

Help kids cool down when they're stressed out

- Stand back
- Talk it over
- Read
- Exercise
- Slow Down
- Sing



It's normal to get mad and lose control when life gets hectic. What we tell the kids at WINGS is that they need to learn different ways to cool off when they are fired up or stressed out.

They learn that otherwise they may take action they regret – like yell at someone when they don't mean it, quit a cherished activity or cause physical harm. We also talk to the kids about how becoming stressed out can make them feel tired or cause headaches.

Talking with kids about some options that might work for them means that they are more likely to control those fired-up feelings in a constructive way. It helps to teach them the STRESS acronym.

We tell them that to Stand back means removing yourself from the stressful situation. Talking to someone can defuse the problem. Reading offers a way to quiet kids down. Exercise is a great outlet for stress and anxiety. Kids can always use more practice in Slowing down and taking deep breaths that make them feel centered and back in control so that they think before they act. And Singing or listening to music is a favorite way for kids to regain calm.

Tell kids: Don't become a human volcano!

If you're about to erupt:

- Think – what happened?
- Feel – name the emotion
- Respond – choose an appropriate reaction

At WINGS we tell the kids that sometimes people are like volcanoes. We can feel our emotions so strongly, it's like an eruption. When emotions erupt, you lose control – and that can get you into trouble.

What we teach them is a three-step process for regaining control:

- First you need to think about the situation: what happened, what did you do, what is going on?
- Then you need to realize how you feel: name your emotions, what's going on inside of you?
- Lastly, you need to use the information you came up with while thinking and feeling to choose the most appropriate reaction.

Learning to control our emotions is an ongoing effort, and we help the kids think about and practice making better choices. We tell them that when they are choosing how to react, they need to make the decision that is appropriate for the particular situation and will lead to having a better day.

It's useful to get them to think about these situations in advance, so we ask them to think of a time when they didn't manage their emotions very well and let the volcano erupt. How could they have handled the situation differently and had a better day as a result?

We tell them: Don't let yourself become a human volcanic eruption! Try your best to think before you react.