

Quiet Zone



Creating a small, quiet play area is a great tool to help students with Autism calm their nervous systems down, and it is a great tool for all children to process bigger emotions. Create a space in your play area that is designated for quiet play and calming:



Visual: Delineate the space visually from the noisy, big play areas. You can use plants, partitions, cloth or any visual border that works. This can be used in your play space outside as well as in your classroom.

Signage: Consider putting a quiet sign above it. Some image that children can recognize as a calming space that you use in the classroom as well.

Books: Have a selection of easily identifiable books there for children to look at (Thomas the Tank Engine, Dora the Explorer, Elmo). This can be a great way to calm little nervous systems and create a quiet activity. Books with characters they identify from home can provide a calming transition when in school.

Small Groups: Consider only allowing two or three children in the calm zone at once. The larger group play can overwhelm students with Autism, and this gives them a chance to connect in a safer space with their peers. You can place an image above the quiet zone so students can see how to use it (3 children together).

Sensory Stimulation: Consider things that offer soothing sounds, like rain sticks or wooden wind chimes, or images, like kaleidoscopes. Offer a small bin of squeeze toys, as those can be calming as well. You can also create DIY sensory bottles for soothing visual engagement. Keep the options limited, as too many items can cause sensory overload.

Storytelling: You can have puppets or other storytelling items in the calm zone. It is a great way to calm the sensory system and can be a wonderful pre-literacy tool to play with words!

Practice: Practice using the quiet zone with all the children repeatedly, so that they learn to identify what it is for and how/when to use it.

