

Calming Spaces, Strategies, and Sensory Items

Strategies for calming: Here are some strategies and exercises that you can try with your child to help them after a traumatic experience.

<http://phoenixaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Phoenix-Child-Help-Strategies.pdf>

- Strategies: talking, music, exercise
- Positive self-talk: (ex: I am safe now, I have people who can help me)
- Relaxation exercises:
 - Deep breathing
 - Imagine a happy place
 - Muscle relaxation
- Distraction

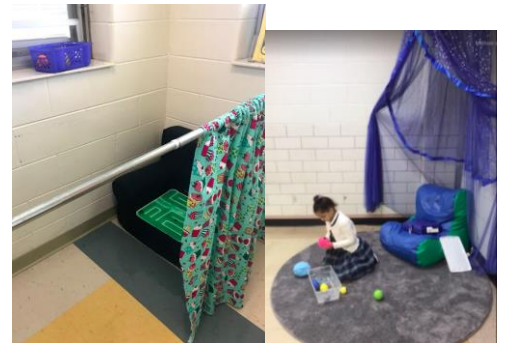
Examples of how to set up a calming corner:

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/2016/4/27/how-to-create-a-calm-down-spot>

<https://www.counselorkeri.com/2018/12/09/calm-corner-ideas/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/mindpeace2170/calming-spaces/?autologin=true>

- Construction: tents, teepee's, curtains, space between bookshelves
- Destress: coloring pages, stuffed animals, pillows, rugs, soft furniture
- Sound: CD players with soft music or nature noises, noise cancelling headphones
- Pleasant scents: oils, smelly markers, plug-ins
- Touch: stress balls, clay, puzzles, weighted blankets, kinetic sand
- Coping skills to practice: deep breathing, reflection worksheets, gratitude lists
- Feelings: Use a feelings poster or images to help the student understand their feelings and reflect upon strategies they can do when they feel that way.



Sensory Items

- Stress balls
- Books
- Coloring
- Puzzles
- Legos
- Journaling
- Putty or Playdough
- Stuffed animals
- Bubble wrap
- Cards
- Beads and string (for counting)
- Bubbles



**Consider the 5 senses: touch, taste, sound, smell and sight*

Music:

“Music can also play a role in helping individuals and communities to cope with trauma, whether it be through the intervention of music therapists, community music making programs or individual music listening” (Garrido, Baker, Davidson, Moore, & Wasserman, 2015).

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4498438/>

- Music Therapy Programs: “The programs were designed to reduce stress, improve coping, and process the trauma associated with the crisis by drawing on a range of techniques including musical improvisation, songwriting, singing, sharing stories, and relaxing with music” (Garrido et al., 2015)
- Music can be used as a healing agent
- Listening, playing, composing, singing, and dancing are commonly used as coping strategies after traumatic experiences
- Focusing on the sounds can help focus and de-escalate from situations

Music and Focusing:

<https://www.ncu.edu/blog/can-music-help-you-study-and-focus>

- “Music activates both the left and right brain at the same time, and the activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory,” (Northcentral University, 2017).
- Music has an effect on our mood, blood pressure and heart rate.
- Types of music good for focusing: (Northcentral University, 2017).
 - Music with no lyrics
 - Classical: You may not want to go to a symphony concert, but the soothing sounds of classical orchestra music seems to increase mood and productivity, which makes it great for studying.
 - Consider Tempo: Music with 60-70 beats per minute like Beethoven’s Fur Elise appears to help students study longer and retain more information.

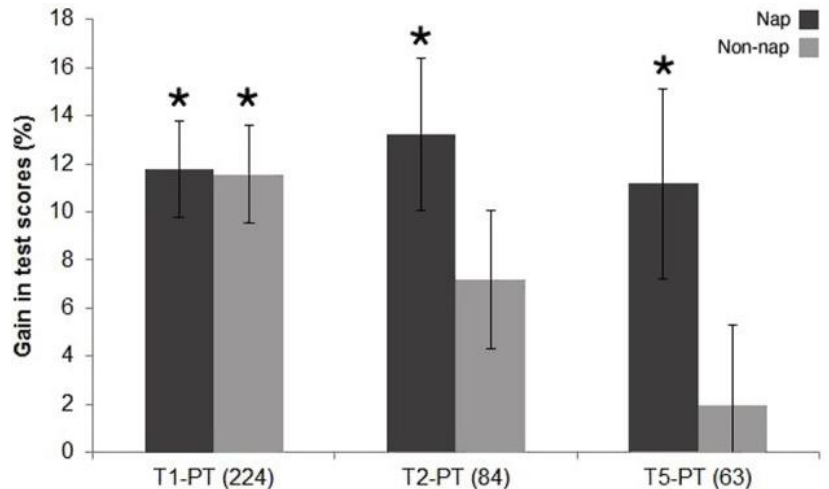
- Spa Music: Ambient sounds that you would expect to hear on a soundtrack during a spa treatment can help you relax.
- Nature Sounds: Like ambient music, the sounds of babbling brooks, birds, wind and rain are very calming and make great background noise.
- Electronic Music: New Age and ambient house music are a good choice for those who don't like classical.
- Sound Control: The volume of your study music is key. Remember, it's supposed to be in the background.

Case Study: Naps in school can enhance the duration of declarative memories learned by adolescents

– Experiment that has a group of students nap after a lecture while another class does not.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4042263/>

- The nap group showed significantly higher scores than the non-nap group at all times tested
- “The results suggest that sleep can be used to enhance the duration of memory contents learned in school”
- “The results of Experiment I (group that napped right after class) suggest that the benefits of a nap taken immediately after school learning remain stable for at least 5 days after the initial learning,”
- “Therefore, the recently acquired memories must have been positively impacted by the nap itself.”
- (T1 = 1 day after class, T2 = 2 days after class, T5= 5 days after class)



Color Psychology:

<https://www.colorpsychology.org/>

- Blue:
 - Intelligence
 - Different shades of blue increase concentration, stimulates thinking, and provides mental clarity
 - Improves productivity
 - Calm authority and confidence
 - Light blue is linked with creativity

- “It’s positive aspects are that it is a calming and safe color. It can lower the heart rate, improve mental clarity and inspire creativity. It also instills confidence and trust” (Color Psychology, n.d.).
- Green:
 - Balance, harmony, calm
 - Stability and endurance
 - Healing power
 - Correspondence with safety
 - “It helps loosen the body, from a mental and physical point of view. It is an excellent remedy for states of anxiety and nervousness, helping a person to regain his emotional balance and inner calm” (Color Psychology, n.d.).
- Orange:
 - Positivism
 - Encouraging, motivating
 - Peach color (pastel) is the best for promoting communication and calmness
- Purple: (limited)
 - Uplifting
 - Trigger creativity
 - Calms mind and nerves
 - “Gems with purple colors are believed to have a beneficial influence in regards to: mind power, increased spirituality, calming down of anxiousness, and refreshing the body for a new learning process” (Color Psychology, n.d.).
- Red:
 - Increases heart rate
 - Raises blood pressure
 - Associated with energy and aggression
 - “The positive aspects are that it represents love, activity, energy, attention and power. The negative aspects refer to aggression, dominance that instills fear, danger and stress. It’s a very basic and important color, but it’s one that needs to be used with moderation” (Color Psychology, n.d.).
- White:
 - Calmness, kindness and hope
 - New beginnings
 - Too much white can cause a sense of isolation
- Yellow:
 - “It is believed to have an influence on the left side of our brain, where deep thinking and perception dwells” (Color Psychology, n.d.).
 - Optimism
 - Can help clear your mind
 - Promotes communication
 - Light yellow has a sense of loneliness, Dark yellow has a presence of melancholy



Exercising Benefits: running, walking, weight training, power lifting, meditating, aerobic exercise
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/the-mental-health-benefits-of-exercise.htm>

While exercising/meditating focus on what your body is actually doing and it can help the nervous system move out of the immobilization stress response that characterizes trauma

- Sharper memory and thinking
- High self-esteem
- More energy
- Increase endorphins produced
- Exercise promotes the growth of new brain cells
- Neural growth, reduced inflammation in the brain, and new activity patterns that promote feelings of calm and well-being
- Relieves tension and stress
- Boosts physical and mental well-being
- Improves concentration, motivation, memory, and mood



References:

Color Psychology. (n.d.). The Ultimate Guide to Color Meanings. Retrieved from <https://www.colorpsychology.org/>

Garrido, S., Baker, F., Davidson, J., Moore, G., & Wasserman, S. (2015, July 15). Music and trauma: the relationship between music, personality, and coping style. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4498438/>

Help Guide. (n.d.). The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise: The Exercise Prescription for Depression, Anxiety, and Stress. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/the-mental-health-benefits-of-exercise.htm>

Lemos, N., Weissheimer, J., & Ribeiro, S. (2014, June 3). Naps in school can enhance the duration of declarative memories learned by adolescents. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4042263/>

Northcentral University. (2017, March 29). Can music help you study and focus? Retrieved from <https://www.ncu.edu/blog/can-music-help-you-study-and-focus>

Phoenix Australia - Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health. (2015). Strategies to help your child after a traumatic event. Retrieved from <http://phoenixaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Phoenix-Child-Help-Strategies.pdf>

Wallace, K. (2016, February 9). Calming the teenage mind in the classroom - CNN. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/08/health/mindfulness-teenagers-schools-stress/index.html>