

The purpose of a calm box is to support a child who is feeling an intense emotion such as anger, frustration or who is feeling overwhelmed. Calm boxes are simple but useful resources that can be used for a variety of children or tailored to the individual child. When a child is feeling an intense emotion and struggling to regulate themselves, the objects in the calm box can be used to support them in finding their emotional balance.

The objects usually found in a calm box will meet a range of sensory needs, such as playdough, fidget toys, textured or weighted balls and bubbles. These are just a few of the objects that may be included to support a child to regulate their sensory and emotional needs.



Within our centres we may have calm boxes that are freely accessible to all children as well as some specifically made with the interests of particular children in mind. Specific boxes are clearly labelled with a photograph of the child to support them and their peers in recognising their individual possessions. Once a child is familiar in using a calm box, having one that is easy and clear to access at all times of the day promotes their sense of confidence and security in knowing that objects that bring them calm and comfort are not too far away.

Creating a calm box is simple and you can change the objects when they are not effective anymore.

- Start with a basket or small box
- Put a photograph of the child on the container to help them recognise it as theirs
- If a child uses PECS, Makaton or another communication tool add this symbol to the box and ensure you know the relevant sign.
- Select up to 5 small sensory objects to go in the container



When choosing your items you can think about the child's interests, if they love vehicles, you could add small cars that they could sort and count or drive up and down their legs to feel different types of pressure. If they have a favourite colour, select sensory objects that are all in that colour so they are surrounded by a colour that already promotes happiness for them and so will support the regulating of their emotions.



Introducing a calm box is most successfully achieved by including the child in making it, talk to them about being calm about how the object makes them feel and show them how to engage with some of the chosen objects. You might give them a choice between a larger selection of objects so that they feel ownership over what is in their box. When a child is then experiencing overwhelm or strong emotions you should offer comfort and label their emotions and bring their calm box to them encouraging them to explore the items within it. You should sit with the child even if they do not want to engage with you so that you are offering a calm presence and the opportunity for further comfort should they need it.

Through this recognition and labelling of emotions combined with repeatedly offering the calm box a child will become more aware of how they are feeling and when things are escalating and the ways in which they can regulate themselves again through familiar and comforting objects.



*There are no age boundaries on a calm box and a child should have access to these calming items for as long as they support them in understanding and regulating their emotions.*