

# Safe Place Tip Sheet

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## The 5 Steps of Self-Regulation

### 1. I Am

- a. Being triggered/upset is the signal to go to the Safe Place. A child may realize they are upset and choose to go, or an adult help the child choose.

### 2. I Calm

- a. Use a calming strategy to soothe the survival and emotional states,
  - i. S.T.A.R., Balloon, and Drain are excellent tools.

### 3. I Feel

- a. Recognize the feeling, accept that it's ok to feel it, realize that you are not the feeling (I am not Angry, I am Sarah)
  - i. Pictures of emotions or Feeling Buddies can help children identify their emotion and realize it's not who they are as a person.

### 4. I Choose

- a. Choose whether or not to stay in that feeling. If not, choose an activity to further calm down
  - i. Drawing, Cranky Cream, read a book, or listening to music can be great ways to calm.

### 5. I Solve

- a. Choose how to solve the problem and act on it.
  - i. For children, this will often be the stage where they learn a new skill such as: learning to ask for help, learning how to resolve conflicts with friends, creating a visual of routines or a social story of success, learning additional strategies to manage situations outside of school that are impacting learning (death in family, violence, divorce, etc.)

## The Safe Place

The Safe Place is a self-regulation structure that combines the Conscious Discipline skill of composure with the power of perception. Children (and adults) use the Safe Place to calm down and regain composure when they are upset or over-stimulated. This in turn helps the person more accurately perceive the event that triggered them and respond more appropriately and be in a brain state to be able to learn a new skill. The Safe Place is NOT Time Out. It is a learning center where children are guided through the 5 steps of self-regulation. The younger a child is, and the newer to the Safe Place, the more adult guidance they will need.

Keep in mind, self-regulation (the Safe Place work) can happen anywhere: in the Safe Place, in another space, in your lap. Remember, the ultimate Safe Place is you (especially for younger children). In fact, a physical Safe Place is only appropriate from age 2 and up. And 2 and young 3-year-olds should never be sent to the Safe Place without an adult.

Some adults worry that children may overuse, or abuse, the Safe Place to get out of learning time. Use of the Safe Place should always be cause for celebration. The child is choosing to calm rather than act out. Any time that a child chooses to use the Safe Place, there is a reason. Rather than worrying about the learning they may be missing, choose curiosity instead. Why does the child feel like they need to be there? Did they have a bad night/are they tired? Is the lesson overwhelming? Did something stressful happen with another child? Are they sad and missing their family? Do they just need a break today? If you can find out the reason, you can work to solve the problem. Even if the reason is a mystery, you can celebrate the child's choice to self-regulate, and your choice to support their emotional needs.

## For the Classroom

- Materials Needed:
  1. Family Communication – to be sent out prior to starting a Safe Place (or before any major changes to its use)
  2. An area that's in a quiet part of the room with comfortable seating
  3. Breathing icons and/or other tools to help children use calming strategies
  4. Feeling Buddies and/or other tools to help children recognize their feelings
  5. Books, art supplies, Friends and Family Book, Cranky Cream, and/or other tools to help children continue to calm
- Steps to Success:
  1. Send out family communication prior to starting or changing the Safe Place in your classroom. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
  2. Set up your Safe Place in a quieter space in your room, make it comfortable and a place where children will want to be.
  3. Supply the Safe Place with breathing icons, Feeling Buddies, and other tools to help with self-regulation.
  4. Talk to the children about the Safe Place. You may want to emphasize how everyone gets upset, and that's ok, but we can feel better and the Safe Place can help.
  5. In the beginning, and with younger children, always have an adult go to the Safe Place with a child to guide them through the self-regulation process.
  6. Allow children to choose to go to the Safe Place when they feel like they need it. There is no such thing as abuse of the Safe Place. If a child feels they need to be there, there is ALWAYS a reason why.
  7. Model (you use it) and be a guide (you use it with them) in the Safe Place for children consistently.
  8. Change your methods in the Safe Place as needed if they don't seem to be meeting children's needs.

## Resources

- Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms by Dr. Becky Bailey
  - Chapter 4 – Composure
    - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-4-composure/>
- Creating the School Family: Bully-Proofing Classrooms Through Emotional Intelligence by Dr. Becky Bailey
  - Chapter 9 – Safe Place
- Safe Place
  - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/shuberts-classroom/safe-place/>
  - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/safe-place/>
  - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/iss-room/safe-place/>
  - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/> for many printables.