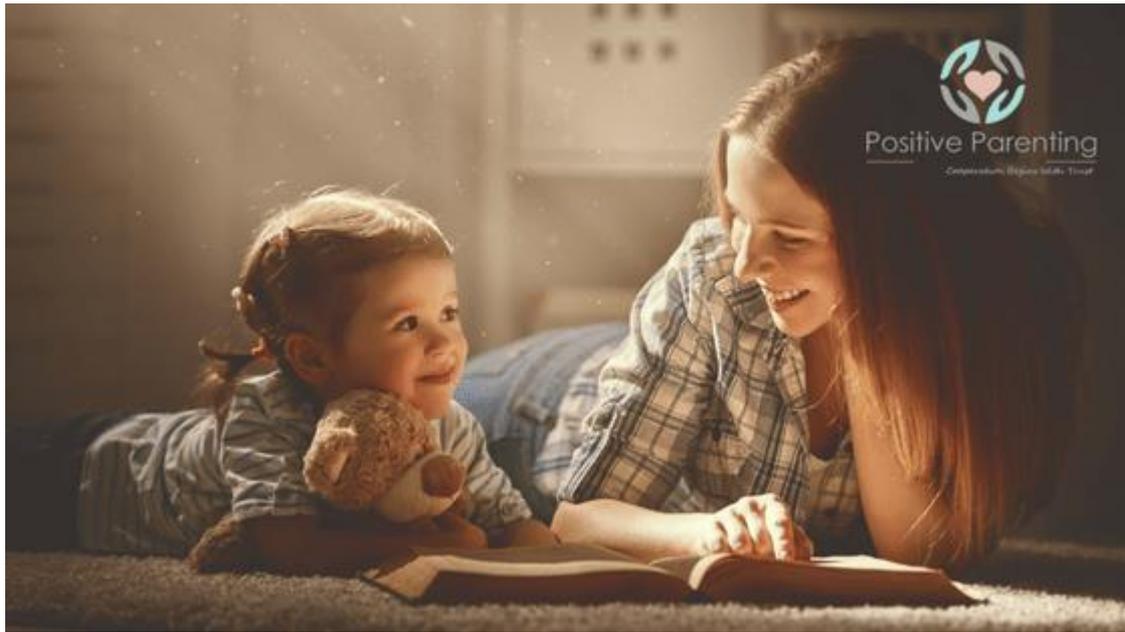
### **Tinker Toys**

Many children need the extra sensory input or a chance to touch and manipulate something in order to get back to calm. A bonus here is that if they are shaping and tinkering there is less chance of a child choosing to hit or lash out. That being said, softer tinker toys, and no breakables are a better choice if you have a child that tends to throw when angry (it's pretty normal if that is the case, and it can get better!)

Some great tinker toys to keep in a calming basket are stress balls, bendeez, stretching string and silly putty. For a while we used a light bulb squeeze toy (like a stress ball) and my children really liked this. It was a good reminder to work towards solutions instead of staying stuck in anger too.

### **Books**

Depending on your child's personality, looking at a book alone or together might be really helpful to calming down.



Sometimes your child will be far too wound up to concentrate on a book, but other children will even stop mid-tantrum to listen to a story, so follow your child's lead and see what works for you. Some of our favorite books for calming down / talking about feelings are:

Peaceful Piggy Meditations (Generally helpful in talking about circumstances and choosing how to feel)

Anh's Anger (Great for encouraging deep breaths)

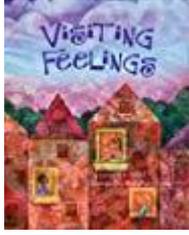
I Am An Artist (2 and 3 year olds tend to love and relate to this book)

The Day the Crayons Quit (I remember one of my children being confused after our dog died and finding comfort in relating to one of the crayons in this story who felt empty)

**Other items that can be helpful to include in a calming kit are:**

- **paper for tearing or scrunching**
- **balls**
- **soft cushion**
- **play-dough**
- **stuffed animal**
- **simple puzzles**
- coloring books
- bubbles
- massage ball
- **papers and markers**
- tissues

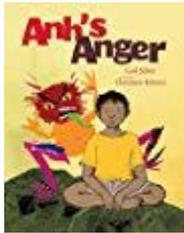
## My Amazon Picks



[Visiting Feelings](#)

**\$13.46** \$14.95

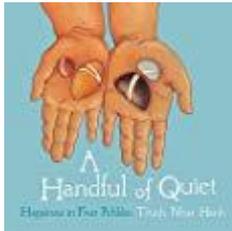
(62)



[Anh's Anger](#)

**\$14.49** \$16.95

(86)



[A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles](#)

**\$12.58** \$14.95

(178)



[Frick Frack Fidgets - Fidget Toy for Relaxing Therapy Set of 10 - Relieves Stre...](#)

(793)

All

[Ads by Amazon](#)

Depending on your child's age, notice what types of toys will be most helpful and safe.

While there are lots of options to add to a calming kit, I find children are much more likely to use it if it has just a few items, three or four options is plenty.

Don't forget to allow your child to explore the calming kit items when they are feeling calm and also talk to them about how and when to use the kit to feel better. Keep your kit somewhere your child has access to it as well.

**Parents can be a big influence in how children learn to calm down.**

**A first and very important step for young children to calm down is reconnecting with you, so whenever possible, try to stay present and help your child weather the emotional storm.**



POSITIVE PARENTING CONNECTION

# ANGER MANAGEMENT CALMING KITS

Because children are watching us to understand how to navigate emotions and social norms, it's important to show children that it is possible to stay calm and not over-react even when big, out of bounds feelings & behaviors show up. (Ok sometimes we fail miserably at that...and so will our children. Strive to be patient with yourself and your child and to reconnect when that does happen.)

## **Beyond a calming kit, you might want to create a calm down plan for the whole family.**

A calm down plan helps children know they will always have the option of a safe way for feelings to come up, get processed (crying, giggles, raging, stomping) and accepted. The key is that the child needs to be involved in setting up this plan, and never forced to do so.

Responding calmly to your child, even in the face of misbehavior, and teaching them to recognize and manage emotions is not only a good idea, it is very important step to reducing aggression and anger in the early years.

If you are feeling challenged with this at home and want more info on calm down plans check out our newsletter gift right up at the top of the page. When you sign up to our newsletter you can download a comprehensive e-booklet on aggression, anger and calming tools for the early years.

What moments are most challenging for you and your child right now that a calming kit might help with?

Peace & Be Well,

Ariadne