Hot, Warm, Cool: The YMCA And You

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HOT, WARM, COOL: YMCA AND YOU

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Education

In the School of Education
at Salem State University

By

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Commonwealth Honors Program
Salem State University
2018
In order for children to self-regulate themselves in situations that may escalate their emotions, children must be able to identify their emotions and understand how they affect their body. This can be challenging as de-escalation strategies typically go against our natural reactions to situations, but as parents and educators, we can retrain a child’s minds to cope with their emotions. Breathing, taking a break, communication, etc. are all elements that children can learn as a skill to cope with their emotions. The following children’s book will have a dual purpose of providing families and their children with what resources the YMCA can provide in certain situations as well as provide a visualization for children on their emotions through an emotion thermometer and educate them on techniques to self-regulate their emotions. The story follows children at the YMCA and highlights escalating situations and describes what the best techniques are to cope with them.
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Salem YMCA and the children in our program for inspiring this story as well as my passion for children. Working at the YMCA for over six years has provided me with the knowledge and skills to help children with their emotions.

Thank you to professor Kristina Scott for being my advisor throughout this journey. You helped me understand what direction I wanted to take my thesis. You were a great resource in the completion of my thesis.

Thank you to Scott Nowka my honors advisor. You helped me understand the thesis process and helped me understand all there was to completing my thesis. You encouraged me to complete my thesis in a way I was passionate about.

My thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of both of you, so Thank You!
Preface

My experience at the Salem YMCA inspired the book and events that occur inside of it. I felt that I wanted to provide a resource for families to help them understand what steps can be taken during the program for children to self-regulate. The children’s book *Cool, Warm, Hot: YMCA and You* highlights the resources available at the YMCA in terms of real situations that may escalate a child’s emotions and highlights the steps children can take with or without staff to help themselves in given situations to regulate their emotions. This book aims to help children understand through visualization how their emotions affect their body. I feel that the strategies and tips provided in this book will promote independence for children in terms of taking control of their emotions through self-regulation and effective communication with YMCA staff.

The visualization of emotions in the story occurs through a thermometer labeled cool, warm, and hot. My reasoning behind this was reflecting on my own emotions and observing the children of my program. Typically, when someone gets very angry they may literally feel hot. Whereas, when they feel calm their bodies feel cool. My hope is that through making connections to physical feelings and emotions, children will better understand how they feel. Understanding how and when their emotions escalate will help children recognize when they need to implement strategies to regulate or deescalate them.
YMCA and You

Written by Tatiana Correia
Illustrations by Lauren Green
When you are at the YMCA, we want you to feel calm and cool, but sometimes...
something upsetting can happen and make your body feel warm or hot.
When your body feels hot, it’s hard to get calm and cool. So, the YMCA staff are there to help!
If someone takes something from you and you feel **warm**, what can you do?
You can tell staff and they can help you get it back.
If someone is putting their hands on you after you asked them to stop and you feel your body getting hot. What can you do?
You can ask staff to take a break from the group to take some space.
If you are waiting for a long time or can't focus and you feel warm, what can you do?
You can ask staff for a ball or fidget toy to keep your hands and mind busy as you wait.
When you feel your body getting **warm**, what can you do for yourself to stay **calm and cool**?
You can take a deep breathe in like you’re smelling a flower and breathe out like you’re blowing a candle out.
You can take some space away from the group in program space where staff can still see you.
You can color or draw to stay calm and cool.
There are many ways to stay \textit{calm and cool} in and outside of the YMCA and staff are there to help!
Strategies to Stay Calm and Cool at the YMCA

- **Taking Space**
  - Taking some space within a safe space to calm your body. This can be at a table by yourself, in a chair, etc. Just remember to stay with staff.

- **Using a Fidget**
  - If you are having trouble sitting still or waiting, using a fidget can occupy your mind, keep your hands busy, and keep you calm and cool. You can bring one from home if you tell staff.

- **Breathing**
  - When you feel your body getting warm or hot, taking a deep breath in through your nose (like you’re smelling a flower) and out through your mouth (like you blowing out a candle).

- **Talk to Staff**
  - If you need help to calm your body or need to take a break talk to staff. We are here to help!

- **Additional Strategy**
  - Coloring
    - Drawing and coloring helps to focus your attention on something calm and peaceful. You are giving your mind a break from what is going on.
Parent and Teacher Resources

**Optimus Education Blog** [http://blog.optimus-education.com/using-de-escalation-techniques-effectively](http://blog.optimus-education.com/using-de-escalation-techniques-effectively)

This is a great resource for understanding as a parent what de-escalation is, how it works, and steps an educator or parent can take in de-escalating a child once they have reached “hot” on their emotion thermometer.


The following page on the PBS kids website provides parents and educators what self-regulation is and provides some great strategies in addition to and in compliance with the strategies in the book.

**Self-Regulation and Interventions and Strategies by Teresa Garland**

This book is a great resource in understanding children with Autism, Sensory Disorders, and ADHD. Each chapter explains what children are experiencing and how parents, educators, etc. can best meet their needs.

**Cool Down and Work Through Anger by Cheri J. Meiners**

This book is another visual reference using the same term “cool” as a self-regulating children’s book. This resource highlights more generalized situations for all children and provides solutions.