BIG Feelings and Calming Activities

Calming skills can assist young children in managing the BIG feelings they experience in their daily lives, such as anger, disappointment, sadness and excitement. To give you and your child the best opportunity for success in working through BIG feelings it is often helpful to practise calming activities when all family members are relaxed and able to enjoy them.

Below are some steps you may find helpful in introducing your child to calming activities.

**Follow your child’s lead:** In order for calming activities to be most useful, your child needs to feel that the coping skills activities are enjoyable. This is more likely to occur if you child has participated in identifying and developing the skills.

**Use visual prompts:** Cards depicting the calming activities your child enjoys can be used as a visual prompt to assist you and your child in choosing and practising calming skills. Encourage your child to decorate their calming cards and have fun making the cards their own (stickers, sparkles, colour, etc).

**Some helpful steps:**

1. “Sandra has taken your toy, you’re shaking, it looks like you’re angry”. (Help your child recognise which emotions they are experiencing, including physical changes (quick breath, loud voice, etc)

2. “It’s okay to feel angry” (Label emotion).

3. “Let’s do some candle breaths (or another enjoyable calming strategy) to help you feel better”. (Prompt your child to ‘stop’ and use a calming activity; for example)