



# CREATING CALMING CLASSROOMS

An Inspired Teacher's Guide to Creating Safe and Calming Spaces for Learner's



**OUR BRAIN SWITCHES BETWEEN TWO SYSTEMS, DEPENDING ON HOW WE FEEL OR WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR ENVIRONMENT**



\* Slows down our heart rate and sends blood to our brain so we are calm enough to think, learn and create

\* Relaxes our facial expressions and changes our tone of voice so those around us feel safe and calm too

\* Elevates our heart rate and sends blood to our muscles so we can run away, fight or freeze

\* Tells those around us there is danger through our tense facial expression and tone of voice

**OUR THREAT SYSTEM IS ACTIVATED BY DANGER, BUT ALSO BY UNCERTAINTY AND STRESS. THE UNCERTAINTY AROUND COVID-19 HAS ACTIVATED MANY PEOPLE'S THREAT SYSTEMS.**

## CALMING ACTIVITIES HELP SETTLE THE BRAIN'S THREAT SYSTEM AND ACTIVATE THE SAFENESS SYSTEM, SO WE CAN THINK, LEARN AND CREATE.

When you are calm, you become a container, creating a safe space for children in your class. Calming activities are a form of self-care.

They all take practice so keep trying even if they feel unfamiliar at first.



### BREATH



Breath in for 3 counts and out for 4. Don't hold your breath, but breath in slowly and exhale slowly. As you practice this, you can increase your counts, always breathing out for longer than you breath in.

### REFLECT



Put your worries into words, perhaps by journaling.

### MOVE



Moving helps release happy hormones, and helps you feel grounded in here and now. It can release anxieties and help you think about what you can do and influence right now.

### CONNECT



Talk with someone who believes in you and calms you.

# ALL OF THE CALMING ACTIVITIES YOU ARE PRACTICING FOR YOURSELF, YOU CAN SHARE WITH YOUR LEARNERS.

Here are some further ideas for the classroom.

As far as possible, get learners to participate and share what they would like to do in class to support one another.

And remember to maintain social distancing.

1. Singing, praying or reciting a poem or motivational quote together.



2. Movement in the classroom could include asking a learner to lead the class in stretches for 5 minutes, dancing to some music, or practicing a yoga pose -while observing social distancing.

3. Set up some calming classroom rituals for appropriate times, such as a morning "check-in".



Get learners to chat to the person next to them to "check-in". You could get the class involved in setting a 'question for the day' for the "check-in".

Examples of questions are: What are you looking forward to today/this week? What have you learned about yourself recently? Who is a hero in your life and why?

4. Facilitate safe conversations about COVID-19. Get tips for talking about COVID-19 here.



## IF YOU STILL DON'T FEEL CALM OR SAFE, IT MIGHT HELP TO TALK TO SOMEONE

**LIFELINE**  
**SADAG**  
**CIPLA WHATSAPP LINE**  
**GBV SUPPORT LINE**

**0861 322 322**  
**011 234 4837**  
**076 882 2775**  
**0800 150 150**  
**0800 428 428**

Learners need to be safe at home to learn, think and create.

If you discover that your learners aren't safe, call child welfare:

**CHILDLINE** **0800 055 055**  
**CHILD WELFARE** **086 142 4453**  
**FOOD PARCELS (SASSA)** **0800 601 011**