

PEACEFUL HOMES GUIDE

Predictable routines

Emotional regulation

Attuned Relationships

Calm Spaces & Activities

Empowerment



PREDICTABLE ROUTINES STRATEGIES



Children and youth feel safer and more confident when they know what to expect. As a parent or caregiver, you can support your child/youth by creating consistent daily routines at home. Predictability doesn't mean rigidity. It means offering a steady rhythm that they can count on. These routines help calm their nervous system and make it easier for them to focus, learn, and feel secure.

☐ **Predictable responses:** How you respond is important. Being predictable in your responses helps create a sense of safety and security because YOU are the child/youth's co-regulator. Co-regulation is when one's nervous system soothes the nervous system of another. If you're escalated, they will escalate. If you're calm, they will be able to come down to calm quicker. When your child/youth is escalating take a deep breath and remind yourself: "It's their job to 'flip their lid' in the presence of a safe adult, and it's my job to help them get their 'lid' back on."

☐ **CICO:** Establish a daily check in/out. The goal is to connect and focus on predictability, that can be personalized. Examples include: Start and end the day with a quick emotional check-in. You can ask, "How are you feeling today?" or use a feelings chart or emojis. This helps your child/youth name their emotions and feel seen.

☐ **Support with transitions:** Create predictable routines around transitions. When it's time to switch activities (like from playtime to dinner), give your child/ youth a heads-up. You can say, "In 5 minutes, we're going to clean up and eat." Try using a timer/visual countdown. Other things to help: try to have a balance of rev up (get energy) and calm down (lower energy) activities planned throughout the day.

☐ **Routines, structures and predictability:** Make these a priority in your home. Front load changes ahead of time, whenever possible. Try to show your child/youth what their day looks like using pictures, a simple chart or a to do list. This helps them feel prepared and reduces anxiety about what's coming next.

PREDICTABLE ROUTINES

Ask Yourself:

Environment: How is our house intentionally set up to ensure the space is clearly defined and well organized to maintain consistency and predictability? Ex. The dining room table is clear and ready to be used for meals.

Routines & Expectations: Does my child/youth know what to expect during common routines like meals, bedtime, or getting ready for school? Do they know what the procedural/clear steps are for those routines?

Regulation: Am I using a calm tone even when things are stressful? How will we become regulated as a family to enter a space of connection?

Even small routines create big feelings of safety.

3 WAYS YOU ARE ALREADY IMPLEMENTING THIS INTO YOUR HOME

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NEW OR REVAMPED GOAL(S) OR ROUTINES YOU WANT TO IMPLEMENT/ REFRESH?



Something you are working on...

EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES



Many children and youth don't have the words to express what's going on inside. Emotional regulation is about helping them name and understand feelings. Helping them understand and express their emotions is a big part of building their confidence and emotional health. It starts with us, when we manage our own emotions, we teach them how to do the same. Remember, the goal isn't to get rid of hard feelings, but to help our child/ youth feel safe feeling them.

Self-check and regulate: Where am I on the stress staircase? Remember: An escalated adult cannot de-escalate an escalated child/youth. If you are higher up the staircase (which is absolutely okay), which strategies will you use to self-regulate?



Modelling and talk it out loud: Remember: Telling is typical, showing is necessary. As parents/caregivers, we are also our children/youth's role models. Talk your emotions and internal physiological states out loud as much as you can. This helps build emotion vocabulary. For example: "I feel my heart beating fast, my hands are getting a bit sweaty, I'm feeling nervous. I wonder what I can do to calm my body?" Then model a calming strategy (i.e., deep breaths, use calming bit, take a big sip of water, etc.).

Name it to tame it and "I Wonder" Statements: These are strategies that can help calm the nervous system. When the adult names the emotion for the child/youth (in a calm, non-reactive tone), it can send soothing signals in the brain. 1. Name the emotion: 1. I see that you are _____ right now (it's okay if you name the wrong emotion); 2. Name what you see (You're covering your face.); 3. Validate (I would be upset too if...); and 4. Brainstorm solutions together. Or, state: "I wonder if you're upset because.." (this helps with validation).

Restorative Language: The repair piece is extremely important, and it cannot be done in a time of escalation. It needs to happen later, in the context of calm and a safe relationship. The idea is for the adult to create the conditions for the child/youth to fix the problem and for the whole family to regroup strengthened. Here are 4 questions you can work through:

- What brought us here (or, what was the mistake)? We all make mistakes.
- Who do you need to make it right with?
- How can you make it right? Let's brainstorm some ideas.
- When can you make it right? I can help!

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Ask Yourself:

Environment: How have you set up spaces in your home to allow for regulation of emotions? Are you making space for your child/youth's feelings, even the big ones?

Teaching & Learning: What calming strategies like breathing, taking space, or using kind words are you modelling? What are you using and how will we teach emotions/social skills?

- Play and games, storybooks about emotions, use simple tools like emotion charts or "feeling faces"
- Modelling for your child/youth how to use emotional language and identify feelings in our body: I feel/see/notice, etc.

Restorative Language: How are you restoring relationship and connection? Do you come back after a conflict to talk and reconnect? Try I wonder statements.

Teach feelings gently and playfully. Be the emotional coach.

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ATTUNED RELATIONSHIPS STRATEGIES



Your relationship with your child/youth is the foundation for everything else learning, behaviour, and well-being. When they feel truly seen, heard, and safe with us, they're better able to thrive. Children and youth who have experienced trauma often question whether relationships are safe. They may test boundaries, push people away, or cling tightly. This isn't rejection, it's self-protection. But the beautiful truth is this: Relationships can be repaired. Trust can be rebuilt. They learn about love and safety through repeated, attuned interactions.

Powerful one-liners: Keep connection while supporting de-escalation:

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. You're safe. I've got you. | 6. I'm here with you. |
| 2. I hear you, I'm listening. | 7. You're not alone. |
| 3. Let's take a deep breath together. | 8. It's okay to feel this way. |
| 4. It's okay to feel this way. | 9. Your feelings make sense. |
| 5. We can handle this together. | 10. I love you no matter what. |

The light up: When your child/youth enters the room, do your eyes light up? That's what they're looking for. No matter what age. Think about the last time someone lit up for you - it was magical!



Genuine interest: Key word: GENUINE.
Children and youth know when we're faking!

Connection before direction, always: If your child/youth is struggling, focus on building the connection first before jumping to discipline or redirection. A hug, a kind tone, or simply being present can go a long way. Spend a few minutes of quality time every day. Even 3-5 minutes of play or conversation where they lead can have a huge impact. This time is not a reward, it's a relationship builder.

Consequences, Punishments, and Rewards: See the need behind the behaviour. Try to view challenging behaviours as a signal that your child/youth needs help, not punishment. Instead of "attention-seeking," think "connection-seeking." What are they trying to tell me? Use natural consequences with care. Instead of punishment, think about how to guide them in making things right. For example, if your they spill something in frustration, they can help clean it up once they're calm.

ATTUNED RELATIONSHIPS

Ask Yourself:

Connection: What are the ways we spend time together? Am I spending intentional 1:1 time with my child/youth?

Building Community: How are we a team? How am I showing them I care?

Learning Opportunities: How do I create learning opportunities for growth mindset and stop the shame/guilt stories we attach to making mistakes? Think, how can I teach them to own mistakes, restore damage, and rebuild connection?

Connection is everything. Your presence is healing. Attunement is noticing and responding with care. Even small gestures count; Repair matters more than perfection. You're showing that relationships can be safe, even after conflict.

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Something you are working on...

CALMING SPACES & ACTIVITIES



When children and youth are overwhelmed, their nervous systems need help to calm down. Calming activities and spaces give them a break from stress and offer tools for regulation. They need tools to help them manage big feelings, especially during moments of overwhelm. Having a plan and a space where they can reset helps build emotional safety and self-regulation. Practicing these during calm moments makes them easier to access during hard ones.

Repetitive, rhythmic, stimulation: Calming the nervous system takes practice. Use calming activities regularly, not just in crisis. Activities like walking, swinging, music, drumming, dancing, or deep breathing can help regulate the nervous system. Try practicing them when your child/youth is already calm so they're familiar in the moment of need.



Build a "calm kit" together: It is important for your child/youth to have input as to what tools are offered and to practice using the tools when they are not escalated. It could be helpful for the adult to create their own calm kit/distraction box alongside. This way, they can see that others use calm kits too. It will be key for the adult to model using the calming kit over and over again in their presence. Schedule time to practice the use of the tool kit! Ideas include: colouring materials, blowing bubbles, favourite books, sensory items like squishes, stuffy, mirror with dry erase marker, etc.

Designated areas: We all benefit from comfortable spaces to help ground ourselves, and so do children and youth. Create a calm space somewhere in your home (could be their bedroom). Build this space together (this helps with buy in). It could be an area with pillows, soft lighting, calming scents, a lava lamp, a fort (can use a large box), This could be a good space to store the calming kits. When you need to calm yourself, remember to model using the space in front of your child/youth, and "talk it out loud".

To help with children and youth who struggle with separation anxiety: Think of ways to stay connected when physically apart. For example, on school drop off or right before bed, you can try the HEART BUTTON STRATEGY. This is where you draw a heart on the palm of your hand and theirs, and you tell them that every time you press your heart button it goes all the way to their heart and vice versa. Every time your child looks at their hand with the heart, they will be reminded of you. For youth, you might share a special rock that they can carry in their pocket. This rock represents you being with them throughout the day.

CALMING SPACE & ACTIVITIES

Ask Yourself:

Environment: Does my child/youth know where to go when they need a break to regulate? Can they easily access the tools they need to regulate in those spaces?

Routines and expectations: What are my expectations when Fight, Flight, Freeze or Fawn sets in for myself and my child/ youth? How about when we are under or overstimulated? Have we practiced this when we are all calm?

Strategies: What are the go-to strategies that our house will use? Am I showing my child/ youth what it looks like to self-regulate?

Calming tools are most powerful when practiced early and often!

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EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES



Empowerment helps them build confidence and a sense of control. Children and youth thrive when they feel capable, heard, and trusted. Empowering your child/ youth means giving them chances to make choices, be responsible, and feel like an important part of the family.

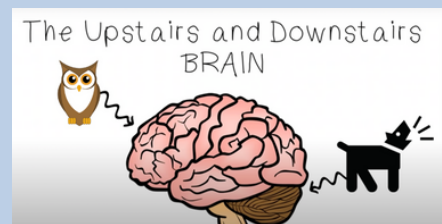
Helper Roles: Everyone loves to feel useful. Invite them to help with small tasks around the house, setting the table, feeding a pet, choosing dinner. These responsibilities build confidence and a sense of belonging.

- Let them choose between two snacks or bedtime stories
- Give small helper roles at home (feeding a pet, setting the table)
- Involve them in simple family decisions

Choices: Offer simple choices throughout the day. Letting your child/ youth choose between two options helps them feel more in control (which helps them feel safe). Try: “Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue one?” “Would you like to brush your teeth first or get dressed first?”

Avoid power struggles. If your child/ youth is pushing back, it may be their way of seeking control. Stay calm, keep offering choices, and try to see the need behind the behaviour.

Talk about the brain in age-friendly ways: Use visuals like the hand-brain model (by Dr. Dan Siegel) to help your child/youth understand what’s happening when they’re upset and what helps bring their brain “back online.” For a video resource: www.angelamurphyauthor.ca.



Involve your child/youth in decision making: Whenever possible, let your child/ youth have a voice in family routines, rules, or plans. Ask for their ideas and show them that their opinion matters. Also - hot school tip - if your child/youth has an Individual Education Plan, find ways to involve them so they can advocate for their goals and what they need for learning.

EMPOWERMENT

Ask Yourself:

Environment: How is the environment set up so that the child/youths voice and choice is represented? Am I offering choices in a way feel empowering?

Routines and Expectations: What are the options within the expected tasks and known routines? Did your child/youth co-create the routine or expectations?

Childs Voice: Do I give my child/youth opportunities to feel capable and important? Does my child/youth see that their voice matters in our home?

Empowerment builds self-worth. It allows your child/youth to feel helpful & included.

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