10 Self Calming Activities for Children

1. **Quiet Area**: Reducing stimulation can help children to calm down. Allow a child to retreat to a quiet area to calm down such as a corner in a classroom with pillows or a comfortable couch at home with a blanket.

2. **Deep Breathing**: Children can practice deep breathing. Slowly inhale through the nose and slowly exhale out of the mouth. Repeat several times.

3. **Listen to Music**: Turn on some soft, quiet music. Use headphones so as not to distract others, if necessary.

4. **Wrap Up in a Blanket**: Wrap yourself up tightly in a blanket or sleeping bag to calm down.

5. **Give Yourself a Hug**: Cross arms across chest and give yourself a big squeeze for 10 seconds. Relax and repeat.

6. **Give Yourself Massage**: Gently rub and squeeze your hands, shoulders and elbows to try and relax.

7. **Exercise**: Get moving. Exercise can help to calm the body. Try yoga, dancing, jogging, jumping rope or walking. Exercise outdoors for additional benefits.

8. **Redirection**: Children need to learn when he/she may need to try something else for a period of time. Children need to learn when to walk away and take a breather. Encourage the child to find an activity that will help he/she calm down such as a sensory bin, coloring or playing with clay.

9. **Slow, Rhythmic Movements**: Sit in a rocking chair or swing on a swing. If nothing is available, sit on your bottom and hug your knees. Gently rock back and forth on your bottom.

10. **Heavy Work Activities**: Participate in activities that require you to push, pull or carry items. Try walking with a stack of books, pull a loaded wagon or push a friend on a swing.
10 Simple Ways to Work on Balance Skills

Here are 10 simple ways for children to work on balance skills throughout the day:

1. Walk up and down stairs or curbs - each time you take a step you are balancing on one foot.

2. Ride a bicycle - this task requires postural control and balance.

3. Ride a scooter - obviously three wheeled scooters are easier than two wheeled scooters.

4. Walk on uneven terrain - walk on grass, rocks or dirt. Wet, thick mud is a big challenge. Walk on uneven terrain without shoes for a bigger challenge (i.e. sand).

5. Play a game of kickball or soccer. You need to stand on one foot to kick the ball.

6. Play follow the leader. Practice walking fast, slow, backwards and sideways.

7. Pretend to be a tight rope walker - Walk heel to toe along any line, try on your toes or your heels.

8. Try putting on your pants in standing - this is a real balance challenge to stand on one foot while putting the other leg in pants. Want to make it harder? Try putting socks on in standing without falling.

9. Walk along curbs or balance beams at the park.

10. Go on a hike searching out some logs or big rocks to climb.
10 Bilateral Coordination Activities for the Whole Body

Here are ideas to practice bilateral coordination skills:

1. Marching to music and clapping hands at the same time.

2. Cross crawls - touch your right hand to your left knee and then the left hand to your right knee. Repeat touching the opposite feet.

3. Traditional jumping jacks

4. Cross Country Jumping Jacks - place right arm and right leg forward jump and switch left arm and left leg forward. Try opposite sides - place right arm and left leg forward jump and switch left arm and right leg forward.

5. March in place sitting down while drawing circles in the air with both hands

6. Try a task using both hands or both hands and feet at the same time - ie: dribbling a ball with both hands, kicking a ball while dribbling a ball.

7. Play hopscotch - the skill of jumping feet apart and together requires coordination of both sides of the body

8. Perform motor activities to the beat of a metronome

9. Jumping activities - jumping rope, jump up and clap hands, jump up and touch your heels behind your bottom, jumping activities through a floor ladder, etc.

10. Animal walks that use both sides of the body - ie: crab walk, bear walk and crawling
5 Ways to Practice Crossing Midline

Here are 5 fun ways to encourage crossing midline:

1. Hit a ball holding a bat with two hands. Put a ball on a tee or hang one from the ceiling. Practice hitting the ball always making sure both hands stay on the bat.

2. Play clapping games. Girls in particular love to play clapping games. Teach children Miss Mary Mack or check out You Tube to learn new hand claps.

3. Make big art projects. Tape a square box to the floor. Have the child stand in it in front of the white board or chalkboard. Try making the biggest rainbow that you can but do not move your feet. Snap a photo when done to save a picture of the big art.

4. Dig in the dirt or sand. Have the child sit down, kneel or squat. Place a bucket on one side of the child and the shovel on the other side. Have the child dig and then rotate to place the dirt in the bucket. Do not let the child switch hands with the shovel when going to put the dirt in the bucket.

5. Play Simon Says. Use instructions and movement such as "put your right hand on your left shoulder" or "touch your left knee with your right hand".
5 Ways to Make Using Scissors Easier

Here are 5 ways to help children learn how to use scissors and to make cutting a little bit easier.

1. Use thicker paper when cutting. Recycled mail, greeting cards or playing cards are fun and easier to cut up than regular paper. Make it functional and the children can cut up junk mail to recycle it. Cut up greeting cards to make a simple puzzle.

2. Use smaller paper. Start out with paper that is not very wide. Index cards are nice because they are small and made out of thicker paper.

3. Draw a line from the edge of the paper to the object being cut out. If a child needs to cut something out in the middle of a paper draw a straight line from the edge of the paper to the object for the child to cut along.

4. Make the line that needs to be cut stand out more. You can thicken the line with a black marker, highlight the line or put stickers along the line to provide extra visual cues of where to cut.

5. Different scissors. Standard scissors may not be the best choice for every child. There are many different types of scissors available and different ways to cut if a child can not use scissors. Ask an occupational therapist for suggestions.
10 Fun Activities to Help Get the Hands Ready to Write

The skills that are necessary for handwriting start long before the actual pencil hits the paper. Here are 10 activities to get the hands prepared to learn how to form letters:

1. **Animal walks**: Pretend to walk around the room like a bear, crab, dog, cat, lion, etc. Any animal where the hands are in contact with the floor.

2. **Play with play dough** or knead bread dough.

3. **Use spray bottles** to water plants or to spray each other on a hot day.

4. **Play on playground equipment**: climb up ladders, jungle gyms and do the monkey bars.

5. **Paper shredder**: Ask the child to be your paper shredder. See if they can rip the paper up into small pieces.

6. **Play paper toss**: Rip a piece of paper in half. Crumple it up using only one hand. Try to throw it in the garbage can. Score!

7. **Play games that use small pieces to work on fine motor skills**: Play games that require the child to pick up small pieces i.e. bingo chips, marbles, pegs, cards, etc.

8. **Build with small blocks**: Play with Legos or other small building blocks.

9. **Create craft projects**: Make a collage on paper. Cut 1 to 2" paper strips into small pieces. Use liquid glue to help strengthen the hands while squeezing it. Try stringing beads to make a bracelet.

10. **Clothes Pin activities**: The child can wash doll clothes or wash clothes and hang them up to dry pinching the clothes pin open. Pinning sheets to furniture when building forts.

11. **Decorating cardboard boxes with markers** or marker, tape, glue.