

Sound & Breath for Nervous System Regulation **A Practical Guide for Preschool Educators**

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The Little Bag of Calm Philosophy

When children feel safe, seen, and regulated, they learn, connect, and cooperate with ease. Sound is one of the fastest, simplest ways to help their nervous system shift from overwhelm back to calm.

This same philosophy guides the work we do with families at home—so children experience consistency across both environments.

Three Core Principles

1. We all develop patterns that once protected us.

Children carry emotional habits based on past experiences. Sound helps them notice their feelings, name them, and choose new ways to respond.

Parents are learning this same principle—so together, we can support children in building new, healthier patterns.

2. Stress invites old coping strategies—calm invites new possibilities.

When overwhelmed, the brain relies on automatic behaviors (tantrums, shutdowns, aggression). When calm, the brain opens to problem-solving, empathy, and creativity. Sound, breath, and rhythm are fast-access pathways to calming the nervous system—supporting better choices, smoother transitions, and emotional safety.

Families are practicing these same tools at home during transitions, bedtime, and big feelings—creating a bridge between school and home.

3. Emotions drive behavior. Always.

This is true for toddlers, preschoolers—and the adults who guide them.

We focus on **what a child feels** before **what they do**.

Once the emotion is supported, the behavior begins to shift.

When teachers and parents both lead with this lens, children feel understood—and behavior shifts naturally.

Today's Three Workshop Goals

By the end of this session, you will:

1. **Feel your own ability to reset and find calm** using sound, breath, and heart coherence.
2. **Discover that you already have everything you need** to shift your nervous system—your intention, your heart, and your voice.
3. **Name one simple sound practice** you'll bring into your classroom this week.

These same goals guide the parent workshops—so families experience the same "aha" moments you're having today.

Why Regulate the Nervous System?

When we're regulated, we can:

- **Think clearly** and make calm decisions
- **Connect** with others and respond (not react)
- **Feel safe** in our bodies and environment
- **Learn, play, and create** with focus and joy

A regulated nervous system supports:

- Emotional resilience
- Attention and focus
- Social connection and empathy
- Stress recovery and rest

For teachers: When *you're* regulated, you become a co-regulator for your students. Your calm nervous system helps theirs find calm too.

Parents are learning this same co-regulation principle at home—when they're calm, their child follows.

The Power of Sound

Sound is one of the fastest, most accessible tools for shifting the nervous system.

Benefits of Sound:

- **Calms the vagus nerve** (the body's "brake pedal" for stress)
- **Slows brainwaves** and supports focus
- **Creates rhythm and predictability**, which signals safety
- **Engages the senses** without needing words
- **Builds co-regulation** through shared listening and creating

How Sound Helps:

- **Humming, toning, or singing** activates the vagus nerve and releases tension
- **Steady rhythms** (drumming, clapping) help organize the nervous system
- **Soft, repetitive sounds** (chimes, bowls, ocean drums) soothe and ground
- **Playful sound games** re-engage attention and support emotional shifts

Families are using these same sound tools at home—humming during tantrums, tapping rhythms during transitions, and creating calming corners with chimes or bowls.

The "Slow Me Down" Breath (4-2-6 Count)

A simple, effective tool to calm your body and mind in moments of stress or transition.

How to Do It:

1. **Inhale through your nose** for a count of **4**
2. **Hold gently** for a count of **2**
3. **Exhale slowly through your nose or mouth** for a count of **6**

Repeat 3–5 times.

Why It Works:

- The **longer exhale (6 counts)** activates your parasympathetic nervous system (rest & digest mode)
- **Counting** gives your mind something to focus on
- **Nose breathing** calms the body and supports oxygen flow

The long exhale tells your brain: *"You're safe. You can relax now."*

This breath: Slows heart rate

Lowers cortisol (stress hormone)

Shifts the nervous system from fight/flight back to calm & connected

This is the same breath parents are practicing at home—before bedtime, during car rides, and in big feeling moments—so children experience it as a familiar tool wherever they are.


How to Share This with Students

For Younger Children (Ages 3–5):

- Use **hand motions**: Arms up on the inhale, hold at the top, float down on the exhale
- Add a **visual cue**: "Smell the flowers, blow out the candles"
- Say it out loud: *"Breathe in... hold... and slowwww it down"*
- Pair it with a **chime or soft tone** to signal the rhythm

For Yourself:

- Use the "Slow Me Down" breath during transitions, before circle time, or when you feel activated
- Model it openly: *"I'm going to take a slow breath to help my body feel calm."*
- Invite (don't require): *"Would you like to breathe with me?"*

 **Pro Tip:** Practice it during calm moments first. That way, when big feelings hit, your students' bodies already know the pattern.

Parents are encouraged to practice this breath during calm times too—so when stress hits at home, kids already know what to do.

Quick Classroom Sound Tools

Tool	Use It For
Chime	Transitions, breath cues, attention signals
Ocean Drum	Calming, grounding, sensory regulation
Shakers	Movement, rhythm, re-engagement
Singing Bowl	Group presence, deep calm, closing rituals
Voice (humming/toning)	Self-soothing, vagal toning, connection

Many families are creating simple sound toolkits at home using household items—jars of rice, pots for drumming, or humming together during transitions.

Where to Use Sound in Your Classroom

- ✓ **Arrival Calming Corner** — Bowl or chime available for self-regulation
 - ✓ **Transitions** — Use chimes or clapping rhythms instead of verbal cues
 - ✓ **Emotional Reset** — Offer a choice: *"Would you like to hum, breathe, or use the shaker?"*
 - ✓ **Mindfulness Minute** — Guided sound + breath check-in (1 min max)
 - ✓ **Creative Sound Centers** — Free exploration with instruments during play
- At home, families are using sound in similar ways—morning routines, bedtime wind-downs, car rides, and big feeling moments.*

Remember:

You don't need fancy tools or perfect delivery. You already have everything you need:

✨ **Your intention**

💖 **Your heart**

🎵 **Your voice**

Sound and breath are just ways to *come back* to yourself—and help your students do the same.

This message is the same one we share with parents—because calm is a practice, not a personality trait, for all of us.

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