FREE PARENT GUIDE

STORY TO LEARN | PARENT SPARK

The Calm Parenting Guide

Simple scripts and real-life examples for tantrums, bedtime, screens, siblings, mealtimes and the moments you lose your cool.

Best for ages 2 to 8

Scripts | Real-life moments | Breathing games | Cheat sh

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Calm is a skill, not a personality

Tools for the moments that push your buttons

Every parent loses their cool sometimes. This guide is not about being perfect. It is about having a few simple tools ready for the moments that push your buttons: tantrums, bedtime battles, leaving the park, screen time, sibling fights and dinner-table standoffs.

Children borrow our calm. When we stay steady, their brain has something steady to copy. Calm does not mean permissive. It means **firm on the limit and kind about the feeling**.

Calm is contagious.

Firm on the limit. Kind about the feeling.

How to use this guide: Pick the one chapter that matches the hardest moment at your home. Try one script for a week. Notice what changes, then add another.

Remember: You do not have to say it perfectly. Pausing, softening your voice and staying close already work.

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This guide shares general parenting ideas. Every child is different. If you are worried about your child's behaviour or development, talk with your pediatrician or a child specialist.

The CALM method

Four small steps for almost any hard moment

C A L M

Say them to yourself like a map.

C — Check yourself

Pause. Drop your shoulders. Take one slow breath before you speak.

In your head: "This is hard, not an emergency."

A — Acknowledge the feeling

Name the feeling before you try to fix the problem.

"You're really disappointed. You wanted to keep playing."

L — Limit with kindness

Hold the boundary in a few calm words. No lecture.

"I won't let you hit. I'll keep us both safe."

M — Move forward together

Offer a choice or the next small step.

"Do you want to hop or walk to the car?"

Calm does not mean permissive.
Firm on the limit and kind about the feeling.

1 When the storm hits: tantrums

Name the feeling first



The moment. Your four-year-old wanted the red cup. You gave the blue one. Now there are tears on the kitchen floor and everyone in the house can hear it.

Instead of...	Try...
"Stop crying. It's just a cup."	**"You really wanted the red cup. That's so disappointing."**
"If you don't stop, no TV."	**"I'm right here. Take your time. I'm not going anywhere."**
"You're being ridiculous."	**"Big feelings are hard. Do you want a hug or some space?"**
"Fine, take the red cup! Just be quiet."	**"The red cup is in the wash. You can pick the blue cup or the green one."**

Mini script

Child: "I WANT THE RED CUP!"

Parent (breathe, then crouch down): "You really wanted the red cup. That is so disappointing."

(Stay close and say very little. Wait for the wave to pass.)

Parent (once calm): "Do you want a hug first, or should we pick a cup together?"

Why it works: A child in the middle of a meltdown cannot take in logic. Naming the feeling first helps them settle enough to listen.

Tip: Hold the limit, not the lecture. Say less, stay close, and talk about it later when everyone is calm.

2 Leaving the park without the drama

Two more swings, then we go

KID

I wanna play!

PARENT

Two more swings!

The moment. It is time to go home. Your child is on the swing, laughing, with absolutely no plans to leave.

Instead of...	Try...
"We're going NOW. I don't have time for this."	**"You're having so much fun. Of course you don't want to go."**
"Stop crying or we'll never come back."	**"It's hard to leave. I'm right here. We'll come back soon."**
"Hurry up, you're being difficult."	**"Two more turns, then we go. Count with me."**
"If you don't come right now, no snack."	**"First we walk to the car, then we pick a snack together."**

Mini script

Child: "No, I'm not leaving. I wanna play!"

Parent (pause, crouch down): "I'm sorry I rushed you. You're having so much fun."

Parent (two fingers up): "Two more swings, then we go. I'll count with you."

Both: "One... two! Okay, bye swing!"

Why it works: A short warning plus a small choice gives your child a sense of control, so the goodbye feels like their decision too.

Tip: Give a 5-minute, 2-minute and 1-minute heads-up. End with a goodbye ritual: wave to the swing, then hold hands.

3 Bedtime without battles

Predictable routines, small choices

PARENT

Two stories, then lights out.

The moment. It is 8:30 pm. Teeth are brushed and pajamas are on, and suddenly your child is thirsty, hungry, scared and needs one more story.

Instead of...	Try...
"Go to bed! I said NOW."	**"It's bedtime. Do you want the star light or the moon light on?"**
"You already had water."	**"I hear you want one more thing. Tonight we have two stories, then lights out."**
"There's nothing to be scared of."	**"Sounds like the dark feels big. Let's check the room together."**
"Stay in bed or I'm taking your toys."	**"I'll check on you in five minutes. Cuddle your teddy until then."**

Mini script

Parent: "Pajamas are on. Two stories, then lights out."

Child: "One more story!"

Parent: "I know, stories are so fun. Two tonight, and tomorrow we pick two more."

Parent (soft voice): "Moon light or star light? I love you. I'll check on you soon."

Why it works: Predictable routines and small choices help children feel safe and in control, so there is less to fight about.

Tip: Use a bedtime ladder: bath, pajamas, teeth, two stories, hug, lights out. Say the steps in the same order every night.

4 Turning off the screen

The timer is the boss

KID

Just one more!

PARENT

The timer is the boss today.

The moment. The tablet says 'next episode in 5 seconds' and your child is already holding on with both hands.

Instead of...	Try...
"Give me that tablet right now!"	**"Five more minutes, then screen off. I'll set the timer."**
"You're addicted to that thing."	**"That show is so fun. Let's pick what we do after it ends."**
"No screens for a week!"	**"When the timer rings we turn it off together. Then we build the block tower."**
"I'm turning it off. You've had enough."	**"Do you want to press the off button, or should I?"**

Mini script

Parent (before it starts): "One show. When the timer rings, the screen goes off."

Child: "Nooo, I want another one!"

Parent: "It's hard to stop something fun. The timer is the boss today."

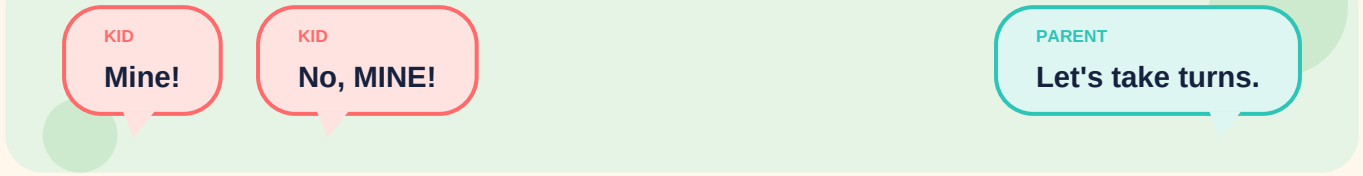
Parent: "Do you want to press the off button? Then snack or puzzle?"

Why it works: Agreeing on the rule before the screen goes on, with a timer as the boss, keeps you from being the bad guy in the moment.

Tip: Plan the next thing before the screen ends. Stopping is easier when something fun is waiting.

5 Sibling squabbles

Be a guide, not a judge



The moment. Two children, one teddy, and a tug-of-war that is about to turn into screaming.

Instead of...	Try...
"Who started it?"	**"I see two kids who both want the teddy."**
"Share! Don't be selfish."	**"You can each have a turn. Let's use the timer: two minutes each."**
"You're the older one, you should know better."	**"You're both upset. Let's breathe, then find a fix."**
"Stop fighting or you both go to your rooms!"	**"Hands off the teddy. I'll hold it while you each tell me your side."**

Mini script

Parent (steps in, calm): "I see two kids and one teddy. Both of you want it."

Parent: "Hands stay safe. I'll hold teddy for a minute."

Parent: "Ali, tell me what you want. Then Sara, your turn."

Parent: "Idea: two minutes each with the timer. Who wants to go first?"

Why it works: Kids do not need a judge, they need a guide. Listening to each side teaches problem-solving instead of tattling.

Tip: Notice the repair: "You two worked that out!" Praise the solution, not who was right.

6 Picky eaters and dinner standoffs

Less pressure, more tiny tastes

KID
Yuck!

PARENT
Tiny dino trees!

The moment. Dinner is on the table. Your child takes one look at the broccoli and crosses their arms.

Instead of...	Try...
"Just one bite or no dessert!"	**"You don't have to eat it. It stays on the table if you want to try."**
"There are kids who would love this dinner."	**"Broccoli looks like tiny trees. Want to be a dinosaur and eat the forest?"**
"You're such a picky eater."	**"What would you like to try first?"**
"Eat it or you'll go hungry."	**"Dinner is open until the timer rings. Then the kitchen closes until snack time."**

Mini script

Parent: "Tonight we have rice, chicken and broccoli trees."

Child: "Yuck! I don't like it."

Parent: "That's okay. You don't have to eat it. Do you want to touch it, smell it, or just look?"

Parent (relaxed): "Tell me about the best part of your day."

Why it works: Pressure makes the standoff bigger. A relaxed table and small, repeated tastes help children get used to new foods over time.

Tip: Put a tiny portion of the new food next to a food they already like. Offer it again and again with no pressure.

7 When you lose your cool (it happens)

Repair matters more than perfection

PARENT

I'm sorry I yelled. I love you.

The moment. You raised your voice. Now you feel awful. Here is the good news: **repair matters more than perfection**. A sincere repair teaches your child that mistakes can be fixed.

The 4-step repair

1

Calm yourself first

Breathe, drink water, or step out for 30 seconds. Repair works best from a steady place.

2

Go to your child and get low

Sit or crouch at their level. Soft voice, soft face.

3

Own it, briefly

Say sorry for what you did, not what they did: "I'm sorry I yelled. That was scary. It's not your fault."

4

Reconnect and try again

"Next time I'll take a breath first. Do you want a hug?" Then do something small together.

Words to tell yourself

> **I'm a good parent having a hard moment.**

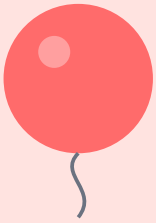
> **This is hard, not an emergency.**

> **My calm is the gift I give my child today.**

8 Your calm toolbox: 3 breathing games

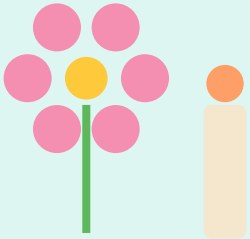
Quick tools for big feelings

Balloon breath



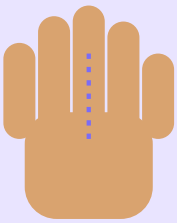
in... fill it up. out... let go.

Flower and candle



smell... then blow it out.

Finger trace



up = breathe in, down = breathe out

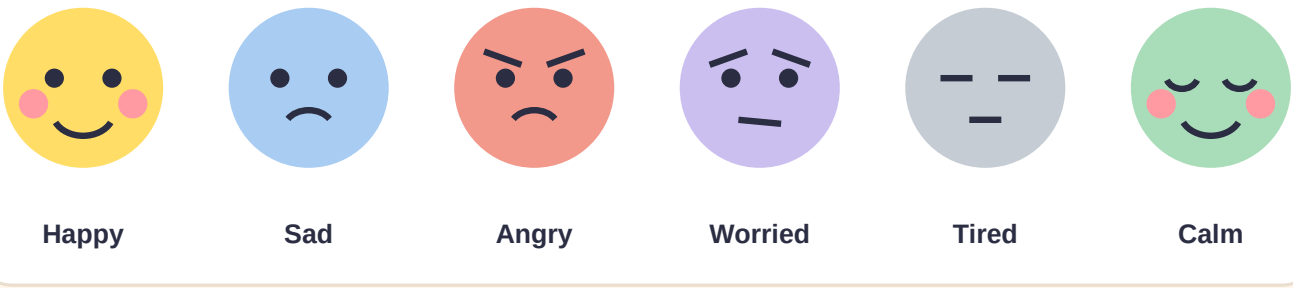
Balloon breath. Hands on the belly. Breathe in slowly like you are filling a balloon, then let the air out slowly. Repeat three times.

Smell the flower, blow the candle. Smell the flower for a count of three. Blow out the candle for a count of three. Great for toddlers and preschoolers.

Finger trace. Hold up one hand. Trace up each finger as you breathe in and down as you breathe out. Works anywhere, even in the car.

Name it to tame it: the feelings chart

Show this to your child and ask, "Which face is closest to how you feel right now?" Pointing is easier than explaining when feelings are big.



9 The calm corner and a calmer day

Make calm part of the day

Build a calm corner.

A cozy spot (not a punishment) where your child can go to settle. Your child can go there on their own, and you can sit with them.

What to add:

- Pillow or blanket
- Soft toy
- Book
- Feelings chart
- Sand timer or glitter jar

A calmer daily rhythm

Morning	Five minutes of connection before the rush: a cuddle, a song, or breakfast together.
Afternoon	Give heads-up before every transition: 5 minutes, 2 minutes, 1 minute.
Evening	Use the same bedtime ladder every night, in the same order.
Before sleep	Ask one question: "What was the best part of today?" Share yours too.

Your own calm kit (for parents)

Drink a glass of water. Take three slow breaths. Step into another room for 30 seconds if your child is safe. Loosen your jaw and drop your shoulders. Then come back and try again.

Pocket cheat sheet

Screenshot it or print it. One line for each hard moment.

Tantrum	"You really wanted that. It's so disappointing. I'm right here."
Leaving the park	"Two more turns, then we go. I'll count with you."
Bedtime stalling	"Two stories, then lights out. Moon light or star light?"
Screen off	"The timer is the boss. Do you want to press the off button?"
Sibling fight	"I see two kids who both want it. Let's use the timer."
Picky eating	"You don't have to eat it. Want to touch it, smell it or just look?"
You lost your cool	"I'm sorry I yelled. It's not your fault. Can we have a hug?"

The CALM reminder

- **C** Check yourself
- **A** Acknowledge the feeling
- **L** Limit with kindness
- **M** Move forward together

Connect first. Then correct.

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