

## How to Create a 'Calm Down' or 'Safe' Space at Home

### What is it?

This is a space where the learner can go to relax, calm down or feel safe. It should be personal to them, and they should want to access this and be somewhere where they can take the time to 'feel good' – it is not a punishment or punitive in nature.

### Where?

There is no set place where this space should be, it will depend on the individual, the home environment and the needs of the family. However, it should be somewhere quiet and not busy.

### What do I need?

There is no set way that this space needs to be designed – get creative! It should however include the following:

- Some form of cover or border to make it feel like a separate space (particularly if being placed in a large room). For example, use the corner of a room and drape blankets or towels or use a small tent to create the separate space.
- Make it cosy – lay a blanket, mat, cushions, beanbag (or similar) on the floor, add extra blankets, soft toys or whatever the learner finds comforting to the space.
- Create a 'calm down toolbox' – this should be full of things that help the learner to feel calm, relaxed and good. It could include things like their favourite book, things for colouring, play dough, stress balls, bubbles, music, fiddle toys, lego. This will be specific for the individual.
- Cue Cards – these are something additional that could be created to go in the 'calm down toolbox'. They could be visual prompts as to what helps the learner to calm down. They may include things such as breathing techniques, body tense/relax, movement activities (e.g. star jumps, wall push ups), listening to certain songs, certain smells etc. Again, this will be specific for the individual.

### How do I use it?

There is no set way to use this as it will be specific for the individual. Here are some key tips to consider:

- Create it with the learner, let them decorate it how they want – potentially with a sign saying “name’s space”. They need to want to use it and feel that they have control over this environment.
- Where possible, sit with them and discuss how it can be used – ask them how they want to use it (do they want to just leave and access this, do they want you to prompt them when might be a good time to use it, do they want to have a communication card to inform you that they are going there without having to verbally say it)? Find what works for you as a family.
- It’s ok to change and adapt as you go along. It is unlikely that this space will ALWAYS work – but it gives the learner an extra coping mechanism in a time when some of their usual strategies may not always be readily available.