

# CALM DOWN JAR | ART THERAPY

Stop. Focus. Breathe.

Parents, your child has created their very own calm down jar to bring home. Before we delve into the specifics of how these jars are used, let's take a moment to understand a crucial concept that underlies their effectiveness: mindfulness.

## Understanding Mindfulness for Kids

### What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying full attention to what is happening in the present moment – to what you're doing, thinking, and feeling, without judgment and without trying to control the outcome. It's about noticing the world around you and inside you in the here and now. It helps you respond to situations with clarity rather than reacting impulsively.

### How to Explain Mindfulness to Kids:

To make it relatable, you might explain mindfulness to children as a superpower that allows them to control their attention, making it stick to one thing at a time like a superhero focuses his vision to spot tiny details. For teens, you might describe it as a director's skill in choosing where to focus the camera lens to capture a crucial scene.

### Direct Quotes to Use with Kids:

"Mindfulness is like being a superhero who can slow down time. Imagine being able to see everything happening around you in super slow motion and choosing how you react to it."

"Pretend you're a Jedi, and your mind is your lightsaber. Mindfulness helps you control it smoothly and with great skill, so you don't react too quickly or make hasty decisions."

"Think of your mind as a sky full of stars. Each thought is a star. Mindfulness helps you look at them one by one, so you don't get lost looking at too many at once."

### Why is Mindfulness Important?

**Improves Attention and Concentration:** Mindfulness teaches children and teens to focus on one task at a time, enhancing their ability to concentrate in school and at home.

**Reduces Stress:** Regular mindfulness practice helps lower anxiety and stress by providing tools to manage them more effectively.

**Increases Emotional Regulation:** Mindfulness allows children and teens to recognize their emotions, understand them, and respond to them in healthier ways.

**Enhances Empathy and Understanding of Others:** By being aware of their own thoughts and feelings, young people can better empathize with others, improving their social interactions and relationships.

## What are "Calm Down" Jars?

Calm down jars are containers filled with glitter, water, and glue that create a mesmerizing visual effect when shaken. They serve as sensory tools to help children self-regulate their emotions and find a moment of calm when they feel overwhelmed. They are a practical application of mindfulness, helping kids focus on the here and now as they watch the swirling glitter settle.

## Why They Are Beneficial

The calm down jar is particularly useful for children with ADHD, anger issues, tantrums, disobedience, self-regulation challenges, control issues, and self-control difficulties. This tool provides a structured opportunity for children to Stop their immediate behavior, focus on their environment through mindfulness, and breathe deeply. This process is an excellent way for children to identify their feelings, gain skills to manage those feelings and their subsequent thoughts, and then regulate their behaviors effectively.

## Breathing Techniques to Enhance Calm Down Jar Use

Use the following breathing exercises to complete the calming exercise effectively. Each technique can help refocus and relax your child:

### Balloon Breath:

**How to Do It:** Have your child place their hands on top of their head and interlock their fingers. As they inhale deeply through the nose, they should raise their arms to mimic inflating a balloon. Upon exhaling through the mouth, they lower their arms and hands, mimicking the deflation of the balloon.

**Why It's Effective:** This exercise helps children visualize the deep breaths filling and emptying, which enhances lung capacity and focus.

### Finger Breath:

**How to Do It:** Ask your child to spread one hand wide and use the index finger of the other hand to trace up each finger while inhaling and down while exhaling.

**Why It's Effective:** This technique not only aids in focusing on the breath but also in practicing fine motor control and concentration.

### Deep Tummy Breath:

**How to Do It:** Instruct your child to lie down or sit comfortably and place their hands on their stomach. They should breathe in deeply through the nose, feeling the abdomen rise, and then breathe out slowly through the mouth, feeling the abdomen fall.

**Why It's Effective:** This encourages full oxygen exchange and promotes a relaxation response in the body, which is very calming.

*(ADDITIONAL STEPS ON PG 2)*

### **Wave Breath:**

**How to Do It:** Have your child imagine waves rolling onto a beach. As they breathe in, visualize the wave building, and as they breathe out, imagine the wave gently rolling out to sea.

**Why It's Effective:** This visual aids in rhythmic breathing and can help children relate the breath to peaceful, natural rhythms.

## **Step-by-Step Directions for Using the Calm Down Jar**

When your child feels overwhelmed or upset, guide them through the following steps to help them calm down using their jar:

### **Stop:**

Say, "Let's take a moment to stop. Shake your calm down jar."

### **Focus:**

As the jar is shaken and the water becomes cloudy and swirly, instruct them to focus on the jar and say, "Watch the cloudiness in the water. Notice how you can't see through it as it swirls around. Just stop and watch."

### **Breathe:**

Encourage them to use one of the breathing techniques above while watching the glitter settle.

**Engage Other Senses:**

Continue to use sensory engagement as previously described.

### **Discuss:**

After the glitter has settled and you've gone through these steps, discuss their feelings by asking, "How do you feel now compared to before we used the jar?"

*Try it...you might actually learn something not only your child can use but you can too!*