

Calming Jar

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Calming jars are helpful tools to soothe or relax us when we're feeling worried or overwhelmed. When we give the calming jar a shake and watch as the glitter gently settles to the bottom of the jar, we can give our minds a break by refocusing on something else, giving ourselves time to regain control and take stock of our emotions. Use the calming jar while taking deep belly breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.

This is an effective mindfulness tool for kids and adults alike and can be a fun group or family activity. Personalize your own calming jar so that it's just right for you.

Materials

- Clean, clear jar/bottle (plastic or glass)
Use plastic for younger kids
- Water
- Glitter (fine, standard, or chunky)
- Sequins (optional)
- Glitter glue, clear glue, or clear hair gel
- Food coloring
- Super glue or glue gun

Instructions

1. Add water to your jar/bottle until it reaches about halfway up.
2. Squeeze glitter glue or clear hair gel into the jar—typically 1–3 tablespoons depending on the size of your jar. (You will be able to decide if more glitter glue is needed after Step 6 by giving your calming jar a test shake.) The amount of glitter glue/hair gel you add will determine how quickly or slowly your glitter falls to the bottom of your calming jar. Start with a small amount, and then add as you go.
3. Add 1–2 drops of food coloring. You can use gel or liquid-based food coloring. If you can, choose a color that brings you a sense of peace and calm. If you don't have food coloring, you can skip this step. Your calming jar will just take on the colors of the glitter/sequins you add.
4. Sprinkle glitter into the jar. It can be fun to use a combination of fine, standard, and chunky glitter (if you have it) since it can provide additional interest for your eyes. You can also use sequins in shapes you like (e.g., hearts, flowers).
5. Add water to the jar until it reaches about 1 inch from the top. Leaving a bit of room will allow you to add more glitter glue/hair gel or glitter.
*Leave a small amount of space empty at the top of your jar—this will allow you to shake the contents of the jar better.
6. Screw the top of the jar on *tightly* and give it a test shake.
7. Make adjustments! Add more glitter glue/hair gel to cause the glitter to fall more slowly to the bottom of your jar. Add more glitter and/or food coloring.
8. When you're pleased with how your jar looks, use super glue or a glue gun to secure the lid to your jar.



Image from firefliesandmudpies.com/how-to-make-glitter-jars

Using Your Calming Jar

Now practice using your calming jar. Sit or stand in a quiet place, either inside or outside of your home. Give the jar a shake and direct your focus to the swirling glitter, noticing as it slowly falls to the bottom of the jar. If you find yourself getting distracted or caught up in your thoughts, try to focus your attention to one single piece of glitter in the jar and follow its trajectory. Try taking some deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. You might even try saying a word or phrase that helps bring you a sense of peace or calm. Examples could include: "Peace," "I am OK," "You can do this," "This too shall pass."

For kids, you can try using the calming jar as a gentle time-out timer. Invite kids to have a quiet moment, refraining from talking or moving until all the glitter has settled to the bottom of the jar.

Problem solve with kids and/or with yourself about when and how you would like to practice using your calming jar. It can be useful to practice using the jar during times when you feel relatively calm and relaxed. This will help you to use it more effectively during moments of worry, stress, or other feelings you'd like to manage. Keep your jar in a dedicated space in your home so that you can access it easily.

Be patient with yourself and with each other. Practicing relaxation is a skill that you can learn over time. It's OK if it doesn't come naturally. As with most things, the more you practice the easier it will become.

"For fast-acting relief,
try slowing down.

–Lily Tomlin