The One-Page Calm Plan

Make the hard moments less likely - one page, for educators and carers

Most calm isn't won in the meltdown - it's built earlier, in the 'green' time: a predictable routine, smaller steps, the right space, a clear signal. Fill in this one page for a child who has tough moments, and you spend less of the day firefighting and more of it teaching.

The idea in one line

Plan the calm before the storm. Change the set-up, and the hard moment is less likely to come.

GREEN

set the day up to suit the child

AMBER

notice early signs, respond calmly

RED

keep everyone safe, then recover

How to print, use and make it last

- Print at A4 or US Letter on normal colour settings - that's all you need.
- To reuse it for years, laminate it: cut-outs become wipe-clean cards, and fill-in pages take a whiteboard marker and wipe clean.
- Prefer to fill it in on screen? Open the PDF in a free PDF editor (or your web browser) and use the text tool.

A general planning aid, not a clinical assessment. If a child's distress is frequent, intense or lasting, or anyone's safety is at risk, please involve the family and a qualified professional.

My One-Page Calm Plan

Fill it in together - then everyone helps the same calm way

Start with GREEN (this is where the real work is). AMBER and RED are the back-ups for the harder moments. Keep it where the team can see it.

GREEN *what keeps things calm*

A predictable routine that helps:

Make it easier - smaller steps, fewer demands at once:

Sensory & space that suits this child:

A gentle signal or visual cue we both use:

AMBER *early signs + calm responses*

Early signs I notice (before it gets big):

My calm responses (offer space, fewer words, a known choice):

RED *safety + recovery only*

Keep everyone safe (stay calm, give space, fewer words, move others if needed):

How we recover together (reconnect warmly, return to the routine gently, talk later):

A Worked Example (early years)

Fill it in together - then everyone helps the same calm way

Here's one filled in, so it's not a blank page. Yours will look different - copy the shape, not the words. Notice how most of it lives in GREEN.

GREEN *what keeps things calm*

A predictable routine that helps:
Same order every morning, with a picture strip.

Make it easier - smaller steps, fewer demands at once:
Pack-away in two small steps, not 'tidy everything'.

Sensory & space that suits this child:
A quiet beanbag corner; noise-reducing time before group.

A gentle signal or visual cue we both use:
A 'two more minutes' card before a change.

AMBER *early signs + calm responses*

Early signs I notice (before it gets big):
Goes quiet, fists clench, leaves the group.

My calm responses (offer space, fewer words, a known choice):
Offer the calm corner + a choice: 'beanbag or window?'

RED *safety + recovery only*

Keep everyone safe (stay calm, give space, fewer words, move others if needed):
Calm voice, give room, keep others a step back, no crowding.

How we recover together (reconnect warmly, return to the routine gently, talk later):
Sit nearby after; rejoin play; chat about it at pick-up.

First - Then Board

A simple, friendly way to show what's coming

Young children cope with changes far better when they can SEE the order. Show what comes first, then what comes next. Pop a routine card (or a quick drawing) in each box.

First

Then

Tip: keep it short and true - 'First pack-away, then story'. Once the 'first' is done, move to the next pair. Say it warmly, point as you go.

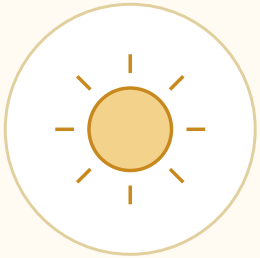
Lantern Path Books

From Lantern Path Books - a gentle planning aid for calm days, not medical or clinical advice.

Routine Cards

Cut out, mix and match for your First-Then board or a routine strip

Eight gentle everyday steps. Print on card, cut out, and arrange them to show the child what the day (or the moment) looks like. Blank ones too - draw your own.

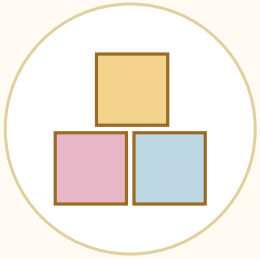


Wake up

Wash

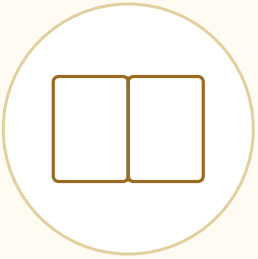
Eat

Brush teeth



Play

Tidy up



Story

Rest

Why a Calm Plan Works

The research behind the plan, in plain words

This is a planning aid built on research about what makes hard moments less likely. We make supportive tools, not clinical advice - the notes below are accurate statements about the research.

What the research says

- When the day is set up to suit a child - predictable routine, smaller steps, the right space, a clear visual cue - hard moments happen less often. This is the proactive 'green' part of Positive Behaviour Support.
- In a 37-school randomised trial, school-wide Positive Behaviour Support was linked with about a third fewer discipline referrals (Bradshaw et al.).
- Visual supports and First-Then boards are recognised evidence-based practices for helping young children follow routines and changes.

A note on the RED band

The RED band is general safety and recovery only - stay calm, give space, keep everyone safe. It is never a plan for any physical hold or shutting a child away alone. If hard moments are frequent or unsafe, work with the family and a qualified professional on a proper support plan.

The research behind it

Bradshaw, C., et al. School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support: a 37-school group-randomised trial. (PBIS evidence base, pbis.org.)

National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence & Practice (2020). Visual supports - identified evidence-based practice.

AEU SA (2024). State of Our Schools survey - 85% of educators spend too much time on behaviour (the time this plan helps win back).