

HOW TO GET CALM BEFORE YOU LOSE YOUR COOL

A Nervous System Guide for Parents,
Educators, and Kids

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Generation Bounce Back Media

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

I 've never been one to keep my cool. Ask my son.

There's an old adage: "the cobbler's children have no shoes." I teach kids resilience and nervous system management skills, so I'm challenged, almost daily, to match my home life with my professional know-how. I'm learning though; when I manage my nervous system, I'm modeling how to keep cool for my teenager and the young people I work with.

Kids watch what we do more than what we say.

For over 20 years, I've worked at the intersection of child development, neuroscience, education, and resilience, supporting parents, teachers, youth workers, and communities to unlock human potential by working with the brain instead of against it. My work has taken me into public housing communities, classrooms, courts, and government agencies, all guided by one mission: **to help young people and the adults who care for them thrive in the face of stress, trauma, and constant change.** Nervous system regulation is at the core of what helps prevent youth from hurting

themselves or others. That's why it is central to mental health, violence reduction, preventing substance abuse, and supporting emotional wellness.

Why do we want a regulated nervous system?

Simple. So we can feel good more often. Isn't that what we're all seeking? **We want to feel calmer, more in control of our moods, and better able to manage the stressors that come our way.** That's what it means to be resilient.

Parents want to be able to manage behaviors that are troubling, exhausting, or even frightening. These are behaviors that make us worry our child will never learn to regulate. We imagine what our young one will be like at 30: still tantruming in the grocery store, yelling at their partner, or running from their problems? Unfortunately, this is the state many adults find themselves in. Most of us could use better skills to manage our own triggered responses to stress.

People who work with kids often tell me they are given tools to help them teach, such as setting expectations or managing behavior. But they were never taught how to help a nervous system move from overwhelmed to ready-to-learn. They know it's nearly impossible to work with a child who is about to lose their cool, let alone an *entire classroom* of fidgety, emotional, or dysregulated kids.

You're probably aware that trying to control kids is difficult and often counterproductive. The greatest teachers and most experienced parents know how to meet a dysregulated nervous system with steadiness and care. In these pages, I believe I've captured their skill, clarity, and calm approach. **Here's the secret: When we,**

as adults, regulate ourselves and keep our cool, we teach kids how to keep theirs.

Nervous system regulation is the foundation for everything that helps kids become prepared for adulthood. A regulated child is more able to focus, connect, learn, take risks, and feel good in their own body and mind. That leads them to grow into adults who are more capable of managing life's ups and downs and thus more focused on goals, success, and happiness.

This handbook translates a few basic neuroscientific facts into practical, usable tools for real life.

- You'll learn why kids behave the way they do when they're dysregulated.
- How stress shows up differently across ages and environments.
- What you can do to help them reset.

Just as importantly, **you'll learn how to regulate yourself**, because calm is contagious, and kids pick up feelings of safety from the adults around them.

What I'll share with you will help you create the environment you may have missed growing up: a home and school life where you felt protected, capable, connected, and inspired.