

Ways to help children stay calm and happy

Break in

Stop the behaviour

Ways to Break in

Get down on the child's level, make eye contact, put a hand out, palm facing down, and say 'stop!'. Do not get too close when doing this and ensure the hand is palm down - children who have experienced or witnessed violence may feel threatened if the hand is up.

If the child is physically hurting someone and the above doesn't work say 'I need to stop you from hurting John. I am going to carry you to the corner and stay with you until you can stop hitting. I will not hurt you'. Then lift the child and carry them to somewhere quiet.

Note that many children who have had adverse experiences in the very early years have a different tolerance for closeness. They may find closeness comforting, but it also might trigger fear or anger. See if you can work out what the child's optimal closeness is and work with that.

Breakout

Break out of the situation by taking the child away or doing something completely different

Ways to Breakout

1. Jumping up and down on trampolines.
2. Hanging upside down.
3. Rolling on the ground.
4. Jumping on bubble wrap to pop all of the bubbles.
5. Brushing hair.
6. Hand massage.
7. Play doh.
8. Getting a group to clap in a rhythm, creating a drum sequence using hands and slapping thighs.
9. Stomping.
10. Blowing up balloons or blowing bubbles.
11. Singing with movement - e.g. if you're happy and you know it; hokey pokey.
12. Play 'who can wrap a blanket around their body the tightest'.

Build up!

When the child is calm, help the child do something in a relationship with an adult caregiver to build up coping skills

Ways to Build up

Building up emotional and behavioural regulation skills occurs in relationships. Relationships are with peers as well as with Early Childhood Professionals. It is helpful to remember that many of these children will require significant adult structure and supervision to be able to play and interact successfully with their peers.

Activities:

1. Reading a story together, getting the child to sit close and talking together about the book.
2. Helping tasks - e.g. packing up, putting things out for snacks.
3. Interactive games that involve motor coordination, e.g. clapping together, jumping together, singing in a group, blowing bubbles, lifting up a parachute and climbing underneath.
4. Rocking together gently.
5. Drawing/painting together and talking about what the child is showing you.