Calm Count Toolkit

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Hosted by:

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Calm Counts/Tolerance of Stressors

Each data sheet should be used for one stressor. This sheet tracks: _____

Fill in one column per day, and list the phase Ryan is on. For successes at the current phase level, circle numbers from the bottom toward the top. For failures, "x" numbers from the top to the bottom. Score an "x" if it is necessary to pause the calm count, even one time.

Phase 1 - proactive calm counts and reinforcement.

Phase 2 - proactive calm counts, you taper off during the count, reinforce.

Phase 3a - warn Ryan that the stressor is coming, but do not conduct a calm count. Reinforce.

Phase 3b - same as 3a, but do not reinforce.

Phase 4a - no warning, no calm count, reinforce successes.

Phase 4b - same as above, but not reinforcement. This is the "real world."

	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Date									
Phase									

Comments:

Calm Count Procedure

1. Identify a stressor.

2. Present the stressor at a level that evokes a little bit of tension. *Do not push to high levels of tension and do not allow your student to back away from the stressor.

3. Count out loud, to 5 for very early learners, but to 10 for most learners.

4. Use your fingers to count, and make eye contact with your student.

5. Model very calm affect, and count fairly slowly (approximately 1 for every 1.25 seconds). *Do not allow your student to push the rate of your counting.

6. At any sign of tension, say something like "Ooh, that's not calm". Avert your gaze and stop counting.

7. As soon as tension subsides, resume counting. (Only start back at "1" if your student was upset for more than 10 seconds.)

Calm Count Target Selection

(*with 3 examples filled in)

Stressor	Easily repeated?	Moderately stressful?	Teacher can control onset/offset?	Begins with positive reinforcement?
Delay in reinforcer delivery	X	X	X	X
Haley's Comet		?		
Fingernail clipping	X	?	X	

Calming Dimensions Grid

(example, Ryan's haircuts)

Easier	Harder
Clippers are off	Clippers are on
Top of the head	Behind the head, back of neck (probably because clippers are out of sight)
Not touching head	Touching head
Relatively far away	Relatively close
5 second count	10 second count

There are a number of variables that can make any challenge, including calm counts, more or less difficult. Recognizing this, we may choose to isolate 1 or 2 dimensions at a time, and may increase student success by making all of the other dimensions "easier".

As soon as possible, I prefer 10 second calm counts over 5 second calm counts. For Ryan, when we first started to put the clippers behind his head, we turned the clippers off. And, the first time we touched Ryan's head with the clippers the clippers were not on and we touched the front/top of his head. These calm counts isolated "back of head" and "touching/clippers on", respectively.

Calm Count Data

Date	Stressor	Phase	# of pauses	Approximate duration	Comments

Common Errors in the Use of Calm Counts

1. Too high a percentage of calm counts are conducted REACTIVELY (i.e., after tension has already started)

2. Teacher allows student to dictate the degree to which the stressor is presented (e.g., how close the clippers are to the fingernail)

3. Teacher allows student to push the rate of the calm count by counting along. Counting along is fine, but teachers must be sure that their student is not pushing the rate of their counting.

4. Teacher fails to model calm affect

5. Teacher counts when student is not calm

6. Teacher over-exposes the student to a stressor