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Calm Boxes

A simple and effective tool for helping children manage anxiety in school

Most schools have children in their classes who are finding it hard to settle or need some extra help. This can be particularly difficult for adopted and care experienced children and young people who have experienced adverse childhood experiences.



Who are calm boxes for?

They are suitable for any child, but are particularly useful if you

- are anxious and worried
- find change difficult
- have experienced loss or trauma
- find it hard to concentrate
- have difficulty settling

Setting up a calm box

Once you have established which child or children would benefit from using a calm box talk to them about how it can be used to help and why. For example, "If we feel worried about something it can help us to have something in our hand to hold".

Encourage the child to decorate the box so they take ownership of it and explain it will be kept in an easily accessible place in the classroom. Talk to the other children in the class about the calm box and how it can help.

Sometimes the other children are curious at to start with and then appear uninterested

What is in a calm box?

They can contain a selection of objects such as:

- a shell
- blue tac
- finger puppet
- small animal (soft toy or small plastic)
- a feather
- a fiddle toy
- something soft
- small Russian dolls
- picture of something that is important to child
- transitional object

How can a calm box be used?

The child is encouraged to choose one of the objects from the box to have with them at the start of the school day and should be given permission to change the object for another one several times during the day, but just keeping hold of one at a time. The child is encouraged to return the object to the box at the end of the school day

Depending on the child's needs they should be supported to access the box:

at regular intervals throughout the school day

after playtime/breaks and lunchtime

during an activity or during a part of the day they find tricky or difficult

during stressful times e.g., when teacher is not in class (change of teacher/substitute teacher)

Monitoring Calm Boxes

It is important that calm boxes are monitored closely:

- to ensure that the contents do not distract other children
- to observe when and how the child is using it and make changes where necessary
- to identify when the objects need changing for new ones, every 4 – 6 weeks approximately
- to evaluate its effectiveness

Resources:

Louise Bomber (2007). Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children in with Attachment Difficulties in Schools. London: Worth