

The Calm Down Script

A quick, repeatable language pattern for student de-escalation

What It Is

A calm down script is a short, intentional set of words you can use when a student is melting down emotionally or showing signs of distress. It helps you maintain a steady tone, communicate clear expectations, and stay consistent - even when the situation feels tense or unpredictable.

Why It Works

When a student enters crisis mode, the thinking part of the brain temporarily shuts down. In that state, they can't process long explanations or reasoning - but they *can* sense safety, predictability, and calm energy from you.

A calm down script accomplishes two powerful things:

- It helps the student recognize what's happening and understand what to do next.
 - It helps *you* stay grounded, focused, and emotionally regulated in the moment.
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How to Create Your Own Calm Down Script

Use this four-step formula as your guide:

- 1. State what the student is doing.**
("You're yelling right now.")
- 2. State what you need them to do.**
("I need you to take a breath.")
- 3. State why in terms of the student's needs or interests (not ours).**
("Because I want to help you feel better.")
- 4. Model the behavior.**
("Watch me. Breathe in. Breathe out.")

Once you've said the script once, you can vary the order of the lines depending on what feels natural in the moment. However, avoid changing the wording. Predictability helps students feel safe and signals emotional stability.

Sample Calm Down Script

“You’re really upset right now. I need you to take a slow breath with me because I want to help, but I can’t if you’re yelling. Watch me. Breathe in. Breathe out.”

Pro Tips

- Keep your script short. Use the least amount of words as possible
- Use the same calm tone every time; predictability builds safety.
- Practice your script until it becomes automatic and easy to recall under stress.
- Post it somewhere visible as a visual reminder during challenging moments.
- Consider adapting the same script for different age groups or emotional triggers.