Calm together

A short guide for parents and carers about big feelings, screens and settling down together.

Your calm is catching

Children borrow our nervous systems before they can run their own. When you slow your breath, soften your voice and get down to their level, their body picks up the signal that things are safe. This is called co-regulation. You don't have to be perfectly calm. A few slow breaths before you respond is enough to start.

When big feelings hit

1. **Breathe first.**
   Take one slow breath out before you say anything. It changes your voice.

2. **Get low and close.**
   Kneel or sit so you're at their height. Fewer words, softer tone.

3. **Name what you see.**
   "Your face is hot and your fists are tight. That's a big feeling."

4. **Help the body first.**
   Offer a calm card, a glass of water, a squeeze or a shake. Talk later.

5. **Reconnect after.**
   When it's passed, a hug or a quiet moment together. Then talk about it.

Screens and winding down

- Give a two-minute warning before screens go off, and stay nearby when they do.
- After a game or show, move. A dance, a shake or a run around the yard helps the body come down.
- Keep screens out of bedrooms for the hour before sleep, and charge devices outside the room.
- Watch together sometimes, and talk about how the show made you both feel.
- Notice your own scrolling. Children copy what we do far more than what we say.

A two-minute reset

Do it together. Shake out hands and legs for 30 seconds. Stand still and notice the buzz. Then three balloon breaths with hands on tummies. Finish with a stretch and a yawn.

A little each day

Australia's movement guidelines suggest kids aged 5 to 17 get at least an hour of active play a day, and no more than two hours of recreational screen time. Outside time, play and sleep all help a busy nervous system settle.

When to get more help

If big feelings are lasting for weeks, getting in the way of school, sleep or friendships, or you're worried about your child's safety, talk to your GP. You don't have to work it out alone.

Kids Helpline, free and any time, for ages 5 to 25: 1800 55 1800

Parent Line NSW, for parents and carers: 1300 1300 52

In an emergency, call 000.