

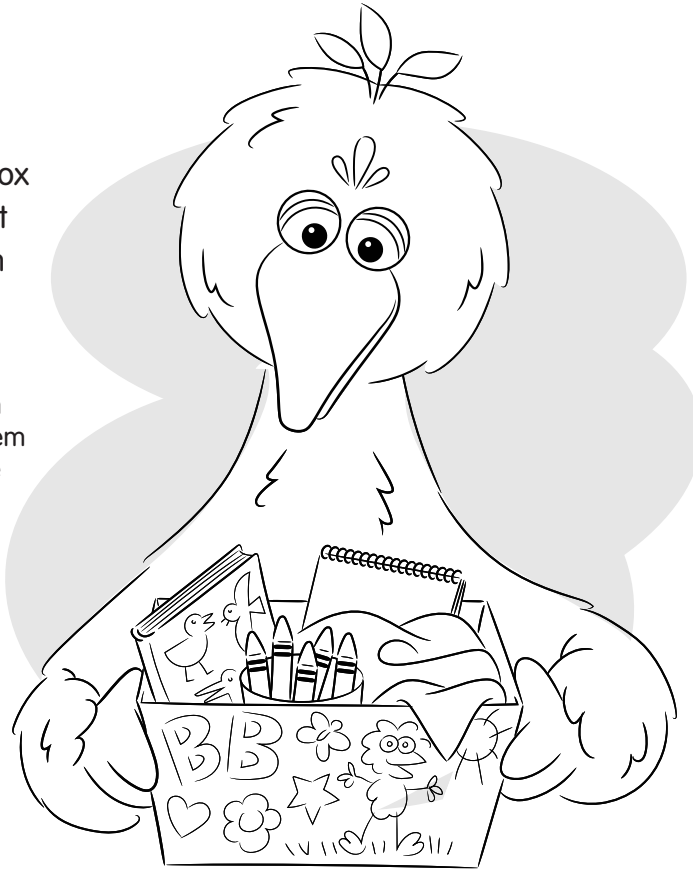
Helping Children Soothe Themselves

Here are two simple hands-on ways to help children overwhelmed by big feelings. In challenging moments, invite them to choose: do they want to use them in a quiet place on their own, or with a caring adult at their side?

Comfort Container

Create this container together during a time when children are not upset. Invite them to decorate a box or bag. The size and material will depend on what you put in it (a bag like a backpack allows children to carry it from place to place). You might add:

- squeeze ball
- crayons & paper
- stuffed animal or doll
- fidget spinner
- storybooks
- blanket
- photos of loved ones
- piece of loved ones' clothing
- fabrics in different textures
- glitter jar
- pinwheel (so children can take deep breaths, let them out slowly, and watch the pinwheel move)
- a small instrument such as a kazoo
- bubble wrap to pop
- ocean bottle (see instructions on this page)



Ocean Bottle

When we're overwhelmed, involving all our senses can help slow down, relax, and ground ourselves. This can help children better manage intense emotions.



- Fill one large, used clear plastic bottle* about one-third with water. Fill the rest with canola or vegetable oil.
- Add several drops of blue food coloring (you may also add some green) and put the cap on.
- Invite children to shake it and watch the waves settle.
- Ask children what they notice (for instance, the bottle feels cool and smooth, the water inside is blue, it makes a swishy, sloshing sound). Help them notice changes in their bodies as they begin to calm down (for instance, "I see your breathing has slowed down a bit, and your face is not as red as before").

*mouthwash bottles are ideal since they have child-proof lids, but you can use a glue gun or duct tape to keep the lid safely on any bottle.