



# The Turtle

## An Effective Self-Soothing Activity for Children

Young children become frustrated for many reasons. They also display this frustration in a variety of ways. For some children, anger and frustration can become overwhelming, leading to excess frustration that “spills out” into everyday situations. When this occurs, children may demonstrate verbal and/or physical aggression, excessive screaming and crying, or other behaviors.

To help these children better manage these intense feelings/worries, The Turtle can be a very effective tool for parents. It is a self-soothing activity aimed at helping children to calm themselves, without major assistance.

### The following is an example of how The Turtle is taught:

- 1) Using a visual aid, such as a drawing of a turtle, a toy turtle, or a live turtle, discuss with your child how turtles keep themselves safe from danger. Explain how they go into their shells, wait a bit, and come out again when it feels safe to do so.
- 2) Explain to your child that humans can also manage big feelings, such as worry, or anger, by doing as turtles do.
- 3) Have your child sit, cross-legged, on the floor.
- 4) Next, encourage your child to bring her knees upward, wrapping her arms around her knees in a “hug.”
- 5) Finally, have your child bow her head, breathe slowly and deeply, and count to ten. For a younger child who is unable to count, simply tell the child to breathe slowly and deeply, and to only raise her head when she feels it is safe to do so.
- 6) When the child has finished, have them stand up, take a deep breath, and ask her to take note of whether she feels better now that she has finished.

**Remember:** The Turtle is never to be used as a consequence (Example: “Since you can’t handle your feelings you have to go do The Turtle for five minutes). Rather, The Turtle is an activity that is to only be encouraged as a help to a child. Consult your therapist if you have additional questions related to implementation of The Turtle.

