

# CALMING JARS (Page 1 of 3)



## Key Learning

To develop emotional literacy and promote self-regulation.

## What You Need

- 📖 Moody Cow Meditates or internet access to watch a short video
- Emotion cards
- Small glass jar with a good seal
- Clear or glitter glue
- Warm water
- Food colouring
- Glitter (coarse and fine)
- Sequins
- Small dowel or plastic knife for stirring
- Optional: decorative duct tape

## No. of Children

- 1 or more

⚠️ You can purchase a beautifully illustrated deck of cards, called **Mixed Emotions** at [www.mixed-emotions.com](http://www.mixed-emotions.com).



This activity was inspired by the book, **Moody Cow Meditates (2009)** by Kerry Lee MacLean. You can find many different recipes for a calming jar online. The recipe used for this activity was **adapted from a blog post by Natalie Shaw**: [www.doodlecraftblog.com/2012/08/diy-calming-glitter-jars.html](http://www.doodlecraftblog.com/2012/08/diy-calming-glitter-jars.html).

## Preparation Activities

1. Prepare one set of emotion cards:
  - Photocopy the emotion cards.
  - Cut them out individually and place them in a container.

## How to Play

1. Discuss different grief feelings:
  - One at a time, select a new emotion card and take turns acting out and guessing the different emotions. If a child is unfamiliar with the emotion invite them to ask you/the group for help.
  - With each new emotion, give the child(ren) an opportunity to share a time when they felt this way. Ask the child(ren) to name other emotions, aside from the ones already discussed.
  - Explain that sometimes, when we have so many thoughts and feelings swirling around in our heads it can be hard make sense of all of the mixed up feelings. We can do an activity today that helps us to settle our minds and calm our bodies when we feel upset or overwhelmed.

⚠️ You do not have to use all of the emotion cards provided on the sheet. Select cards that are mindful of the child's unique needs.

2. Read **Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry Lee MacLean** or visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNmMH6tqiMc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNmMH6tqiMc) to watch the video, **Mind in a Jar – Planting Seeds: The Power of Mindfulness for Children** (2013) posted by Mindfulcloud Entertainment.
3. Make a Calming Jar:
  - Pour 2 tbsp of glue into the glass jar.
  - Fill the jar with warm water, leaving about 1.5" of space at the top
  - Add 1 drop of food colouring and stir.
    - Think of the coloured water in this jar as your mind. The glitter that we add will be your thoughts and feelings. What feelings do you want to add to your jar?
  - Add about 3-4 tsp of glitter.
    - Pick a different colour of glitter to represent different emotions.
  - Invite the child(ren) to add a few sequins to the jar – naming one thought or worry as they add each sequin.

⚠️ You can add a bit more water if necessary, but be sure to leave enough space at the top to shake it up! If you have decorative duct tape in your toolkit, wrap some around the lid to make sure it is extra secure.

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### How to Play *continued*

4. Explain the purpose of the calming jar as a coping tool:
  - What do you think will happen when we shake up our jars? Our worries and upset thoughts (the sparkles) that we added to our jars will get all mixed up.
  - That's what our minds look like when we feel upset or stressed out – all of our mixed up thoughts and feelings are swirling about, making it hard to think clearly and control our actions.
  - What do you think will happen if we sit quietly and let the jar rest? Our worries will eventually settle on the bottom of the jar and our minds (the water) will become clear again.
  - Just like the water in the jar, we can clear our minds by sitting quietly and paying attention to our breathing. When you feel upset you can use this jar to help calm your body and clear your mind.
5. Teach the child(ren) how to use the calming jar:
  - Shake up your jar really well.
  - Set the jar on the floor or a low table and sit down on the floor in front of your jar. Sit with your legs crossed, your back straight and your hands resting on your knees/by your sides.
  - Now focus your attention on the sparkles swirling around in the jar. As you watch the sparkles spin around the jar, breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, then slowly let the breath out through your mouth (be sure to demonstrate). Keep breathing this way until I signal to stop.
  - Once the water starts to clear and the glitter begins to settle on the bottom signal the child(ren) to stop.



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## Discussion

### Reflect

How do you feel after watching your jar and practising deep breathing?

### Connect

Do you remember the last time you got really upset? What made you feel that way? What other things make you feel angry or upset?

What do you feel like doing when you get mad? Some people yell, hit or break things when they are mad – do you ever feel like doing these things when you are upset?

### Apply

It is okay to feel however you are feeling, but it is not okay to act on those feelings in ways that hurt yourself, others or property. We already know we can use the jar to calm down, what are some other positive things you can do to calm down when you are really upset?

## Variations

1. Invite child(ren) to draw the emotions instead of acting them out.
2. Play the matching game instead of pulling cards from a container for discussion:
  - Photocopy and cut out two sets of emotion cards.
  - Lay the cards face down on the table/floor in a series of rows and columns.
  - Take turns selecting two cards in an attempt to make a match.
  - Discuss the emotion when a match is made.
  - Continue until all of the pairs have been found.



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To advocate for educational opportunities and support services that will benefit children and youth who are grieving the dying or the death of someone they care about.

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## SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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