



SECURE AND CALM

What is the quality “Secure and Calm”?

Secure and calm describes the ability to take part in daily activities and approach new situations without being overwhelmed with worries, sadness or anxiety. To be secure and calm also means to be able to cope with stress and pressure and to bounce back from difficulties. It is an inner capacity for well-being.

What does being secure and calm look like?

Children who are secure and calm are usually able to experience pleasure in everyday activities, and to cope when they encounter difficult situations. They do not ordinarily appear fearful, anxious, sad or depressed. Young children who are secure and calm do not get overly distressed when left by their parent or guardian, or when they face new and unfamiliar situations. They call on inner resources to calm themselves. They get along with other children and are usually able to express their needs to adults and peers. Children who are secure and calm tend to be hopeful, optimistic and independent.

What does it look like when this quality is diminished?

When a child is not secure and calm they may be anxious, worried, fearful, unhappy or even depressed. These feelings can be mild or severe depending on the child, and the situation. It is normal to experience stress and anxiety, however, when anxiety and worry interfere with daily life, it becomes a problem. Chronic anxiety and fear can change the brain’s circuitry, it triggers stress hormones, and it may lead to developmental delays.

Because anxious children and teens are often quiet and compliant, they often go unnoticed by their parents and teachers. As a result, many never receive the help they need. Unfortunately, untreated anxiety can lead to other problems later in life, such as depression, missed opportunities in career and relationships, increased substance use, and an overall decreased quality of life.

Why is it useful/helpful to have this quality?

Children who are secure and calm have the ability to manage stress in their lives, which leads to healthy cognitive, social and emotional development. When children and youth feel calm and secure, they are able to participate in fun activities and enjoy learning opportunities, cope effectively when things feel overwhelming, and reach out for help when they need it.

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8 ACTIONS THAT HELP CHILDREN FEEL SECURE AND CALM

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| <p>Strengthen In safe relationships children learn social and emotional skills.</p> | <p>Children learn to regulate emotions, express their needs and solve problems in secure attachment relationships. Build interactions that include open expression of emotions and that provide opportunities for children to learn how to become competent in their emotional world.</p> |
| <p>Watch Be aware of what normal and unhealthy stress looks like.</p> | <p>Stress at a certain level is healthy and keeps us engaged and alive – know what is normal so you can be alert to chronic or sustained levels of anxiety that is not healthy. Normal anxiety includes difficulties with separation or with new things (infants & toddlers); fear of animals, the dark and being away from parents (preschoolers); performance anxiety, fitting in, and bigger issues such as death (school-age children); anxieties about social life and the future (adolescence)</p> |
| <p>Nourish A healthy body is better prepared to handle stress.</p> | <p>Healthy food, adequate sleep and physical activity all play a critical role in preventing anxiety, dealing with stress and building the capacity to be secure and calm.</p> |
| <p>Build Build resilience in children/youth.</p> | <p>Resilience is fostered by opportunities that develop a sense of self, a sense of family, a sense of community and a sense of culture, language and land.</p> |
| <p>Ask Asking for help is important (both for a child and an adult).</p> | <p>Excessive worry means much of the brain’s resources are tied up in managing “what-if” thoughts. Identify supports to learn more about anxiety and helpful coping strategies. One of the most important supports is people. Help children identify friends and adults who they can talk to about their feelings. A support team!</p> |
| <p>Empower Teach children basic goal setting and problem solving skills.</p> | <p>Overcoming a fear, solving a problem, preparing for an upcoming event, learning a new skill and even completing a task can all become situations that require some extra coping skills. Empower children with a step-by-step approach to face life’s challenges. 1) How do you feel? 2) What would happen if...? 3) What is the problem? 4) What is the child afraid/unable to do? Come up with solutions by breaking one large goal into several smaller goals. Try the solution - one baby step at a time. Acknowledge and Reward success at every step.</p> |
| <p>Design Be intentional to design places and spaces that feel safe and caring.</p> | <p>Safe and caring environments at home, in schools and around the community, help children feel secure and calm. Safe and caring places are friendly, show visuals of cooperation, provide clear expectations, and find ways to honour children’s contributions.</p> |
| <p>Inspire Read about courageous characters and situations.</p> | <p>Help children to be courageous by sharing through books and stories. Research shows that by identifying with characters and events in books, young people may feel less isolated, can be relieved of emotional pressure and gain insight into their own behaviours and self-concept.</p> |

