

The Mom MELTDOWN Manual

7 Therapist-Approved
Tools for Calmer Days

'A no-fluff, judgment-free
guide to help you and your
child reset-even on the
hardest days.

From Puzzled Parents

Hi Mama,

If you're reading this, chances are you're having one of those days. Or maybe you're just doing your best to stay ahead of the next one.

Either way, you're in the right place.

As a licensed therapist, parent coach, and mom, I know how hard it is to keep your cool when everything inside you wants to scream. I also know that "just stay calm" isn't helpful advice.

So here are 7 tools I use in therapy (and at home) to help parents and kids regulate, reconnect, and reset.

You don't need perfection. You need support.

Let's dive in.

EMOTIONAL FIRE DRILL

A Coping Plan for Big Feelings (For Parents + Kids)

What sets off our emotional alarms?

My child's triggers:

- ☐ Loud noises
- ☐ Being told "no"
- ☐ When plans change
- ☐ Feeling hungry or tired
- ☐ Crowded spaces
- ☐ Bright lights or scratchy clothes
- ☐ Transitions (leaving, bedtime, etc.)
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

My triggers as a parent:

- ☐ Crying or whining
- ☐ Feeling rushed or late
- ☐ Big messes
- ☐ Repeating myself
- ☐ Not feeling in control
- ☐ Sibling fights
- ☐ Lack of sleep
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

What Helps Us Feel Calm and Safe?

Child's Coping Tools:

- ☐ Deep breaths
- ☐ Hug stuffed animal
- ☐ Rock in a chair
- ☐ Listen to soft music
- ☐ Use a sensory toy
- ☐ Sit in a cozy spot
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Parent's Coping Tools:

- ☐ Step away for a moment
- ☐ Count to 10
- ☐ Drink water
- ☐ Breathe deeply
- ☐ Say a calming mantra
- ☐ Text a friend
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Our Emotional Fire Drill Plan

Use this space to create a simple script you can both follow when feelings get big. Practice it when things are calm. Example: "I feel mad. I will stomp 3 times, then take a deep breath."

Child's Fire Drill Script:

I feel _____. I will _____, then _____.

I feel _____. I will _____, then _____.

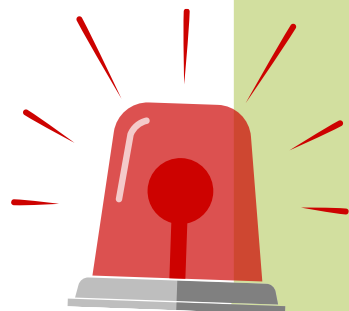
I feel _____. I will _____, then _____.

Parent's Fire Drill Script:

I feel _____. I will _____, then _____.

I feel _____. I will _____, then _____.

I feel _____. I will _____, then _____.



WHAT HELPS ME CALM DOWN

Use this worksheet to figure out what works for you when your feelings get big. Keep it on the fridge, in your calm-down kit, or near your quiet space!

Calming Tools

Count to 10



Hug a pillow or stuffed animal



Chew gum or crunchy snack



Listen to music



Rock in a chair or swing



Draw or color



Go outside or get fresh air



Draw What Makes You Calm:

Encouraging Words Box

Big feelings are okay.

I can calm down.

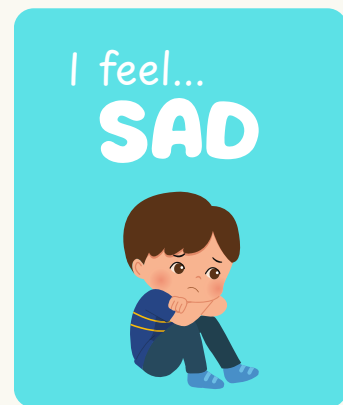
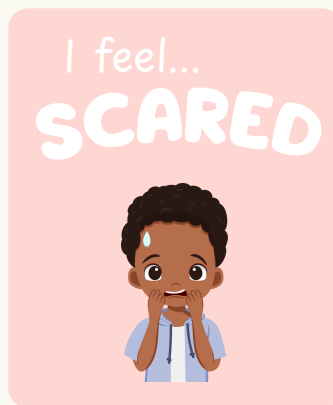
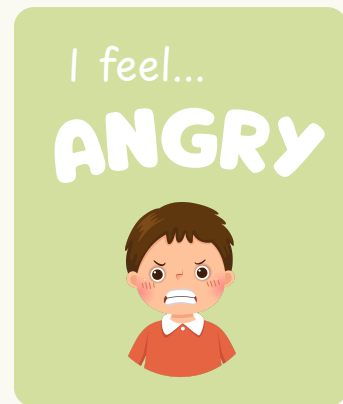
I have tools that help me feel safe.



[illegible][illegible]

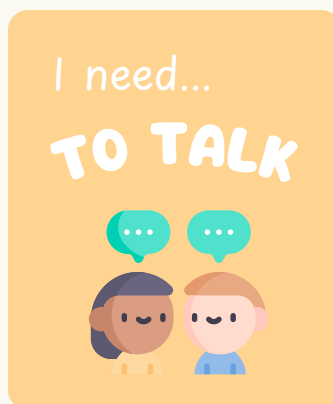
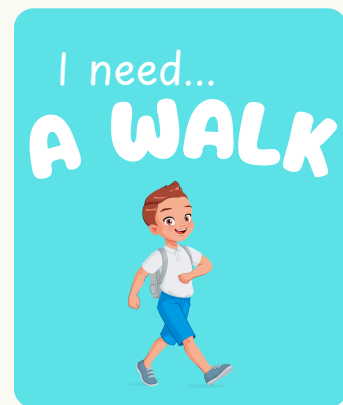
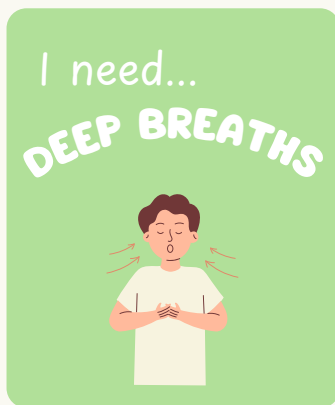
I Feel... I Need... Card Set

Teach your child to name what they feel and ask for what they need.
Cut them out and use them when emotions are running high!



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BODY CLUES CHART

Our bodies give us clues about how we're feeling—like butterflies in our tummy or a hot face. Let's figure out what your body says when you're mad, sad, or nervous!

In the boxes...

write how each emotion
feels in your body

Ex; When I feel angry my face feels hot

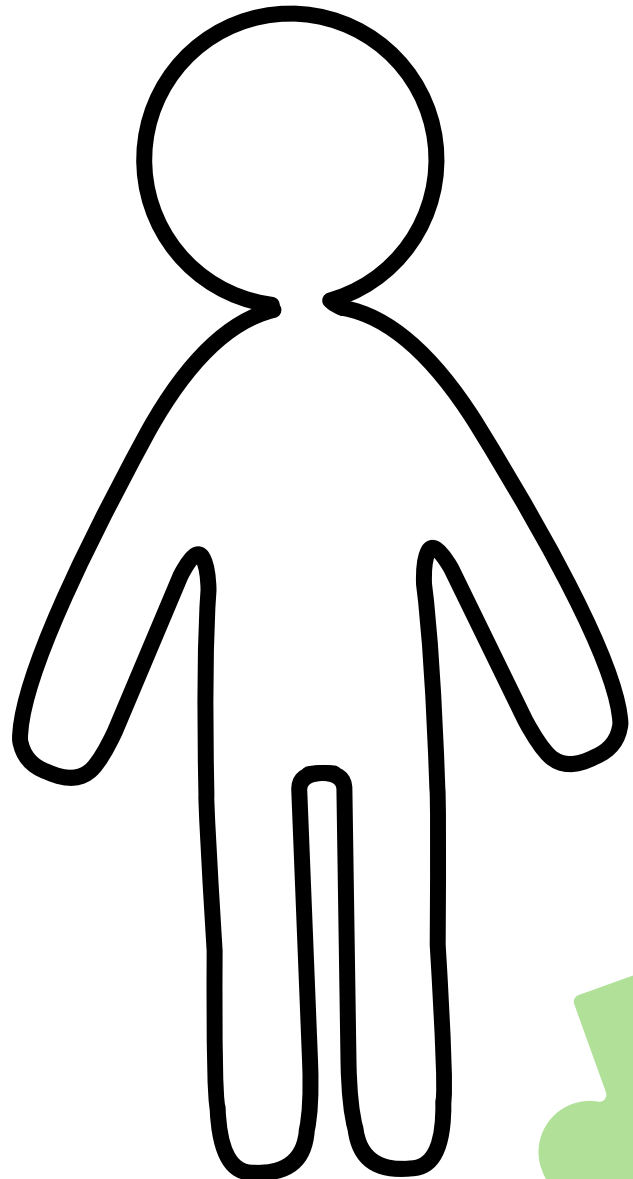
Anger

Sadness

Anxiety/
Nervousness

Color

where you feel
each emotion...



REFRAME THE THOUGHT

Sometimes our brains tell us things that aren't totally true or helpful. This worksheet helps us catch those thoughts, question them, and replace them with something that feels more accurate and kind.

Step 1: What's the Situation?

What happened? What triggered this thought?

Step 2: What Thought Popped Into Your Head?

What did your brain say right away? (Even if it seems silly or dramatic, write it down!)

Step 3: How Did That Thought Make You Feel?

What did your brain say right away? (Even if it seems silly or dramatic, write it down!)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad | <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassed | <input type="checkbox"/> Left out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Step 4: Is This Thought 100% True?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

What evidence do I have for or against this thought?



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Step 5: What's a More Helpful or Realistic Thought?

What would you say to a friend who had this thought?

Step 6: How Do You Feel Now?

Don't
Forget...

Thoughts
Are Not
Facts



Self Care Menu

Self-care isn't just bubble baths or spa days—it's anything that helps your mind, body, or heart feel just a little better. Use this menu to pick what works for you—daily, weekly, or when you're feeling overwhelmed.

Appetizers

Use when you're low on time but need a quick reset.

- ☐ Drink a full glass of water
- ☐ Step outside and take 3 deep breaths
- ☐ Text a friend "hi"
- ☐ Do 10 jumping jacks
- ☐ Stretch your arms and neck
- ☐ Listen to one song you love
- ☐ Put your phone away for 5 minutes
- ☐ _____

Dessert

Save for days you really need a full recharge.

- ☐ Take a nap
- ☐ Go to therapy
- ☐ Read a book for 30+ minutes
- ☐ Create something (art, music, writing)
- ☐ Plan a solo outing or fun time with a friend
- ☐ Say no to something and protect your time
- ☐ _____

Main Course

These are great for planned or daily self-care.

- ☐ Go for a walk
- ☐ Journal your thoughts
- ☐ Clean one small space
- ☐ Do a screen-free activity
- ☐ Take a shower or wash your face
- ☐ Talk to someone who makes you feel good
- ☐ _____

Reflection

This week, I will try these 3 self-care actions:

How to Use This Manual

- Print it and keep it somewhere handy.
- Pick one tool to start using today.
- Involve your child where you can, but don't pressure.
- Most importantly: give yourself grace.
- You don't need to do it all. You just need support that works.

With you in the chaos,

Joanna

Licensed Therapist | Parent Coach
| Founder of The Puzzled Parents