

HEALTHIER MINDS

Emotional Regulation Strategies for Children and Young People



Learn to Breathe

Hand Breathing

Trace one finger up and over the fingers of your other hand. As you move your finger up breathe in and as you move your finger down breath out. Go from thumb to pinkie and back again then swap hands.



Balloon Breathing

Find a comfortable position and close the eyes.

Start to think about the breath, become more aware of how you breathe in and out taking 3 deeper breaths.

Imagine a deflated balloon, it can be any colour you like perhaps the favourite colour or a colour you find relaxing. Pick up the balloon and put it to the mouth taking a deep breath in. Breathe out slowly imagining the balloon getting gradually bigger. Practice making the breath out longer than the breath in so that each time you breathe out the balloon gets bigger and bigger. As you do this imagine the balloon turns into a shape. It can be any shape you want but make it a shape that makes you happy. It might be an animal, an object or even a person. See the balloon getting bigger and bigger and feel the warmth and happiness that the shape and colour gives you. Continue to breathe deeply now keeping the balloon at a constant size but enjoy seeing the balloon dance around on the breath. Now imagine the balloon drifting away. Watch it dance on the breeze, move up and down and around as it drifts further away. As you watch it float away imagine it is taking all the worries with you leaving you feeling calm, relaxed and happy.

Count to 5 slowly before you open the eyes.

Sniffing Hot Chocolate

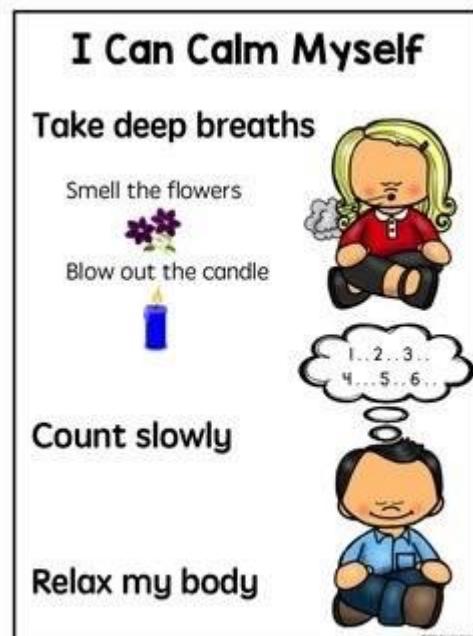
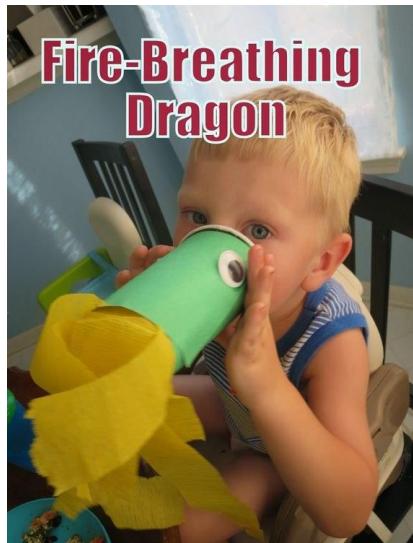
Together pretend to hold a cup of hot chocolate up to your lips. Prompt some basic visualisation and encourage the child to 1st smell the cocoa by breathing deeply through her nose and exhaling through her mouth to cool it down. Encourage this pattern a few times experimenting with the breath so it's not too hard or fast (and blows the cocoa out of the cup) but not too slow either.

Blowing Bubbles

Half fill a plastic cup with water and use a straw to blow gentle bubbles in the water. Experiment with what happens if you blow too hard – the water spills out! Practice keeping the water and bubbles in the cup.

The Breath Button

Choose an object in the room that can become a breath button – an item that whenever it's touched the child is reminded to take a big deep breath. It could be a door knob, an object on a shelf or draw an actual button on the wall; or it could be something that the child has on them at all times (e.g. a button in their pocket). The child can also be cued to take a deep breath by the adult with a simple, verbal or non-verbal cue and the adult touching the button. This is the child's cue to take a breath and calm down and can be used proactively or preventatively as required.



Make a dragon out of a cup and strips of tissue paper. Practice making the dragon breathe fire.

Deep Breathing Check

After you have spent some time practicing deep breathing with the children, teach them this quick method to check in and see if they are chest or tummy breathing. While teaching deep breathing to children, deep, diaphragmatic breathing is often referred to as "tummy breathing." To do the check, instruct the child to put one hand on her chest, the other hand on her tummy. Take some slow deep breaths. If the hand on her chest is moving, then she is still taking shallow chest breaths and it's time to practice more tummy breaths. If the hand on her tummy is moving, then she is successfully engaging the diaphragm in deep breathing. Time to celebrate!!!



Drain

Extend arms out, pretending your arms are faucets. Tighten arm, shoulder, and face muscles. Exhale slowly making a "sssshhh" sound and release all your muscles, draining out the stress.



S.T.A.R.

Smile, Take a deep breath And Relax.
Encourage belly breathing where the tummy goes out when the air goes in, and in when the air goes out. Also help children learn to exhale slower than they inhale.



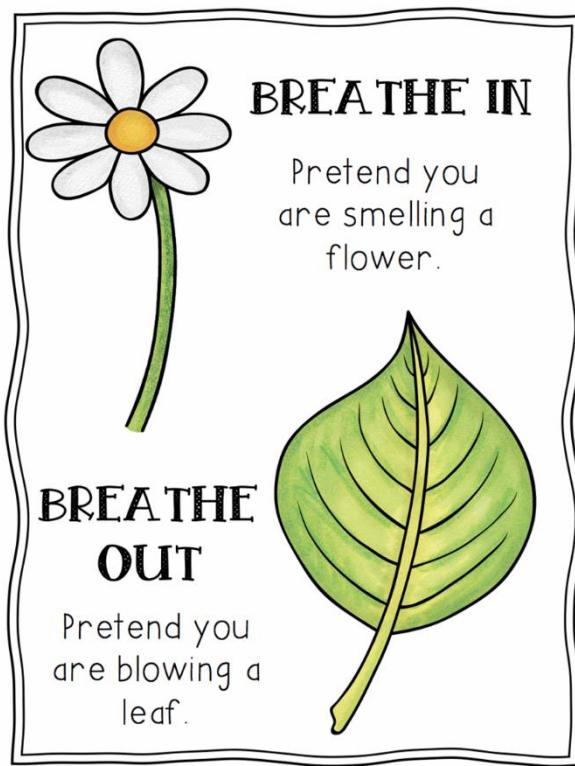
Pretzel

Standing up, cross your ankles. Now cross your right wrist over left, turn your hands so your thumbs are facing the floor, put palms together and interlace fingers. Bend your elbows out and gently turn your hands down and toward your body until they rest on the center of your chest. Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Relax and breathe.



Balloon

Place your hands on top of your head and interlace your fingers. Breathe in through your nose as you raise your arms, inflating an imaginary balloon. Release the air in the balloon by pursing your lips, exhaling slowly, lowering your arms and making a "pbpbpbpbpb" sound.



Use Your Imagination

Happy Room

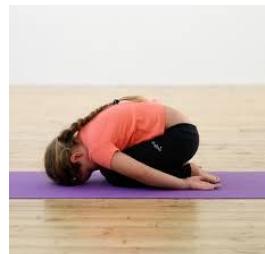
Find a comfortable position and close the eyes.

Start to think about the breath, become more aware of how you breathe in and out taking 3 deeper breaths.

Now imagine walking into a room which makes you feel really happy, calm and relaxed. Take a moment to look around the room. What things do you see? See everything really clearly in colour. What smells do you notice? What sounds do you hear? Take time to touch things. How do they feel? Walk around and explore the whole room and enjoy the sensation of feeling happy and calm. Choose a comfortable place to sit down and take a few moments to look around the room. Feel relaxed as you take in the room, all the sights, sounds and smells. Breathe in calm and breathe out stress and frustration. As you breathe out imagine the frustration and stress slipping out of the room leaving you feeling only happy and calm. Take the attention back to the breathing and count to 5 slowly before you open the eyes.

Little Mouse

1. Release the hands and gently fold over the legs with the forehead resting on the ground.
2. Be quiet and still like a little sleeping Dormouse.



Do Nothing Doll

Roll onto the back and lie flat.

1. Make sure the spine is straight and look up at the ceiling.
2. Close the eyes.
3. Let the arms and legs flop onto the mat like a rag doll.
4. Feel the ground beneath you.
5. Imagine the mat/the floor is a piece of hot toast and you are a little ball of butter gently melting over the toast.



Playdough Minds

Play with a ball of playdough and tell the child his/her mind is just like playdough – it can be stretched, changed, grow depending on what we tell it (how we manipulate it). Talk about the power we have to remind our brains to be calm. Practice good, happy thoughts (e.g. I am good at this, I can do this, I will have a good time, I choose how I feel, I remember to take a deep breath and squeeze my hands when I'm nervous) and for every negative thought remove a bit of playdough, transform it in shape and give it a more positive thought and return it to the bigger ball.

Pack Your Bag

When you go to school or on holiday you pack a bag. You pack all the essentials in and check it so you don't forget anything. It's just as important to pack a mental bag so you have everything you need if you face a difficult situation.

Take a deep breath and close your eyes. Spend a minute or 2 focusing on your breathing – try not to be distracted by other thoughts but if you are just bring your focus back to your breath.

Imagine a bag in front of you – it might be your favourite bag or one you've made up in your mind. It might be very plain or very colourful or covered in stickers or pictures of your favourite things.

Once you have a clear image of your bag. Start to think about some of the things which make you feel happy, relaxed, confident and calm. You might picture:

- a **person** like a family member or friend
- an **activity** like swimming, running or drawing
- an **object** like a bed, music player, paint brush, tv
- a **place** like the beach or a room in the house
- a **word or phrase**, positive mantra or something good that someone has said about you
- a **strategy** which you have developed to help you cope like walking away, counting to 10, breathing deeply

You can picture as many or as few things as you like as long as they are images that you associate with being relaxed and happy.

Take some time to look at the things you've selected – some more might pop into your mind as you're doing this. Focus on the good feelings you get when you think about these items. Remember it doesn't matter what size your bag is everything will fit in! When you are happy with your items you can start to put them in the bag – imagine physically putting them in.

Now you have all the things you need in one place. When you start to feel nervous, worried or upset you can imagine opening up your bag and pulling out some of the things you might need to help you feel better in that moment.

Be Mindful

Relaxation Station

Develop a “Relaxation Station.” within a room. This should be a consistent, calming spot where kids and adults alike can go to relax. Place some comforting pillows, hang a pretty curtain, and include calm, soft lighting. You might want to consider some calming music, nature sounds, rosewater or lavender scents, nature pictures, sweet smelling bean bags to cover the eyes, stress balls to squeeze, blankets, and a favorite stuffed toy.

When consistently used over time, the relaxation response will come automatically upon entering the space. Spend some time practicing relaxation activities in the space to further strengthen the relaxation response associated with it.

Mindful Posing

The Superman: stand with the feet just wider than the hips, fists clenched, and arms reached out, stretching the body out as long as possible.

The Wonder Woman: stand tall with legs wider than hip-width apart and hands or fists placed on the hips

Safari

Say that you will be going on a safari, and their goal is to notice as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, and any other animals as they can. Anything that walks, crawls, swims, or flies is of interest, and they'll need to focus all of their senses to find them, especially the little ones

Texture bag

Place several small, interestingly shaped or textured objects in a bag, and have each child reach in to touch an object, one at a time, and describe what they are touching. Make sure they don't take the object out of the bag, forcing them to use only their sense of touch to explore the object.

Musical Statues

When the music stops hold a pose – not a competition, just try to hold the position and be aware of bodily sensations and breathing.

Cloud Garden Game

Arrange cushions in a circle to form the “cloud garden”. Start with some gentle stretching to signal the body to begin to relax. Explain to children that this cloud garden is a place for all of us to relax. It is a place for peaceful voices and peaceful bodies. Sit on the pillow and give everyone a few cotton balls to hold. Each of the cotton balls represents something you would like to give to the cloud garden. This can be a special wish or affirmation related to bedtime such as “I am feeling light and soft like a fluffy cloud” or “I am ready for peaceful sleep.” Or, if you have had a particularly challenging day, this can be thoughts or feelings you would like to release into the cloud garden in order to feel more relaxed and ready to sleep. Take turns releasing the cotton balls into the circle.

I Spy

It's the game you know and love but instead of sounds the child has to find objects which fit into a specific category.

e.g, 'I spy with my little eye something....

- Squishy
- Pink
- Round
- Funny

Encourage the child to take a turn of asking you to find something

Move Your Body

Relax and Release

Pull the hands into very tight fists.
Ahh, let them go with a swish, swish, swish.
Squeeze tight, tight, tight with all the might.
Now just relax and make them light.
Curl the toes into a ball.
Now let them go, release them all.
Squeeze tight, tight, tight with all the might.
Now just relax and make them light.

Shake Out

For a quick energy shift—help the child to shake out their stress. Tell them that we are going to shake, shake, shake our bodies until all the tense energy is released into the space around us. Begin by simply allowing the body to shake in whatever way it feels comfortable. Let go everywhere. Pay attention to the energy moving through the body. Remember there is nothing to “do”—just relax and allow it to happen. The perfect amount of energy will be released. After you are done shaking, stop for a moment and check in with the body. Simply pay attention to the sensations and how you feel.

Big Fat Puddle

Pretend you are standing in your bare feet in a big, fat muddy puddle

Squish your toes right down in the mud

Try to get right down to the bottom of the puddle

Now step out of the mud and relax your feet

Let your toes go loos and see how nice that feels

Back into the muddy puddle

Squish your toes right down

Use your legs to help you push right down

Push down, harder, harder

Come back out the puddle now

Relax your feet, legs and toes

It feels so good to relax – feel all warm and tingly all over

Squeezing Lemons

Imagine squeezing all the juice out of a lemon by closing your fist tight. Hold for 5 seconds then release for 5.

Repeat with the same hand 5 times and then swap to the other hand

Focus on how each hand feels when it's squeezing the lemon and relaxing and compare to the other hand

Fly on your Nose

Now a nasty old fly has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. Wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can.

Good, you've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose.

OOPS, here he comes again, right in the middle of your nose. Shoo him off. Wrinkle your nose again very tightly. Notice how your cheeks, your mouth, your eyes and your forehead get all wrinkled too. Make lots of tight wrinkles to scare him off.

Hold it tight. Okay, now you can let go. He's gone for good now. You can relax. Let your face go smooth. No wrinkles anywhere.

Walk a Maze

Take some chalk outside and create a pattern on the ground like a snake or a maze or a curvy line and ask the child to try to follow it like on a tight rope and be careful not to fall off. Watch out for the scary crocodiles or lava below!!

Repetitive, Sensory Experiences

All are great for calming the brain. Try things like:

- Marching on the spot
- Knitting or finger knitting
- Gardening – especially digging, planting
- Throwing and catching a ball
- Hand massage
- Races with different running styles – running, hopping, skipping, jumping etc

KIDS 7 MINUTE HIIT WORK OUT FOR SELF-REGULATION

Set an interval timer and complete each animal movement for 45 seconds, with 15 seconds of rest in between. Do as many as you can!



FROG JUMPS

Hop, hop, back and forth like a frog



BEAR WALK

Hands & feet on the floor, hips high - walk left and right



GORILLA SHUFFLE

Sink into a low sumo squat, with hands on the floor, shuffle around the room.



STARFISH JUMPS

Jumping jacks as fast as you can, with arms and legs spread wide.



CHEETAH RUN

Run in place, as FAST as you can! Just like the fastest animal in the Sahara.



CRAB CRAWL

Sit and place your palms flat on the floor behind you near your hips. Lift up off the ground and crawl.



ELEPHANT STOMPS

March in place lifting your knees as high as you can and stomping the ground as hard as you can!

GARDEN YOGA FOR KIDS



Pretend to be a tree

Tree Pose: Stand on one leg. Bend the other knee and place the sole of your foot on your inner thigh. Sway like a tree in the breeze. Now the other side.



Pretend to be a frog

Squat Pose: Come down to a squat with your knees apart and arms resting between your knees. Touch your hands to the ground. Jump like a frog.



Pretend to be a seed

Child's Pose: Sit back on your heels and bring your forehead down to rest on the floor. Pretend to be a seed in the garden.



Pretend to be a butterfly

Cobbler's Pose: Sit on your buttocks with a tall spine. Bend your legs with the soles of your feet together. Flap your legs like the wings of a butterfly.



Pretend to be a flower

Flower Pose: Lift your bent legs, balancing on your sitting bones. Weave your arms under your legs, palms up. Pretend to be a flower in bloom.



Childhood 101 & Kids Yoga Stories

printable yoga poster

What Zone Are You In?

Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
Sick Sad Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	Mad/Angry Mean Yelling/Hitting Disgusted Out of Control

What zone am I in?

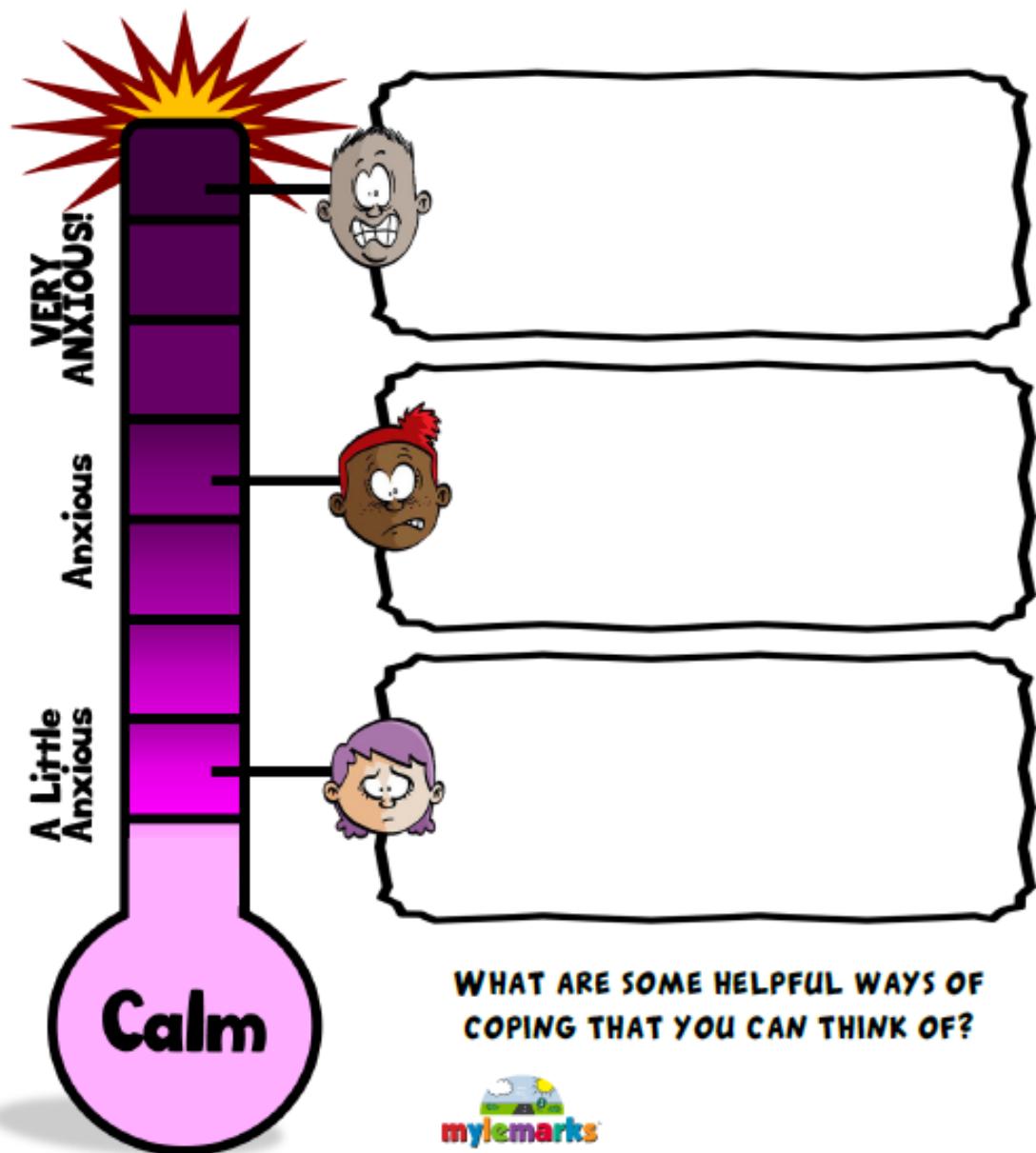


Use tools to get in the green zone.



ANXIETY THERMOMETER

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS OR SITUATIONS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL
A LITTLE ANXIOUS, ANXIOUS, AND VERY ANXIOUS?

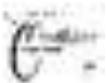


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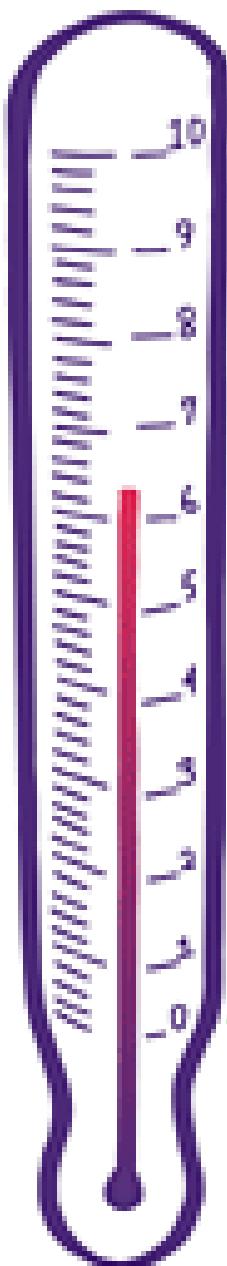
My Anxiety Thermometer

Things I feel
or do

What I can do
to calm down



THE FEAR THERMOMETER

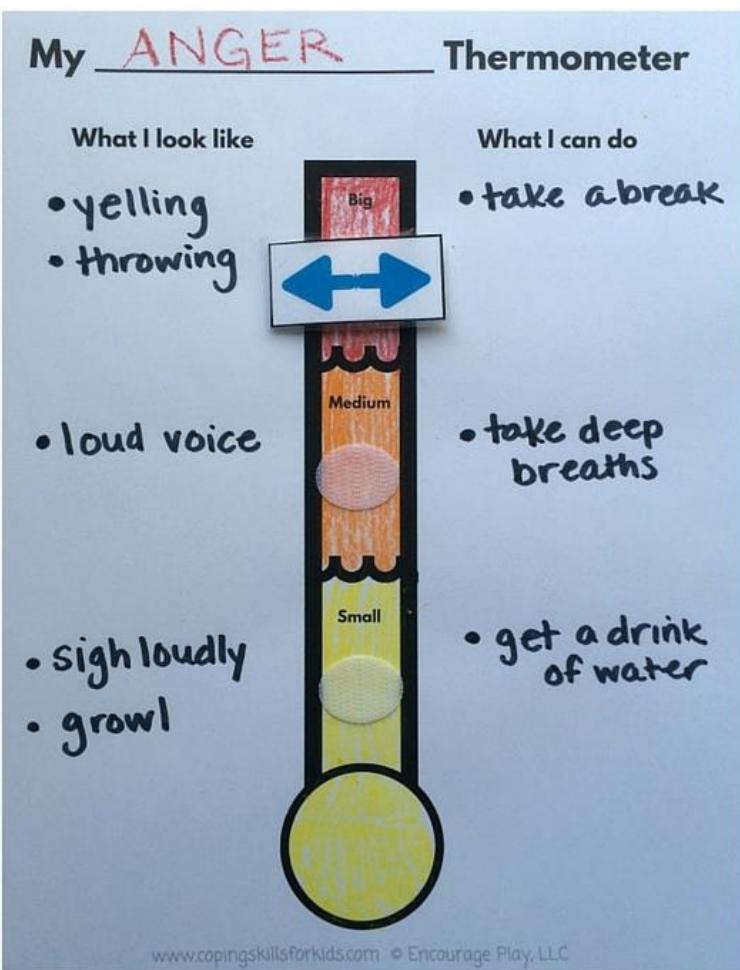


"Yikes! Get me out of here!"

"This is hard, but I'm in control!"

"No problem!"

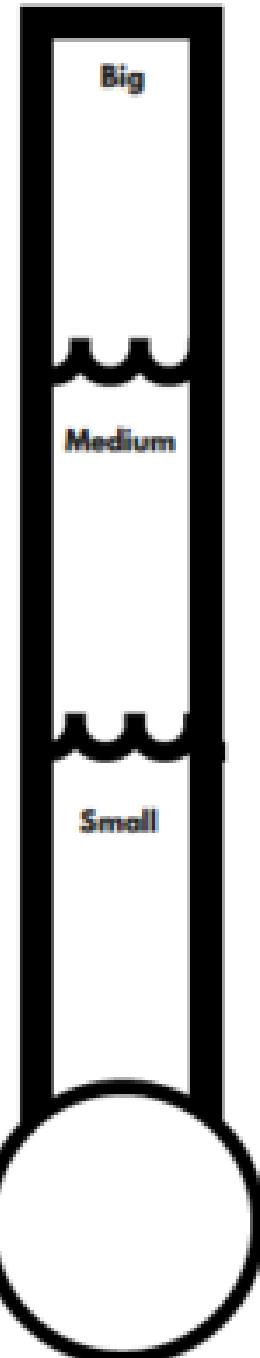
Making a Feelings Thermometer



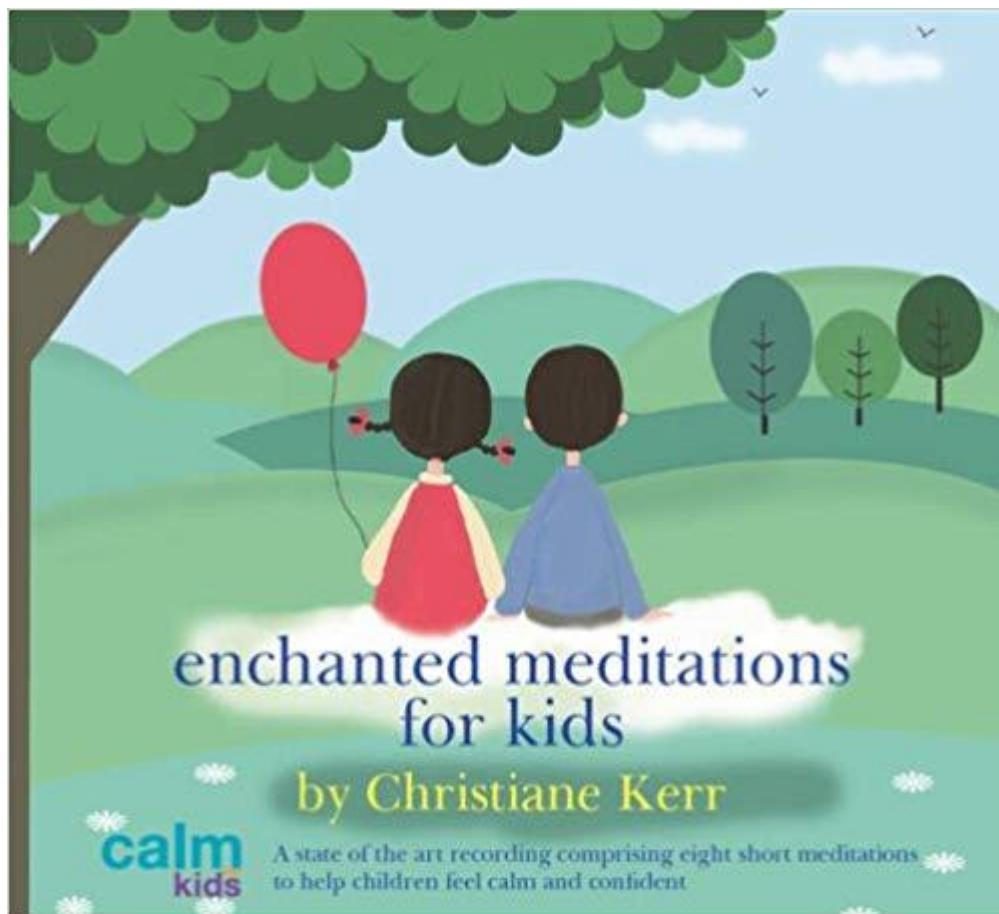
Help Your Child Understand and
Manage their Emotions

My _____ Thermometer

What I look like



What I can do



<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Enchanted-Meditations-Kids-Christiane-Kerr/dp/1901923894>

Fiction Books

[The Huge Bag of Worries by Virgina Ironside](#)

[The Worrysaurus by Rachel Bright](#)

[Help Your Dragon Deal with Anxiety by Steve Herman](#)

[My Strong Mind by Niels van Hove](#)

[Sully the Seahorse by Natalie Pritchard](#)



The WORRYSAURUS



Non Fiction Books

[You're a Star: A Child's Guide to Self-Esteem by Poppy O'Neill](#)

[Don't Worry Be Happy by Poppy O'Neill](#)

[No Worries! Mindful Kids: An Activity Book for Children who Sometimes Feel Anxious or Stressed by Dr. S Coombes](#)

[Breathe like a Bear: 30 Mindful Moments for Kids](#)

