

The Calm Kit for Parents of Anxious Kids

Tools to Calm the Nervous System
and Support Your Neurodivergent
Child

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This printable menu gives you a flexible list of calming actions your child can try when anxiety is rising or emotions feel overwhelming.

2 Visual Calm Plan Template

Make a personalised calm plan for your child

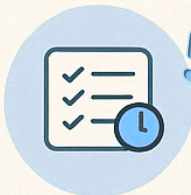


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BONUS: Visual Calm-Down Cards for kids



Dr Lucy Russell
Child Clinical Psychologist

I'm Dr Lucy Russell. I specialize in working with families of autistic and ADHD children. Autism runs in my family too.









Calm Moments Menu

Parent Instructions


What is this?

This printable menu gives you a flexible list of calming actions your child can try when anxiety is rising or emotions feel overwhelming. It's a practical way to support your child's regulation without needing to think on the spot.

How to use it:

-  Keep it somewhere visible - like the fridge, calm box, or family folder.
-  In a tricky moment, offer just one or two calming choices. You can point to options, or let your child point.
-  It puts them gently in control.
-  Add your child's own calming favourites at the bottom over time.

Why it works:

When children are anxious, their nervous system becomes dysregulated. This means their brain is stuck in “alarm mode” (fight, flight, freeze or shutdown) 

The **Calm Moments Menu** helps shift them back into their “thinking brain” by engaging the senses, body, or relationships.

Here’s how each section supports this shift:



Move My Body

Why it helps:

Physical movement activates the vestibular and proprioceptive systems (balance and body-position senses)-, which help regulate the nervous system. It also releases calming brain chemicals like dopamine and serotonin.



Connect & Feel Safe

Why it helps:

Safe connection with a trusted adult or familiar object (like a toy or pet) calms the brain’s threat system. Oxytocin is released through touch and closeness, which lowers stress and builds a sense of safety.



Calm On My Own

Why it helps:

Some children regulate best when they have time and space alone. Familiar sensory tools, soothing sounds or predictable solo routines can help them recover their balance in a low-demand way.



Calm When We're Out

Why it helps:

Outings can be overwhelming. These options support regulation by using grounding (e.g. “5 green things”), sensory tools, and gentle nervous system input like deep breaths or hydration.

THE CALM MOMENTS MENU



Move My Body

- Jump on a trampoline or the spot
- Push hands against a wall
- Walk barefoot outside
- Rock gently in a chair
- Do star jumps or animal walks
- Carry something heavy (e.g, book basket)



Connect & Feel Safe

- Hug a parent, pet or soft toy
- Wrap up in a blanket
- Read a favourite book together
- Sit together in a "calm corner"
- Listen to a calming voice or story
- Hold in a den or under a blanket



Calm On My Own

- Use a fidget or chew toy
- Listen to music or a nature sound playlist
- Look through a photo book or memory jar
- Stretch or lie on the floor with eyes closed
- Use a calming scent (lavender stick etc.)



Calm When We're Out

- Count 5 green things I can see
- Look up at the sky
- Take sips of water
- Stroke something soft (e.g, fabric, pet)
- Ask to go somewhere quieter
- Use ear defenders or headphones



My Child's Favourites

2 Calm Plan Template

Parent Instructions

What is this?

This calm plan helps you map out what works best for your child when they're anxious, overwhelmed or nearing a meltdown. It's a simple, clear reference for you — and for anyone else who supports your child.

How to use it:

- Fill in the boxes when you're in a calm space, not during a difficult moment.
- Keep it somewhere accessible, like the fridge, calm kit, or school bag.
- Use it to remind yourself (or others) what helps and what doesn't.
- You can involve your child if that feels right — especially in choosing calming strategies.
- Update it when things change.

Why it works:

When you're in a high-stress moment, it's hard to think clearly. This plan helps take the pressure off by giving you a ready-made guide. It also helps your child feel seen, understood and supported in the way they need.

My Child's Calm Plan



What Helps Me Feel Calmer

(List calming tools, spaces, or support)



Things That Make It Worse

(What to avoid in anxious moments)



What Adults Can Do to Help

(Ways to support co-regulation)



How I (Parent/Carer) Can Stay Calm

(Simple actions or phrases that help you keep steady)



Notes / Personal Insights

3 Body Clues Spotting Sheet



Parent Instructions

What is this?

This sheet helps you recognise your child's early signs of rising anxiety - before it tips into overwhelm or meltdown. The earlier you notice the clues, the easier it is support regulation gently and effectively.

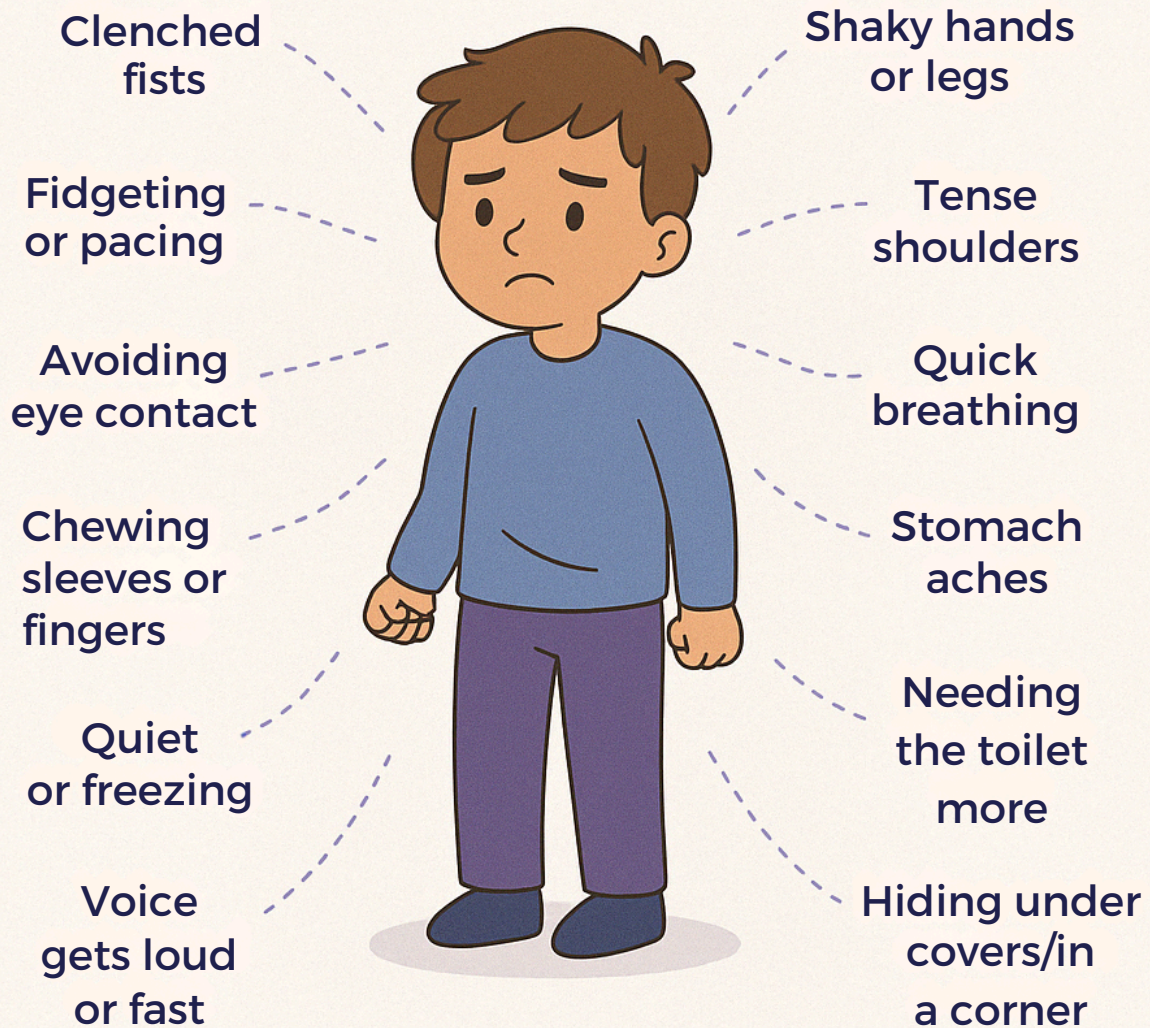
How to use it:

- ✓ Look at the common body clues shown on the sheet. Tick any that match your child.
- ✓ Talk to your child about what anxiety feels like in their body (if they're open to it).
- ✓ Add any unique signs your child shows in the blank boxes.
- + Keep this sheet somewhere visible as a gentle reminder to catch the early warning signs.

Why it works:

Anxiety often shows up in the body before children can explain it in words. Learning to recognise these physical signs helps you take calm supportive action early. Over time, it also helps your child become more aware of their own signals and needs.

What Anxiety Looks Like in My Child's Body



My Child's Unique Signs

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |

4



Sensory Soothers Checklist

Parent Instructions

What is this?

This checklist lists **quick** sensory ideas to help regulate your child when their nervous system is dysregulated. Each suggestion uses a different sense to help restore balance and calm.

How to use it:








- Keep this somewhere accessible e.g. family folder, calm kit, or fridge.
- In a tricky moment, offer your child just one or two options from the list.
- Make a note if your child has a favourite sensory soother.

Why it works:









The brain uses the senses to detect safety in the world. Sensory inputs can soothe the "alarm centre" (limbic system) of the brain, helping to re-regulate your child. Different types of sensory input (e.g. movement or sound) work for different children, so it can be helpful to have options at your fingertips.



Understanding the 8 Senses

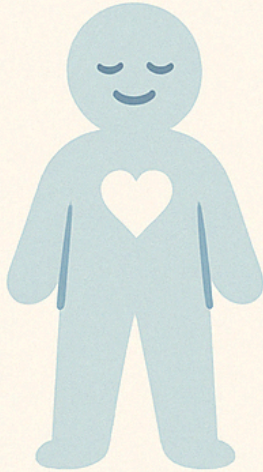
| Sense | What it Does | Example Clues When Dysregulated |
|---|---|--|
|  Visual (Sight) | Helps process what we see | Light sensitivity, avoids eye contact |
|  Auditory (Hearing) | Detects and filters sound | Startles easily, covers ears |
|  Olfactory (Taste) | Interprets scents | Strong reactions to smells |
|  Tactile (Touch) | Interprets textures, pressure, | Picky eater, avoids certain textures |
|  Vestibular (Balance & Movement) | Controls balance and spatial orientation | Seeks spinning/movement, afraid of swings |
|  Proprioception (Body Awareness) | Senses where body is in space | Clumsy, bumps into things, presses too hard |
|  Interoception (Inner Body Awareness) | Detects internal signals (e.g. hunger, thirst, emotion, pain) | Struggles to know when they're hungry, tired, anxious or need the toilet |

Quick Regulation Ideas by Sensory System

| Sense System | | Quick-Access regulation Ideas |
|---|------------------------|---|
|  | Visual | Dim lights, wear cap/hoodie, soft lighting |
|  | Auditory | Noise-cancelling headphones, white noise, gentle music |
|  | Smell | Scent stick, smell a favourite blanket/clothing |
|  | Taste | Suck a mint or chewy sweet, sip warm tea or smoothie |
|  | Touch | Soft blanket, warm bath, rub lotion or smooth stone |
|  | Vestibular | Swinging, spinning chair, gentle rocking or pacing |
|  | Proprio-ception | Wall pushes, bear hugs, carry something heavy |
|  | Intero-ception | Ask: "What's your body telling you?" + body scan/check-in visuals |

What's a Body Scan?

How Can It Help with Anxiety?



A body scan is a mindful check-in with your child's body from head to toe. It gently helps them tune in to and describe their internal signals, like a racing heart, butterflies, or a tight tummy.

Learning to spot these body clues helps your child practice emotional regulation. ✦

Sensory Strategies That Work for My Child

 ✦

5 The Calm Kit Cheatsheet

What To Do When Anxiety Hits



Parent Instructions

This one-page cheatsheet gives you clear step-by-step guide to follow when your child is anxious, overwhelmed, or melting down. It's a visual, fridge-friendly reminder of what helps — for you and your child — in the heat of the moment.

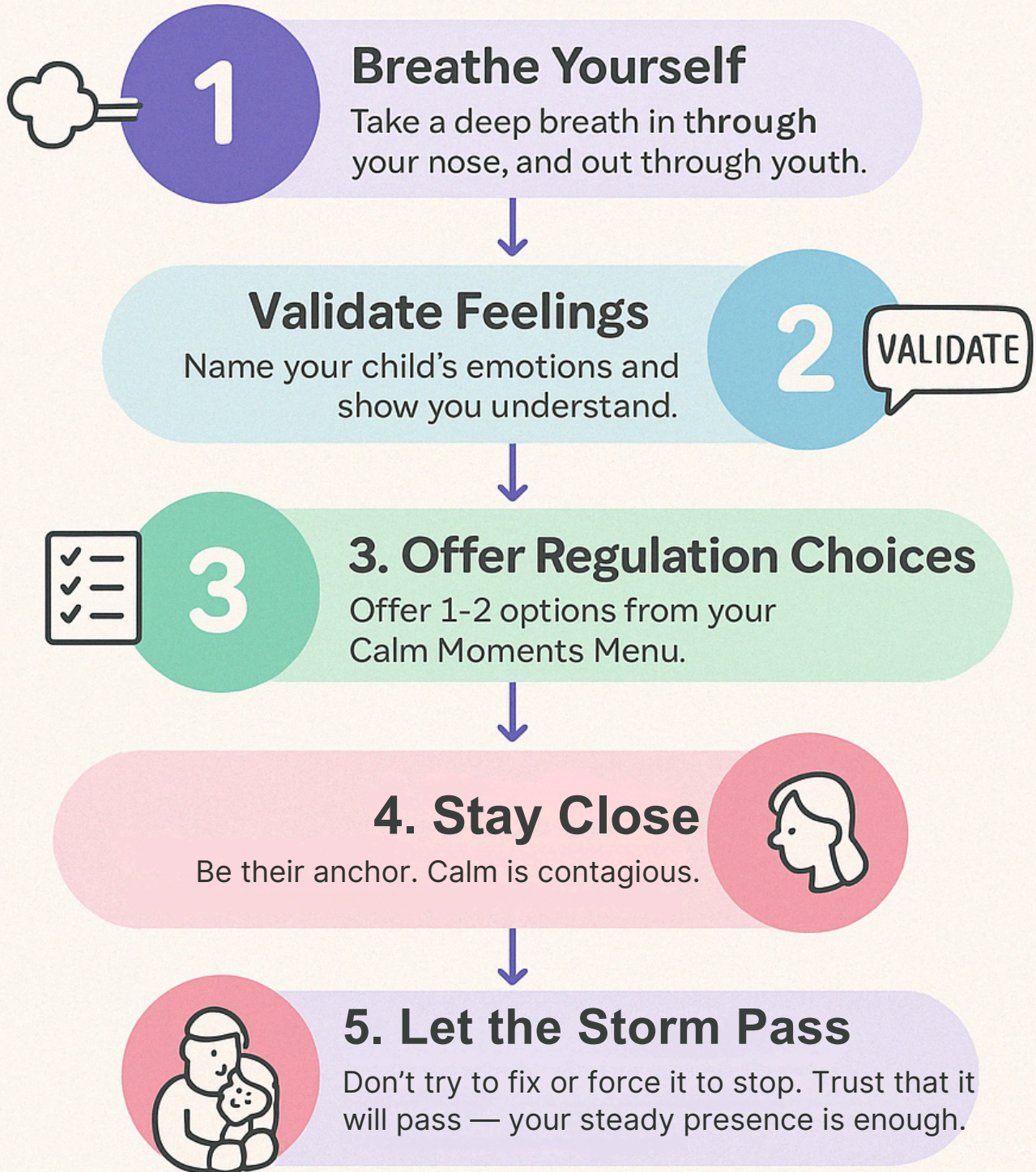
How to use it:

- Keep it somewhere easy to glance at — like the fridge, a calm box, or family folder.
- Use it as a guide for your own actions when anxiety escalates.
- You don't have to follow every step perfectly — just come back to the next one when you can.
- If your child has a key adult at school or another setting, share it with them too.

Why it works: When your child is dysregulated, their thinking brain is offline. They can't be reasoned with or problem-solved. But your calm, connected presence is powerful. This cheatsheet helps you regulate yourself first, then co-regulate with your child, and only later — when things have calmed — move into problem-solving if needed.

The Calm Kit Cheatsheet

What To Do When Anxiety Hits





Parent Calm Reminder Cards

Mini Mindset Shifts to Ground
You in Tough Moments



Parent Instructions

What are these?

These reminder cards offer quick, calming phrases to help you stay centred when your child is anxious, overwhelmed or having a meltdown. Each one is designed to shift your mindset gently and bring you back to calm.

How to use them:

- Print and cut out the cards.
- Keep a few where you'll see them; in your bag, on the fridge, near the kettle, by your bed.
- Choose the ones that speak to you. Use them like an anchor in hard moments.
- Try reading one aloud to yourself during or after a tricky interaction.
- You can also set one as your phone wallpaper, or tape it to your bathroom mirror.

Why they work:

When your child is dysregulated, you might feel panicked, powerless or overwhelmed. These cards are here to meet you in that moment. A few quiet words can interrupt the stress spiral, help you regulate, and bring you back to focusing on your child's needs.

Parent Calm Reminder Cards

I don't need to
fix this; I just
need to be here.

Every parent has
hard moments;
I'm not alone.

I am exactly the
parent my
child needs.

I don't need to
have all the ans
wers right now.

I will respond,
not react.

I'm bringing
the calm here

It's okay that
this is hard

I can't stop the
storm, but I can
calm myself

My child isn't giving
me a hard time;
they're having
a hard time

All my feelings
are okay.

BONUS RESOURCE!



Visual Calm-Down Choice Cards

Helping Your Child Choose What Helps



Parent Instructions

What are these? These cards give children a visual way to communicate their needs when they're anxious or overwhelmed.

Why they work: Visual calm-down choice cards give clear, predictable options, helping children feel safe and in control during overwhelm.

How to use them: Print and cut out the cards. Laminate if you want them to last longer. Keep them in a calm kit, on a ring, or in a pouch your child can access easily.

Offer just 1-2 options at time if your child is in distress.

Use them proactively too - before anxiety builds - so your child gets used to using them.

Encourage your child to choose what helps, or point if verbal communication is hard for them.

Use alongside your Calm Plan or Sensory Soothers list.



Headphones on



Weighted blanket



Fidget or squeeze



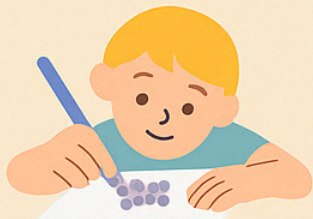
Wall push-ups



Big stretch



Sip of water



Draw a picture



Listen to music



Talk to someone



Hold something soft

What's Next?

If you've found something helpful in this kit – something that made you breathe a little easier. or helped your child feel a little more understood – I want you to know: there's more support where that came from.

If you're in the UK, you're warmly invited to join **Everlief Parent Club** – my membership community where we go even deeper together. Inside, you'll find step-by-step tools, calm guidance, and real conversations about how to support your neurodivergent child's wellbeing – and your own. We'd love to welcome you.

Parents everywhere can also explore my other workbooks and printables designed to support anxious or neurodivergent children in practical, reassuring ways.

Visit: www.theyarethefuture.co.uk/resources

No pressure at all – just an open door.

With warmth,

Dr Lucy Russell

Clinical Psychologist & Parent

