

Creating Calm

Everyday Regulation Strategies for Parents & Caregivers

Caring for children who have experienced trauma can be deeply rewarding, but it can also be emotionally and physically demanding. Caregivers of all kinds often focus so much on supporting children through big emotions that they neglect their own needs. Here are several simple strategies that can help caregivers stay grounded and show up as their best selves for the children in their care.

If You Have 10 Seconds

- A physiological sigh: Take two quick inhales through the nose, followed by one long exhale.
- A tension release: Unclench your jaw, relax your shoulders, and soften your hands.
- A palm press: Press your palms together firmly for 5 seconds, then release.

If You Have a Minute

- Box breathing: Inhale for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold for four.
- Butterfly hug: Cross your arms over your chest and alternate tapping your shoulders.
- Temperature change: Hold an ice cube or splash cool water on your face.
- 5-4-3-2-1: Identify 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste.

If You Can Step Away

- Step outside: Take three slow breaths while looking at the horizon, trees, or sky.
- Listen to music or nature sounds: Even a few minutes can help reset your mood.
- Stretch your body: A forward fold, shoulder roll, or gentle stretch can reduce physical tension.

Children learn powerful lessons about coping and emotional health when they see trusted adults using healthy regulation strategies. Over time, these small moments of self-care can strengthen resilience, improve emotional well-being, and help create a more connected and healing environment for you, your family, and the children in your care.

The Wisconsin Family Connections Center is here to support you throughout your parenting or caregiving journey. You can connect with a Resource Specialist by calling 800-762-8063 or emailing info@wifamilyconnectionscenter.org. You can also schedule a time to meet with a Resource Specialist at a time that works best for your schedule. We are here to support you every step of the way.