

The Buzz about using the Bee CALM Backpack

Narrator: Welcome. Today we're going to talk about ways you can prepare for the unexpected. If a child in your care falls and scrapes their knee, you probably have a first-aid kit to take care of that. Well, today we're going to explore how to have a first-aid kit or go - bag for our emotional well-being. We call it the Bee CALM Backpack.

CALM stands for calming and learning materials. The Bee CALM Backpack is designed for teachers and staff working in early childhood programs. It aims to help children feel calm and secure during emergencies. Emergencies might include situations like sheltering from a tornado, a flood or hurricane warning, lockdown or shelter in place, earthquakes, wildfires, or a violent incident in the community.

During emergencies, it is natural for adults and children to respond with strong emotions. These emotions can help you act quickly to make sure everyone is safe. But balancing this sense of urgency with calm emotions and an in - charge presence is essential. It is your ability to stay calm, take control, and be supportive that will support infants and young children's emotional well-being during emergencies.

So, what goes into your Bee CALM Backpack? The good news is that the best items are things you already use for play and emotional well-being in your classroom. Blankets, small stuffed animals, books, small toys or stress balls, Play-Doh, laminated breathing exercise guides. And feelings check in cards. The Bee CALM Backpack is helpful to use at any time during emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Emergency preparedness. When an emergency comes up, it's often too late to pack. We recommend setting up your Bee CALM Backpack with the same items that you already use in your classroom to talk about emotions and feelings. Build positive relationships by being warm and loving; fostering a sense of safety; and being sensitive, compassionate, and responsive to each child's needs, feelings, and interests.

Books and stories are a powerful way to prepare children for events. Read aloud a book about an emergency and ask about the character's safe choices. This helps children think through scenarios without making it about their own experiences. Response. During an emergency, to help others, you must first make sure that you have taken care of yourself.

There's a reason flight attendants say, "Put on your oxygen mask first." Take a moment to check in with yourself and take a deep breath to care for your needs and your children fully. Be sure to model the behavior you want to see. Give clear directions that the children can follow. Use simple and developmentally appropriate language to give basic but correct information about what is happening and what you are doing.

Use the items in your Bee CALM Backpack. Since all these items are familiar to your class, using them to help the children play and talk about emotions will help them manage their emotions.

Sing songs, tell stories, and offer physical comfort if it is safe to do so. Reassure infants and young children that you are keeping them safe.

Recovery. After a disaster or other emergency event, children may want to be by your side more often or want physical attention. If the child wants to talk, listen to them. If the child wants to be held, hold them. When children receive the extra attention they need, they feel better. Encourage physical play and activities so children can release anxious energy.

Also, offer soothing activities like singing, coloring, or listening to music. Encourage expressing thoughts and feelings using feelings check in cards from your Bee CALM Backpack. Show children your interest in their thoughts and feelings about what happened. Not all children are verbal or express themselves best through language.

Many will tell their stories through dramatic play, puppets, and art. You build resiliency in your classroom every day through your practices and relationships. When an emergency does happen, make sure to take a breath and calm yourself. Then, you can use the materials in your backpack to help the children through the situation.

Share this valuable tool with your Early Childhood Program staff so they understand its purpose and benefits for all. Are you ready to create your own Bee CALM Backpack? You can get a list of recommended materials and suggestions for books and other resources from Using Bee CALM Backpacks with Children During Emergencies.