

**EXECUTIVE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN—
PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN VERSION**

Read each item below and then rate that item based on how well it describes your child. Then add the three scores in each section. Find the three highest and three lowest scores.

Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

	Score
1. Acts appropriately in some situations where danger is obvious (e.g., avoiding hot stove).	_____
2. Can share toys without grabbing.	_____
3. Can wait for a short period of time when instructed by an adult.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
4. Runs simple errands (e.g., gets shoes from bedroom when asked).	_____
5. Remembers instructions just given.	_____
6. Follows two steps of a routine with only one prompt per step.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
7. Can recover fairly quickly from a disappointment or change in plans.	_____
8. Is able to use nonphysical solutions when another child takes toy away.	_____
9. Can play in a group without becoming overly excited.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
10. Can complete a 5-minute chore (may need supervision).	_____
11. Can sit through preschool "circle time" (15-20 minutes).	_____
12. Can listen to one to two stories at a sitting.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
13. Will follow an adult directive right after it is given.	_____
14. Will stop playing to follow an adult instruction when directed.	_____
15. Is able to start getting ready for bed at set time with one reminder.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
16. Can finish one task or activity before beginning another.	_____
17. Is able to follow a brief routine or plan developed by someone else (with model or demo).	_____
18. Can complete a simple art project with more than one step.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

(cont.)

Executive Function Activities for 3- to 5-year-olds

Children’s executive function and self-regulation skills grow at a fast pace during this period, so it is important to adapt activities to match the skills of each child. Younger children need a lot of support in learning rules and structures, while older children can be more independent. Ultimately, the goal is to shift children away from relying on adult regulation, so when the child seems ready, try to reduce the support you provide.



Imaginary play

During intentional imaginary play, children develop rules to guide their actions in playing roles. They also hold complex ideas in mind and shape their actions to follow these rules, inhibiting impulses or actions that don’t fit the “role.” Players often take ideas from their own lives, such as going to the doctor’s office. They might act “sick,” be examined by the doctor, and receive a shot. The “doctor” talks and acts like a doctor (calm and reassuring), the “sick child” talks and acts like a sick child (sad and scared), and the child in the role of “parent” talks and acts like a concerned parent (worried and caring). While younger children tend to play alone or in parallel, children in this age range are learning to play cooperatively and often regulate each other’s behavior—an important step in developing self-regulation.

Ways to support high-level imaginary play:

- **Read books, go on field trips, and use videos** to make sure that children know enough about the scenario and roles to support pretend play.
- **Provide a varied set of props and toys** to encourage this type of play. Younger preschoolers may need more realistic props to get the play started (e.g., toy medical kits), while

older children can re-purpose other things to turn them into play props (e.g., paper towel tube that is used as a cast for a “broken arm”). Reusing familiar objects in a new way also practices cognitive flexibility.

- **Allow children to make their own play props.** Children must determine what is needed, hold this information in mind, and then follow through without getting distracted. They also exercise selective attention, working memory, and planning. If the original plans don’t work out, children need to adjust their ideas and try again, challenging their cognitive flexibility.

- **Play plans can be a good way to organize play,** as shown by one early education program designed to build self-regulation, Tools of the Mind. Children decide who they are going to be and what they are going to do before they start playing, and then draw their plan on paper. Planning means that children think first and then act, thus practicing inhibitory control. Planning play in a group also encourages children to plan together, hold these plans in mind, and apply them during the activity. It encourages social problem solving, as well as oral language.

Storytelling

Children love to tell stories. Their early stories tend to be a series of events, each one related to the one before, but lacking any larger structure. With practice, children develop more complex and organized plots. As the complexity of the storytelling grows, children practice holding and manipulating information in working memory.

Ways to support children’s storytelling:

- **Encourage children to tell you stories,** and write them down to read with the child. Children can also make pictures and create their own books. Revisiting the story, either by reviewing pictures or words, supports more intentional organization and greater elaboration.

continued

Executive Function Activities for 5- to 7-year-olds

Games can exercise children's executive function and self-regulation skills—and allow them to practice these skills—in different ways. At this age, children start to enjoy games that have rules, but do so with widely varying levels of interest and skill. Since an important aspect of developing these skills is having a constant challenge, it's important to choose games that are demanding but not too hard for each child. As the child players become familiar with these games, try to decrease the adult role as soon as possible; the challenge is greater for children if they remember and enforce the rules independently. Just be prepared with some techniques for negotiating conflict. Flipping a coin or drawing a straw are some methods used by Tools of the Mind, an early education program designed to build self-regulation.



Card games and board games

■ **Games that require players to remember** the location of particular cards are great at exercising working memory. At the simplest level, there are games such as *Concentration*, in which children uncover cards and have to remember the location of matches. At a more complicated level are games that require tracking types of playing cards as well as remembering their locations, including *Go Fish*, *Old Maid*, *Happy Families*, and *I Doubt It*.

■ **Games in which the child can match** playing cards, either by suit or number, are also good at practicing cognitive flexibility. Examples include *Crazy Eights*, *Uno*, and *Spoons*. *Blink* and *SET* are newer card games in which cards can be matched on more than two dimensions.

■ **Games that require fast responses** and monitoring are also great for challenging attention and inhibition. *Snap* and *Slapjack* are card games that fall into this category. *Perfection* draws on similar skills.

■ **Any board game that involves some strategy** provides important opportunities to make and hold a plan in mind for several moves ahead, consider the varying rules that govern different pieces, and adjust strategy in response to opponents' moves. Through strategizing, a child's working memory, inhibitory control, and flexibility have to work together to support plan-based, effective play. *Sorry!*, *Battleship*, *Parcheesi*, *mancala*, *checkers*, and *Chinese checkers* are some of the many examples of these types of games for children this age.

Physical activities/games

■ **Games that require attention** and quick responses help children practice attention and inhibition. They include *freeze dance* (*musical statues*); *musical chairs*; *Red Light, Green Light*; or *Duck, Duck, Goose* for younger children. Some of these games also require the person

who is "It" to mentally track others' movements, challenging working memory as well; these games include *Mother May I?* and *What Time Is It, Mr. Fox?* Others require selective responses and test inhibition, such as the *Magic Word Game*, in which children wait for a "magic word" to start an action.

continued

Project/Assignment _____

Get Ready

Do

Done

Step 3: What materials do I need:
Strategies: Materials:
Resources: Tech:
How can I set myself up for success?

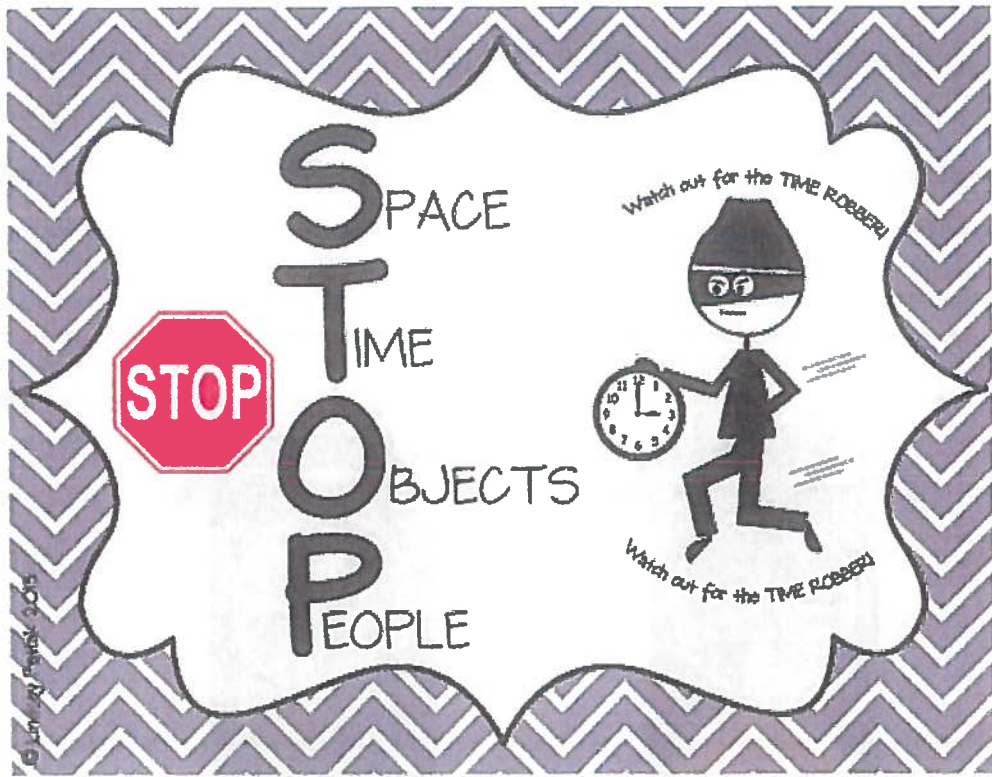
Step 2: What steps will I need to take to complete this? How long will this take me to complete? What might hinder me from my work?

Step 1: What will it look like when I am DONE? Picture/Sketch/Model
How will I feel when I am done?

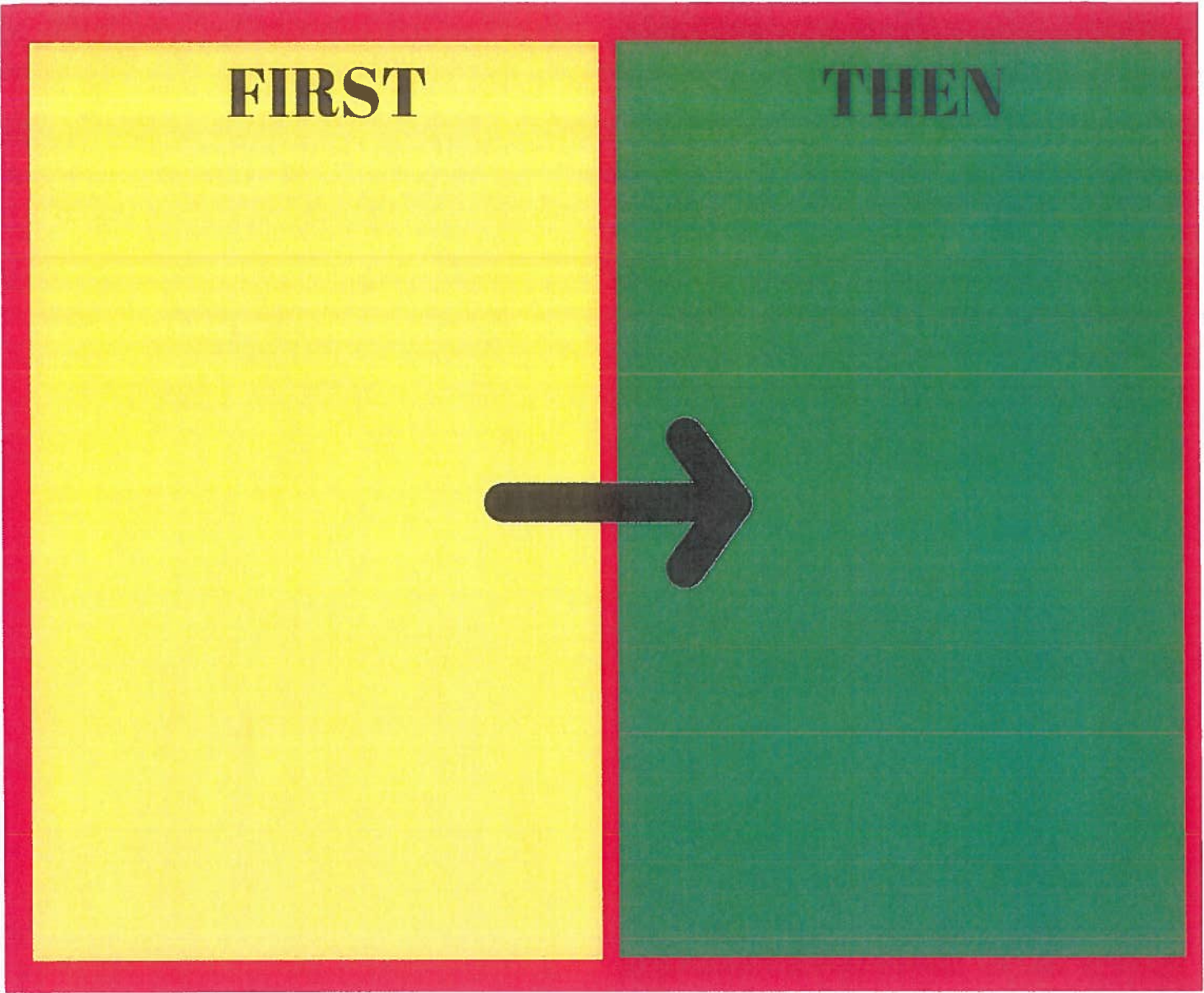
Step 4: Get my materials out and prepare my space.

Step 5: Set up the time, set 1/2 way point check in, Complete the steps

Step 6: Turn in the assignment. Reflect on what worked, what didn't? How did I feel about it?



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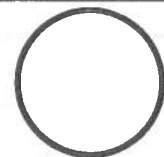
MY SCHOOL MORNING ROUTINE



GET DRESSED



EAT BREAKFAST



BRUSH TEETH



COMB/BRUSH HAIR



MAKE BED



PACK LUNCH & BACKPACK



PUT SHOES & COAT ON



MY AFTER SCHOOL ROUTINE



PUT SHOES & COAT AWAY



EMPTY BACKPACK



WASH HANDS



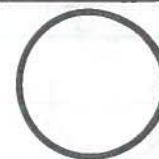
SNACK TIME



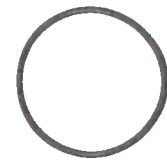
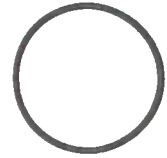
QUIET / PLAY TIME



HOMework TIME



MY ROUTINE



We thank the staff from Flemington-Raritan Autism Program, who wrote the base for these stories. Permission granted to print, adapt, and use at home or in the community. Thank you!!

SOCIAL STORIES

Getting Dressed



Before I go out I need to get dressed.

I can dress myself!

This makes Mommy happy.

First I can put on my socks.

Next I can put on my pants.

I might need to button or snap my pants.

Sometimes there is a zipper to zip.

After that I can put on my shirt.

I might need to button my shirt.

Then I can put on my shoes.

When I dress myself my clothes feel good and I am happy.

I can show Mommy how I dressed myself and she will be so happy!



BRUSHING MY TEETH

At night I need to brush my teeth so they are clean.

I put the toothbrush in my mouth.

First I brush in the back on the bottom.

Next I brush in the back on the top.

Then I brush in the front on the bottom.

Last I brush in the front on the top.

When I am done brushing my teeth I can spit out the toothpaste.

I can rinse off my tooth brush after I spit.

When I am ALL DONE I can have something special.

Break Cards

Break cards are an essential visual that helps students tell an adult they need a break. This is so important because students need a way to tell someone this before they become upset or angry.

Break cards are a positive way for a student to say, "I've had enough and really could use a break right now".

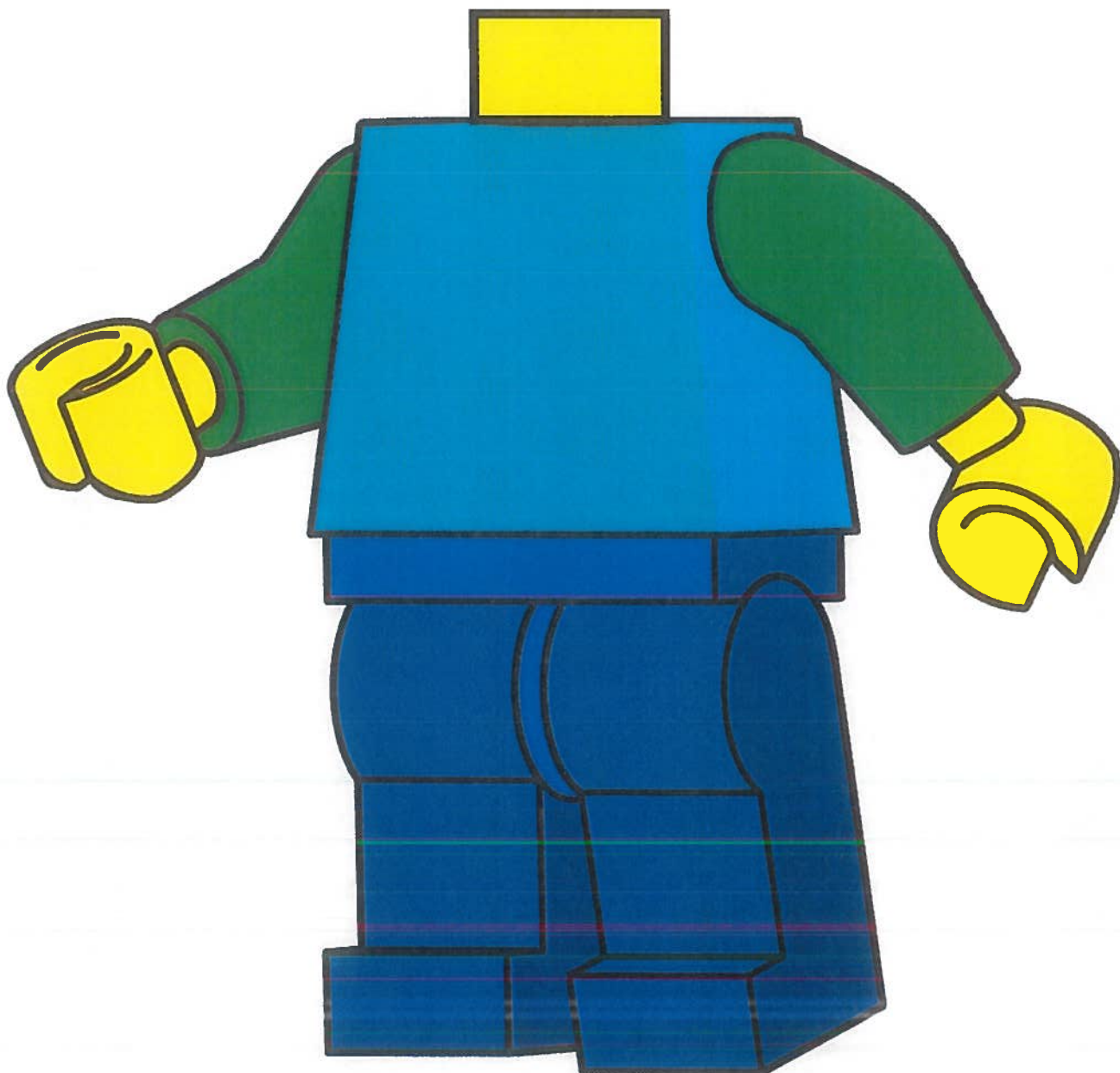
For all students, the way you use break cards might be different. For some students, you may choose to limit the number of break cards to 2 or 3 per day. This will allow the student to learn to choose wisely when they want/need a break in their day.

Also, it's important to talk with the student and set boundaries/expectations about the break cards. You will have to decide times when a break card can/can't be used, how long a break will be, and what the student can do on the break.

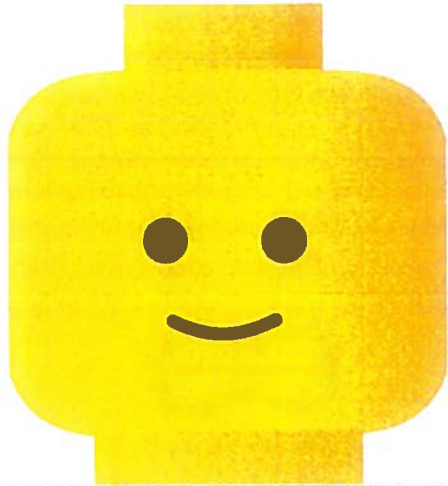
For this reason, three different sets of break cards are included:

- Can I have a break?
 - Break Card
- Break Card ____ minutes

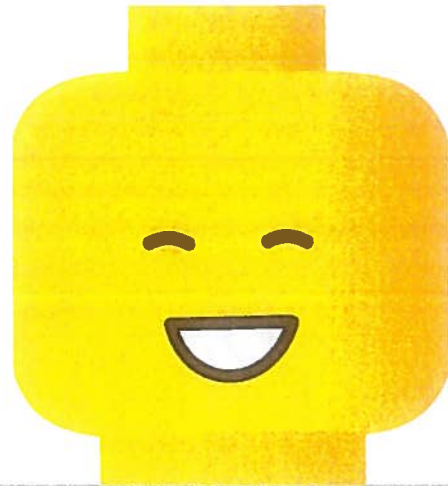
TODAY I FEEL...



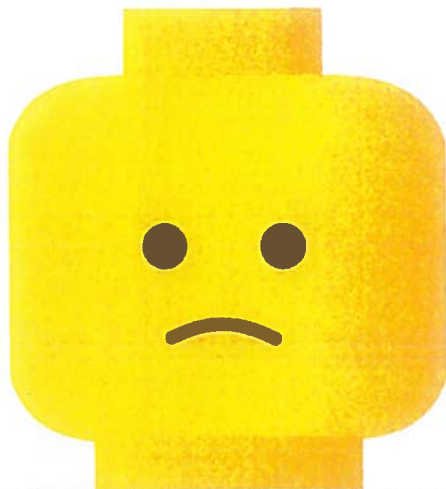
HAPPY



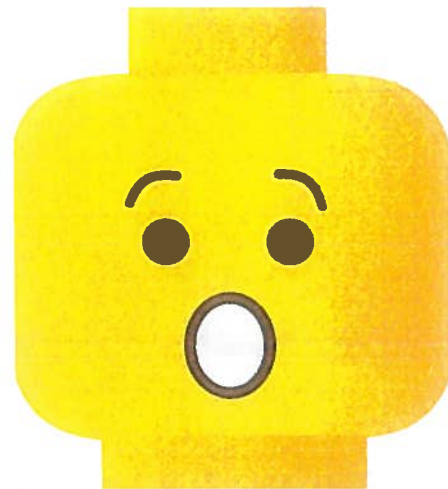
EXCITED



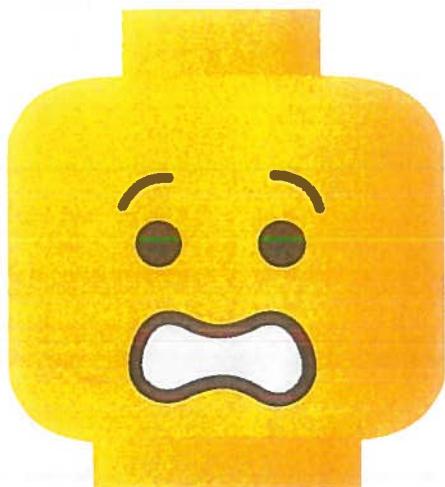
SAD



SURPRISED



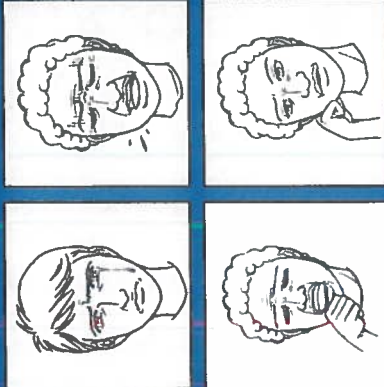

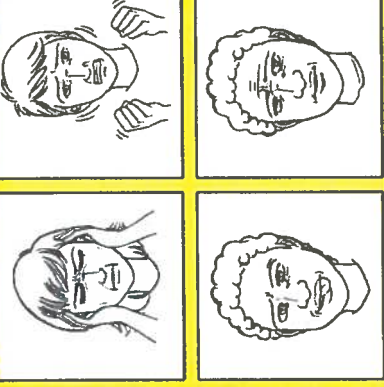
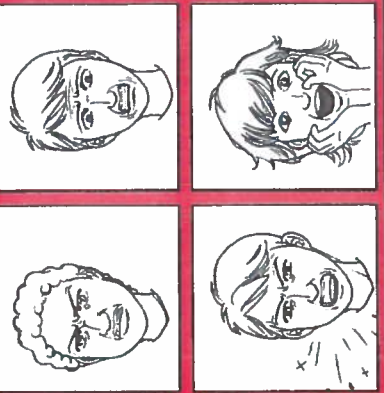
SCARED



ANGRY



The ZONES of Regulation®

			
<p>BLUE ZONE</p> <p>Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly</p>	<p>GREEN ZONE</p> <p>Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn</p>	<p>YELLOW ZONE</p> <p>Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control</p>	<p>RED ZONE</p> <p>Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control</p>

5

4

3

2

1

How BIG Is My Problem?

6 Emergency



Earthquake, Tornado, Fire, Security Risk, Danger

5 Gigantic Problem



Harassment, Fighting, Someone is Injured, Someone is being Destructive To Property

4 Big Problem



Parent contact, Minor Accident, Calm Down Needed

3 Medium Problem



Not Feeling Well, Someone is Bothering You, Forgetting Assignment, Need Something

2 Little Problem



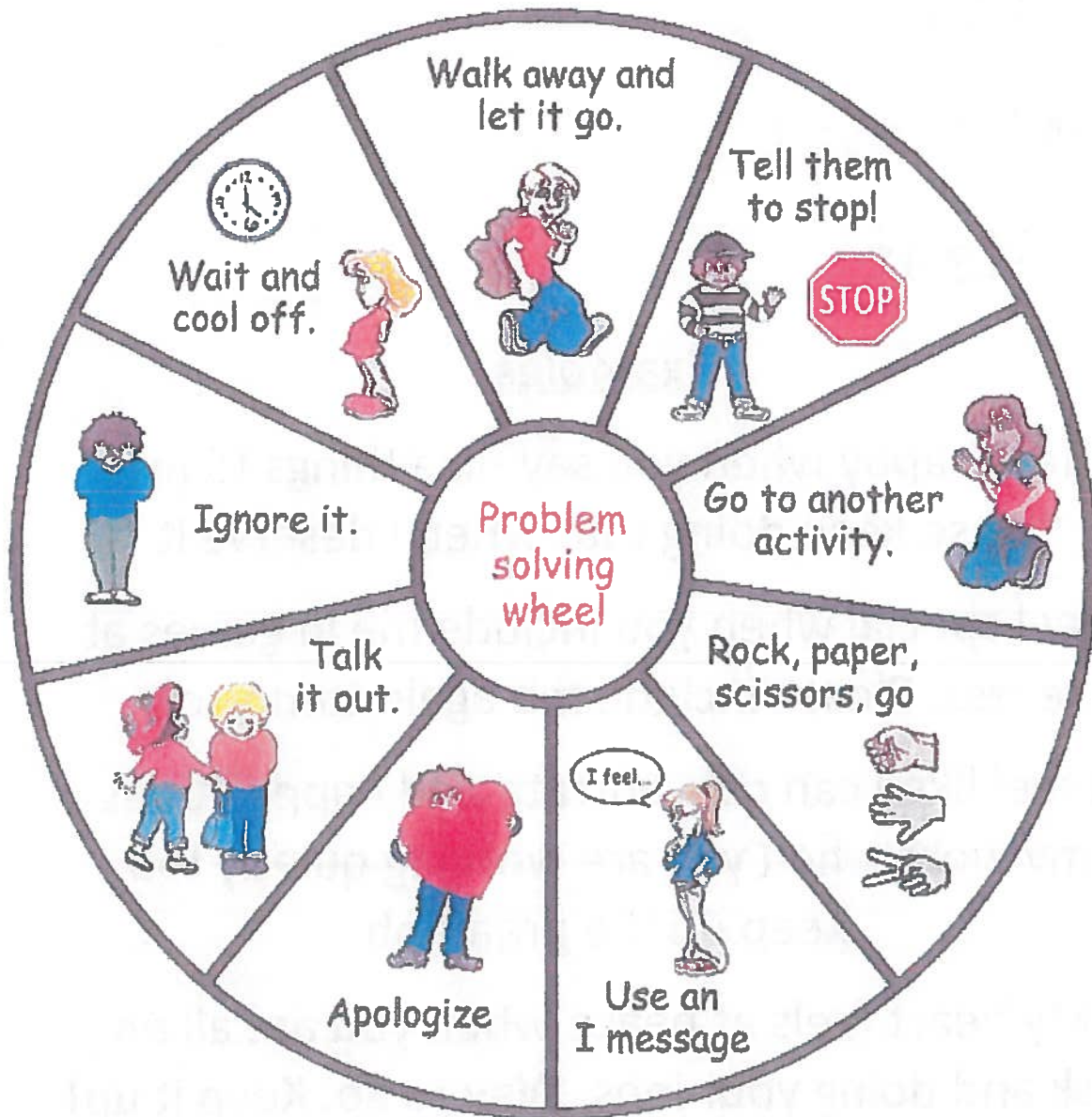
Runny Nose, Need to go to the Bathroom, Dropping Supplies by Accident

1 Glitch



Not Getting Called on, Someone at the Door You Know, Being Bored in Class

What can I do?



CALMING TOOLS AND STRATEGIES



100 Calm Down Tools & Strategies

Glitter Jars
I-spy Sensory Bottles
Mazes
Coloring Mandalas
Look and Find Books
Visual Schedules
Visual Timers
Hour Glass
Visual Calming Cards
Sunglasses
Spins
Jumps
Sit and Spin
Hang Upside Down
Roll into a Ball
Hand Fidgets
Stress Balls
Playdough
Silly Putty
Bubble Wrap
Kaleidoscope
Calming Music
Plastic Snow Globe
Finger Maze
Journal

Sensory Tunnels
Weighted Blanket
Resistance Bands
Weighted Vest
Body Socks
Flashlight
Light Up Toys
Spinning Tops
Shadow Puppets
Pinwheels
Essential Oils
Scratch and Sniff
Noise Canceling
Ear Muffs
Audiobooks
MP3 Players
Blow Bubbles
Bubble Gum
Chewable Jewelry
Count to Ten
Blow Out a Candle
Feather Blowing
Get a Hug
Push Against the Wall
Yoga Stretches

Take a Walk
Ask for a Break
Positive Affirmations
Drink Something Cold
Take a Bath (epsom salts)
Rice Sensory Bins
Sand Trays
Hum a Song
Picture Your Happy Place
Defeat Thought Monsters
Belly Breaths
Square Breath
Dragon Breath
Star Breath
Puffer Fish Breath
Squish Box
Crash Pad
Squeeze a Pillow
Burrito Rolls
Joint Compressions
Play with a Pet
Push on a Wall
Turn Into a Pretzel
Photo Album
Hug a Stuffed Animal

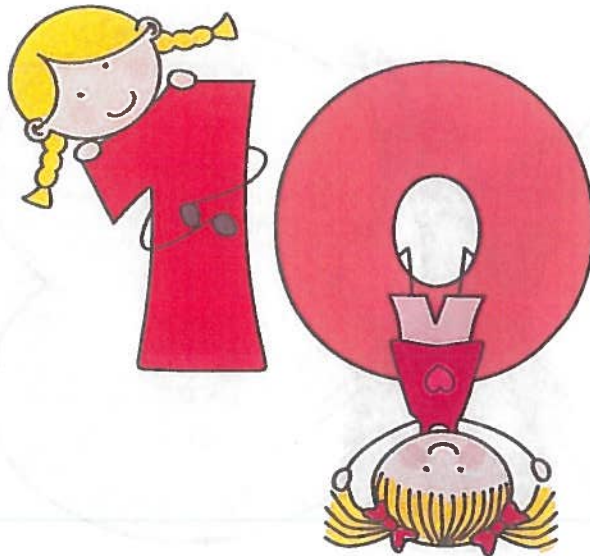
Take a Shower
Think, Feel, Act
How Do I Feel Chart
Hiss Like a Snake
Sing the ABCs
Name Your Worry
Wheelbarrow Walks
Listen to a Rainstick
Suck Ice
Brush Hair/Skin
Mop
Body Shapes Bean Bags
Carry a Backpack
Bounce on a Ball
Build with Blocks
Do a Puzzle
Ride a Bike
Play an Instrument
Count Backwards
Drink a Smoothie
Silly Faces
Climb a Tree
Scent Jars
Wrap in a Blanket
Drink Water

I Am a Calm Down Hero

Counting backwards to a calm body

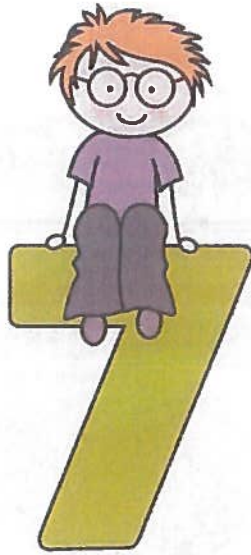


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**I can wiggle my ten fingers, one by one,
Until each one is stretched and done.**

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**Seven times I reach up high
And bring my hands down with a sigh.**

4

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**I cover and uncover my ears six times
And continue to read these little rhymes.**

5

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**With my finger, I trace the number three.
Just look at how calm my body can be!**

8

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**With two hands, I touch the floor.
I then stand up and give a roar.**

9

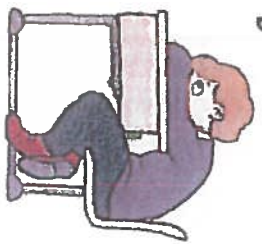
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Ways I can calm myself ...

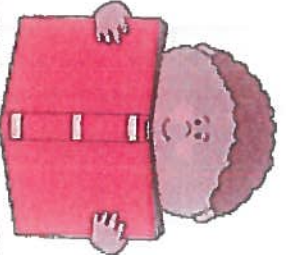
Write About It



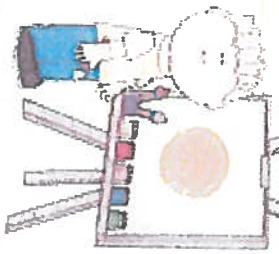
Put my Head Down



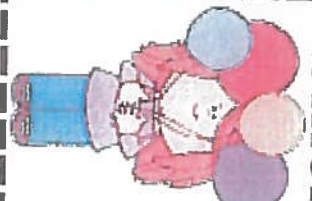
Read a Book



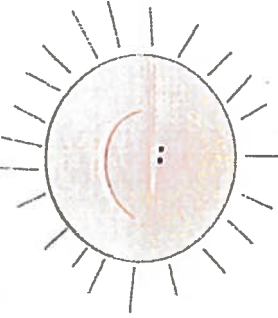
Draw a Picture



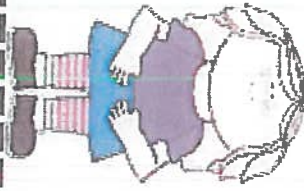
Remember a Happy Time



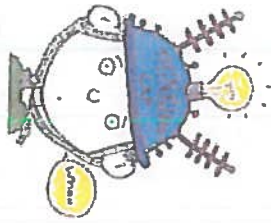
Smile



Breathe Deeply



Take a Brain Break



Count to 10

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10



Lay or bounce on a ball



Sing the ABCs forwards or backwards



Build with blocks



Go for a run



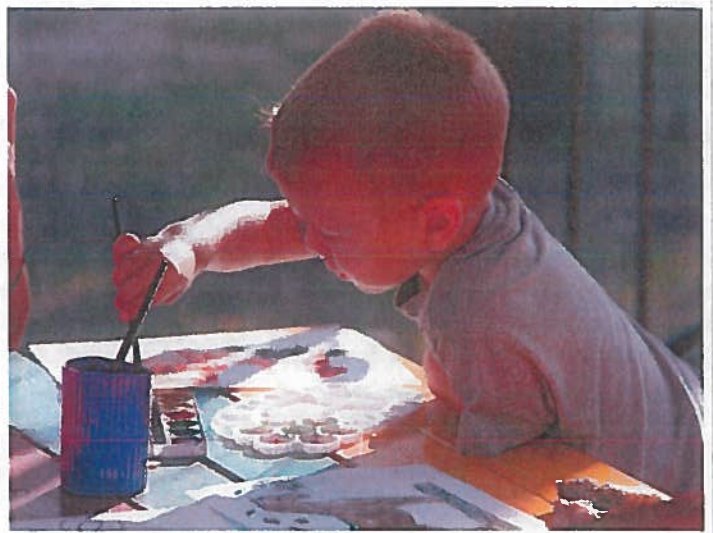
Swing



Pet a cat or dog



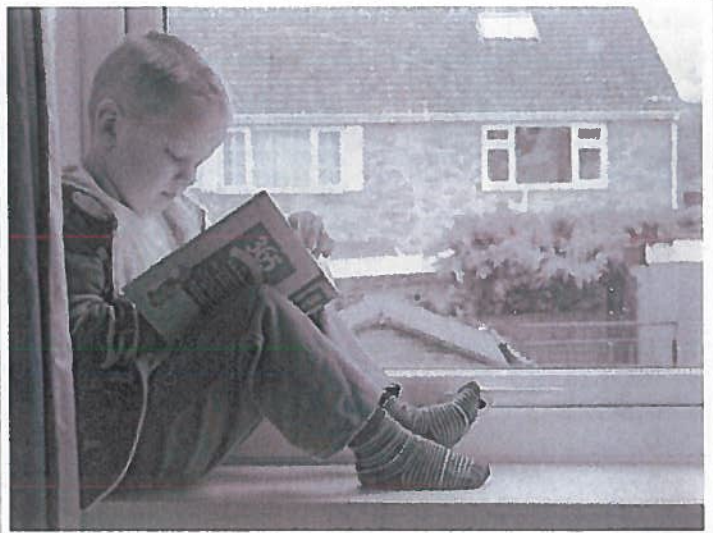
Go to a quiet place



Paint a picture



Do a maze, dot to dot, or word search



Read a book



Count slowly forwards or backwards



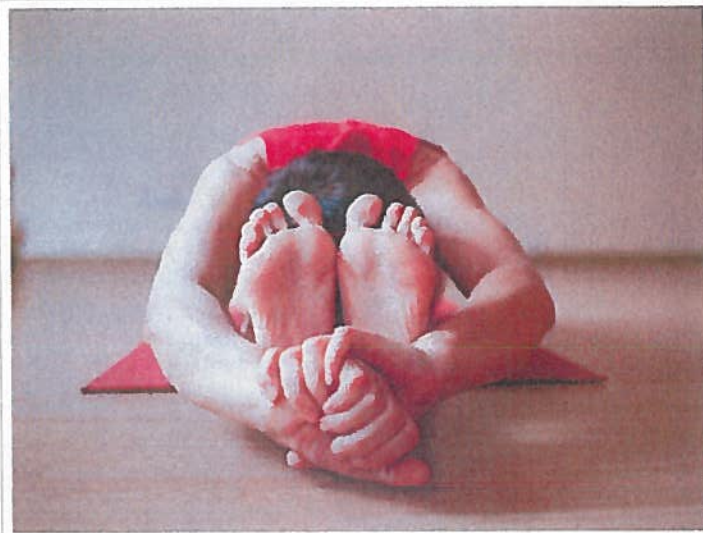
Ask for a hug



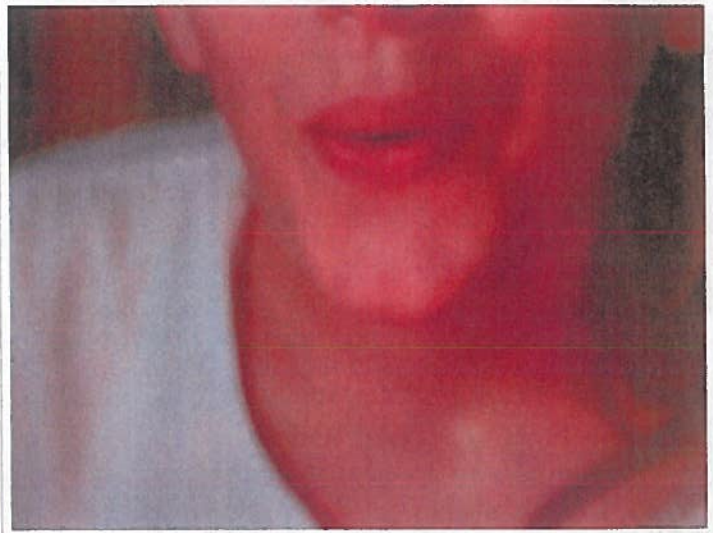
Do a puzzle



Hum or sing a song



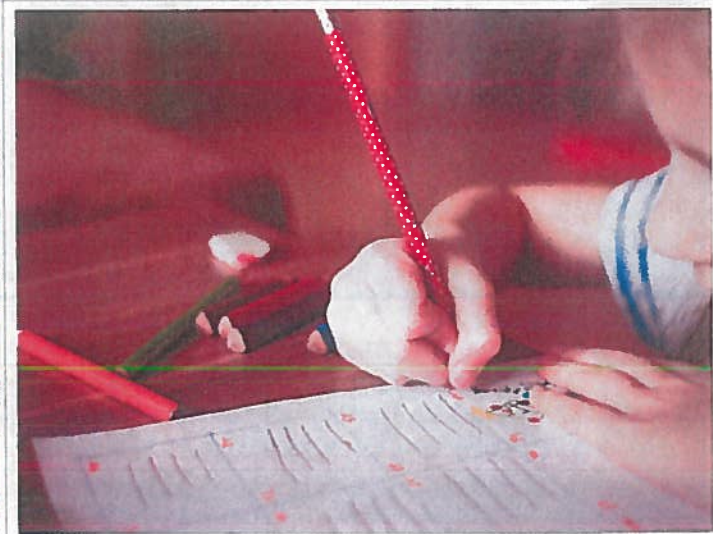
Do yoga



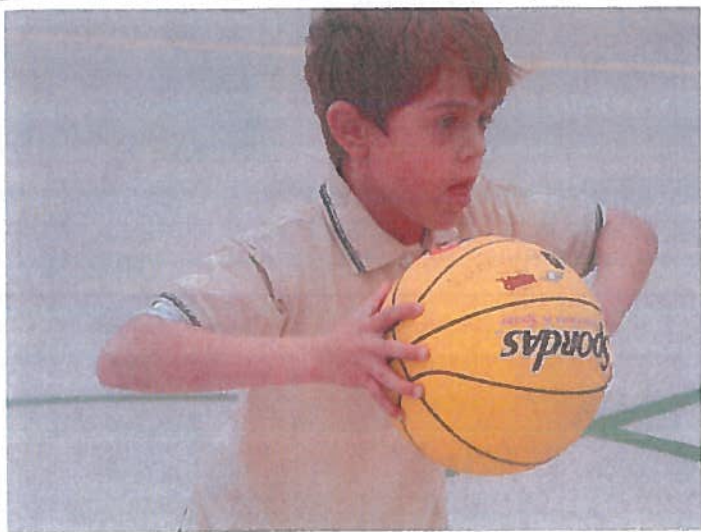
Take 5 deep breaths



Go for a bike ride



Draw a picture



Do exercise or play with a ball



Relax in a comfy chair, fort, or ball pit



Look at a calming sensory bottle



Do animal walks



Dance



Do some skipping