The Power of Being CALM

2018 Child Abuse Prevention and Family Support Conference
Des Moines, Iowa April 10, 2018
Presenter: Karen Williams williamsgroup@cableone.net


Science’s Bottom Line: Youth CANNOT Behave, Remember, Think, Learn or Develop until they can feel CALM.


And... NEVER . . . in the history of calming down has anyone ever calmed down by being told to calm down.

Which of these infants is CALM?

How did we know?
We assessed his/her BEHAVIOR.
Development of the 75% of neurons that are not programmed or networked at birth can happen only when children are calm...

The number one job of adults is to give the experience of being calm to children and then teach them how to calm themselves...

The purpose of behavior is to let those observing know the state of the observed.

It is estimated that 1/3 of child abuse could be prevented if adults knew how to calm a crying infant.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2C8MkY7Co8

Being UPSET is normal. It is part of life. But we can only GROW OUR BRAIN & GET SMARTER when we are ALL SET -- CALM -- READY TO LEARN!

We need the HABITS to RESET – to get CALM.

To be able to reset is to be resilient.

Resiliency is the Ability to Adapt, i.e., to Self-Regulate Being CALM, even when our needs are unmet.
TO BE CALM & RESILIENT & TO LEARN & DEVELOP, OUR BASIC NEEDS MUST BE MET:

Adversity is NOT having your needs met.

All of These Stimulate Being CALM.

& Trigger Our REWARD CENTER!


williamgroup@cableone.net

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Confidence

Motivation

Self-Worth

Trust

Comfort

Physical

Competence

Connection

Belonging

Beauty

Adventure

Safety

Choice & Control

Poverty

Hunger/Food Insecurity

Homelessness

Sofa-Surfing

Foster Care

Family Separations

Dependents

Blended Families

Custody Sharing

Bullying

Family/Community Violence

Child Neglect/Abuse

Sexual Abuse

Substance Abusing Parent/Sibling

Parent w/ Debilitating Illness

Parent/Sibling in Prison/Jail

Military Deployments

Deportations

Unmitigated Distress is the OPPOSITE of Calm.

The definition of being “traumatized” is being overwhelmed.

Trauma is the most extreme form of DISTRESS.

NOW research shows that...

both chronic stress & frequent periods of normal to moderate stress appear to be particularly damaging to YOUNG BRAINS ...

National Science Foundation, 2010.

Multiply by 10....

Because youth are all about building their brains, you can multiply what you know about how stress affects the adult brain by ten-fold when you think about a 10-20 year old’s brain...

Dr. Robert Sapolsky, Stanford University


2012 Children’s Health Survey

15
It takes a minimum of 25 years to build a BASIC brain. 

Unmitigated distress & trauma interrupt the process.

PREVENTION:
We cannot always avoid or prevent negative/harmful situations/experiences...
...but we can provide PROTECTION that MITIGATES the risks and reduces the negative/harmful effects and impacts.

Telling youth to be calm DOES NOT teach them how to do it!

Teaching youth what not to do DOES NOT teach them what to do.

“NOT never equals WHAT.”

Think of children as firefighters, living in homes & neighborhoods that are ON FIRE...

They need habits, i.e., skills that are learned reflexes...to handle the distress – so they can think & remember...

They need at least one person they can count on to unconditionally care for them, and to be available to ask for help...at any time...

& one place that meets their basic needs.

Use their MIRROR NEURONS.

MODEL, MODEL, MODEL...IT’S AUTOMATIC TEACHING/LEARNING.
"Self-regulation", i.e., self-control is learned CALMNESS.

Do I know what it feels like to be calm?
Do I know how to "reset" when I am upset?
Can I produce a feeling of CALM at will?
What's the first thing I do?

Top Rated "Distress Fix":
Learn to breathe to THRIVE!!
Build the HABIT.

Note:
It’s very different from just breathing to survive.

What is the one thing We can lose for 15 minutes.... and die?

The Single Greatest Need = Breath
1 minute: Brain cells begin to die, but survival is possible
3 minutes: Serious brain damage likely
10 minutes: Many brain cells have died; the patient is unlikely to recover
15 minutes: Recovery is virtually impossible
we immediately increase Dopamine, Oxytocin, Endorphins, Anandamide & Serotonin.

Immediately increases Dopamine, Oxytocin, Endorphins, Anandamide & Serotonin.

This Gif (animated in PowerPoint Slideshow) is available on Google Images: “4 Second Breath”

This Gif (animated in PowerPoint Slideshow) is available on Google Images: “4 Second Breath”

Cleansing Breath: Reset Your Chemistry! 4 x 4

Breathe In

R E S T

Breathe Out

Same cycle as in smoking!

Breathing to Thrive Is Linked with Mindfulness & Meditation

Provide props...
Use an expanding “Hoberman Sphere” as a model for the calming 4 second breath...

Teach a class on how to breathe...
Put posters up all around the facility to remind both the youth and you to breathe to thrive – not just to survive.

Teach Deep Breathing to help them manage and overcome

When teaching me about my emotions, start with helping me understand what is causing my sensations:
Am I excited?
Or
Am I upset?
I will have the same physical sensations for both...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6thx2g
**Start with my PHYSICAL symptoms:**

*My Sensations*

- **Breathing Rate**
  - Rapid or Slow
  - Short or Long
  - Shallow or Deep
- **Heart Rate**
  - Rapid or Regular
- **Muscles**
  - Tense or Relaxed
- **Stomach**
  - Tight or Relaxed
- **Skin**
  - Hot or Normal
  - Clammy or Dry

Check the first 3 first; the others follow the more excited or upset you are.

- Hunger does not always apply......
- **Muscles**
- **Stomach**
- **Skin**

**Show & Teach Compassion**

Tigger our Vagus Nerves

---

**VIRGINIA and KENTUCKY’S “THE COMPASSIONATE SCHOOLS PROJECT”.** “…is the most comprehensive study ever undertaken of a 21st century health and wellness curriculum in an elementary or secondary school setting.

Educating 20,000 children in self-awareness and self-understanding, the curriculum integrates mindfulness for stress management and self-control; contemplative movements, postures and breathing for physical awareness and agility; nutritional knowledge for healthy eating; and social and emotional skills for effective interpersonal relationships. Students learn to cultivate focus, resilience, empathy, connection, and well-being as the basis for academic and personal success.  [http://www.compassionschools.org/program/](http://www.compassionschools.org/program/)

---

**The “Compassionate School”** is a term synonymous with:

- **“Brain-friendly”**: Taking into account how the brain works and develops;
- **“Trauma-Informed/Sensitive”**: Taking into account how unmitigated distress, anxiety and trauma affect how the brain works and develops;
- **“Whole Child”**: Taking into account all aspects of child’s life before expecting him/her to care, become competent, or to make a contribution;
- **“Resilient & Social-Emotional Learning”**: Taking into account the skills and habits necessary to self-regulate and maintain homeostasis in spite of the situation.

---

**The Goals of a Compassionate School**

To provide a safe, supportive and inspirational environment for learning, thriving and development:

- **Self-regulation**: the means by which an individual manages themselves as a positive member of society
- **Resiliency**: adaptability to navigate challenges
- **Social/Emotional Competencies**: how we feel about ourselves and how we get along with others
- **Executive Function**: making healthy choices
- **Academic Satisfaction**: recognizing that we can learn, do something well, and make a contribution.
In the Compassionate School...
...all school personnel agree to put the health and wellbeing of ALL students before or equal to academic concerns.

Traumatized youth are not focused on learning because it is physically impossible until their ability to cope equals the demands of the distress.

The Washington State Compassionate Schools Project

Washington State’s Department of Education has created a state-wide movement for “compassionate schools”.

You can find a full description, plus a detailed implementation manual at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction web page.

http://www.k12.wa.us/compassionateschools/
ron.hertel@k12.wa.us.

The publication is, “The Heart of Learning: Compassion, Resiliency and Academic Success.” Also at the site: a link to the “Ten Principles of a Compassionate School”.

When behavior is “out of control”, the EMT*:

• Remains calm, alert, focused, and in control
• Builds trust and hope

Adults Model...

• Assists with CALMING DOWN BEFORE CONSEQUENCES
  • Offers Concern, Comfort, Assurance, Reassurance
  • Assists in restoring person’s breathing
  • Assists in restoring person’s focus
  • “Walks through” every step
  • Then...there are consequences...

Two Questions to Avoid:

1. “What’s wrong with you?” (NOTE: This escalates the helplessness and hopelessness that triggered the negative behavior in the first place.)

2. “What were you thinking?” Duh!!

There are ALWAYS CONSEQUENCES, but do the “Comfort & Control Cs” first.

• COURTESY
• COMPASSION
• COMFORT
• CALM
• CAUSE & EFFECT - “What happened to you to cause you to act this way?”
• CONSEQUENCES – worked out in partnership (which allows power and partnership)
Three Questions to ALWAYS Ask:

1. When they have calmed down, ask: “What do you think happened to you to cause you to act this way?” To lose control?”
   TEACH CAUSE & EFFECT.

2. “What were you feeling?”
   TEACH IDENTITY of FEELINGS.

3. “Do you know what to do to calm yourself down?”
   TEACH COPING & STRESS MGT. SKILLS

The “Think Space”

Massachusetts’ “Trauma-Sensitive” Schools

https://traumasensitiveschools.org/

MOVE!

Movements that we choose, i.e., movements we make without threat, trigger Dopamine and Endorphins, and - depending on how much we enjoy them - can also trigger Serotonin, Oxytocin & Anandamide!

Laughter is a form of Movement!

It’s a cardio workout!!
& Laughter Protects Our Immune System.

When we laugh, which way does our breath go? In or out?

https://traumasensitiveschools.org/
The direction of our breath & the movement of our diaphragm are the secrets of the healing power of laughter.

Children are wired to laugh up to 300-400 times a day. **Adults about 40 times a day.**

When you give affirmations to yourself, they are positive self-talk. They train the brain to think positively, increase dopamine & serotonin, build resilience – and GROW THE VAGUS NERVE.

Laughter helps protect our 3-Probed Immune System

- 60-70% of our Immune System is in our Gut (Our 2nd Brain): We need Pre-Biotics, Pro-Biotics & Laughter to help maintain our Gut health. Serotonin operates our Digestive System.
- 30-35% of our Immune System is a fluid management, cleaning, & lymphocyte (white blood cell) "manufacturing plant". The pump? Our Diaphragm!
- 10-15% of our Immune System is in our 1st brain. It works only when we sleep. (Discovered in 2013 at the University of Virginia, published in 2015.) When we laugh, we sleep better!

Sleepy?

Tap your Thymus!

The word thymus comes from the Greek word ‘thimos’ which means “life energy.” The thymus gland lies just beneath the upper part of the breastbone in the middle of the chest. It is associated with energy regulation.

Begin each day with a...

- Laughter
- Breathing
- Affirmation
- Empathy
- Leadership
- Generosity
- “BAGGEL”

Affirmations build:

- A sense of personal power, sense of autonomy, internal locus of control, safety, self-worth, optimism, confidence, engagement and persistence, i.e., resilience.
Positive Self-Talk

I WILL
I HAVE
I CAN
I AM

and
I BELIEVE

We are ALL 1st Responders!

Tell Someone!