Kimochis®

Kimochis® Help Calm Upset Feelings

For Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Children with autism spectrum disorder can have challenges managing angry emotions. Mad feelings can often be triggered by an event, task or activity that your child dislikes or wants to avoid. Mad feelings can appear quickly and sometimes without notice or warning! Make an effort to determine what might be a trigger for your child and decide if that trigger can be changed or avoided. Since this is not always possible, it is important to plan ahead and give your child a strategy (or several) to calm him/herself during mad or stressed moments. For some children, one strategy may be enough. Other children may need several different choices, depending on the situation. Together with your child, try several calm-down strategies and choose one that might work best.

The Kimochis® character Cloud® is a bit moody and unpredictable, like the weather. Cloud® can often SNAP and rain on his friends' parade. Because Cloud® sometimes struggles with expressing anger in positive ways, he can be a great teacher.

Introduce Cloud® to Your Child

Read Cloud's story from the *Kimochis® Feel Guide*—included in the Cloud® character box. If your child can read, he/she might want to read it to you! Have fun talking about where Cloud® lives and his favorite things. Talk about the description of Cloud's personality in the second paragraph. Describe how Cloud® can be happy one moment and then mad the next. Explain to your child, "Because Cloud® has to practice calming down his mad feelings, he can teach you ways to calm your mad feelings."

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Cloud's Calm-Down Breath

This activity will give your child a concrete, easy-to-use strategy to use when feeling stressed, anxious or angry.

Materials: Cloud®; Mad Feeling; Feelings from Mixed Pack #2: Uncomfortable and Hurt, and the blank Make-Your-Own—using any washable marker, write CALM on one side of the blank feeling and draw a simple, calm face on the other side

- Do this activity when your child feels calm and relaxed.
- Tuck the Mad Feeling in Cloud's pouch. Ask your child to pull it out. Turn Cloud's face from happy to mad. Ask, "What do you think Cloud® is feeling? Why do you think he feels that way?"
- Encourage your child to think about what made Cloud® feel mad. This will be imaginary and may be difficult. Give examples such as, "Cloud® might be mad because his brother broke his toy."
- Share a story of a time that you felt mad. Explain why you were mad. Start with, "I felt mad when …" Show what your face and body might have looked like when you were mad. Ask your child to imitate your facial expressions and body language. If it is comfortable for your child, look into a mirror together to make mad faces and bodies. If other family members are available, involve them too. Try the following statements:
    - "Look at my mad face. Let's make a mad face together. Look at my mad feet, mad hands, mad hair. Let's make those together. Let's make a mad sound."
- Put the Mad Feeling back in Cloud's pouch. Ask your child to pull it out and think of a time when he/she was mad. If he/she is unable to think of one, say, "I remember a time when you got mad because (name a time). Do you remember that? Let's make a mad face, body, hands and feet. Let's make a mad sound together to show how mad you were. Sometimes when we get mad, we might use a mad face and body like this. We also might say or do things that hurt the feelings of other people." Hold up the Hurt Feeling. Give some examples of hurting words.
- Show your child Cloud® with his mad face and say, "When Cloud® feels mad, he might use a mad face, body and voice. He needs to calm down so he won't do or say things that are mean or hurt someone's feelings. Cloud® has a special way to calm down. He wants to teach you how to do it."
- Have your child put the Mad Feeling back in Cloud's pouch. Demonstrate the Calm-Down Breath. Hold your pointer finger under your nose. Say, "Smell the flower (breath in through your nose)…and blow out the candle (blow out through your mouth)." Say, "Cloud® feels better when he uses his Calm-Down breath. Let's practice." Ask your child to do this with you. While breathing you or your child can turn Cloud's head to the other side. Say, "See how his Calm-Down Breath made Cloud's mad feelings smaller. It makes me feel better, too. Does it make you feel calm?" Give your child the Calm Feeling (that you made from the blank Feeling) to trade for the Mad Feeling and ask your child to tuck it in Cloud's pouch.
- Do the Calm-Down Breath together several times. Ask your child, "When do you think you could use the Calm-Down Breath?"
- If you have Mixed Feelings Pack #2, you can do the same steps above using the Uncomfortable Feeling. Explain, "Uncomfortable means that something doesn't feel right in your body or brain. When you are uncomfortable, it can be easy to use a mad face, body, voice or words. You can use your Calm-Down Breath to help when you feel uncomfortable. Let's practice." Give some examples from your own life to help your child understand the meaning of the word "uncomfortable."

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- If the Calm-Down Breath does not work for your child try some of these other calm-down strategies. Use the steps described above to teach these other strategies:
  - Hold Cloud® with the Calm Feeing tucked in pouch
  - Count from 1 to 10 (if you still feel mad, count again from 10 to 1)
  - Squeeze the Mad Feeling, Cloud®, or a stress ball
  - Think of a peaceful place or look at a picture of a peaceful place
  - Talk yourself into being calm by saying, "Be calm, be calm" or "I can handle this"
  - Tense and then relax your arm and leg muscles
  - Rub the Mad Feeling or a worry stone that you can keep in your pocket
  - Listen to music or sing a song (to yourself or out loud)
  - Walk or march it off (See the March Away Madness game below)

Prompt and Reinforce Your Child's Use of the Calming Strategy

- If you child starts to get upset, give him/her Cloud® or the Mad Feeling to hold as an acknowledgment of upset feelings. Say, "I can see that you feel mad." Remind your child to use the Calm-Down strategy that you practiced together. Give Cloud® to your child with the mad face facing him/her and prompt him/her to rotate Cloud's head to the other side. You can also trade the Mad Feeling for the Calm Feeling as a concrete way to show that feelings can change.
- If Cloud® or the Mad Feeling are not readily available, ask your child, "What would Cloud® do right now?"
- Prompt your child to take a Calm-Down Breath before he/she is out of control. Say, "Jacob, let's take a Calm-Down Breath." Take several breaths yourself to model and calm down together.
- Model how you and other family members use the calm-down breath. "Daddy is going to take a Calm-Down Breath." "I want to be sure I can talk calmly because I feel mad right now. I'm going to take a Calm-Down Breath."
- Acknowledge when you see your child use the strategy. Say what you see! "I saw you take a Calm-Down Breath! I noticed you were feeling mad, but you are talking to me so calmly. I am very proud of you!"
- Your child can color the template at the end of this handout. Place it in a prominent place in the house (on the refrigerator) to remind your child (and other family members) to calm down when feeling upset.
- Establish a phrase that your child can use to remove him/herself from a situation such as, "Excuse me. I need a break." Or "Please give me a minute." This phrase will give your child a polite and kind way to exit a stressful situation, regain control, and return when in a calmer state. Your child can also hold Cloud® while regrouping.
- Teach your child a statement that he/she can say to safely warn others that he/she feels mad. Practice a script such as, "I feel so mad right now I can't say anything else."

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Write a Kimochis® Social Narrative

Social narratives are simple stories that you write with your child about challenging situations. These stories can direct your child on what to do; encourage emotional regulation; and promote an increased understanding of the perspectives of others. The narrative acts as a reminder of the strategy that Cloud® taught. In this case, your child needs to remember to use a Calm-Down Breath when feeling upset. Here are two examples:

My Calm-Down Breath (for younger children)

Once in a while I can get really mad. When I get mad, I might yell and say words that hurt others. When I do this, it can hurt the feelings of my friends and family. Everybody gets mad at times, but they usually stay calm. Cloud® taught me to use a Calm-Down Breath when I get mad. I will "smell a flower and blow out a candle" to make my mad feelings smaller. That is a way that Cloud® calms down and I will try it too.

My Calm-Down Strategy (for older children)

Sometimes things happen at school or at home and I feel really mad. I usually get mad when someone asks me to do something that I don't want to do. I might get so mad that I get out of control. Cloud® gets mad, too. He uses his Calm-Down strategy to help him calm down so he doesn't get out of control. Cloud® taught me how to use my Calm-Down strategy. When I get mad, I will (name the strategy). Using my Calm-Down strategy will help me stay calm. Everyone around me will like it when I use my Calm-Down strategy. When I start to feel mad or get upset, I will try to think of Cloud® and do the Calm-Down strategy he taught me.

Tips for writing a Kimochis® Social Narrative

- If possible, involve your child in writing the social narrative.
- Write the story in first-person and present tense.
- Begin with a sentence that explains the challenging situation. Using the word "sometimes" or "once in a while" will help your child to understand that difficult situations don't happen all the time.
- Throughout the story, include sentences that explain the situation—what your child sees, what happens, who is involved
- Include a sentence that describes the feelings and thoughts of others as a way to help your child learn perspective-taking.
- Write a sentence or two describing what to do during the challenging situation.
- Use the example narratives here as a guide, but make sure you individualize it for your child's age, developmental level, situation and experiences.

Read the social narrative several days (and numerous times) before a new experience that you predict may cause upset feelings. This will help your child become familiar with the parts of the narrative. Review the story immediately before the event or experience so the steps are fresh in your child's

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mind. While reading the story, you can role-play each step with your child. During the event or experience, coach and prompt your child to use the positive behaviors suggested in the story. "Remember how Cloud® used his Calm-Down Breath." Verbally reinforce your child when he changes his behavior. You can also add drawings, pictures or photos (of your child doing the desired behaviors). Having Cloud® close-by when you read the story together may also help your child remember what to do.

The March Away Madness Game

- Together as a family talk about things that can make each of you feel mad. Everyone can list one or more things.
- Show your child how you can use your body in positive ways to make madness smaller. Just like an athlete can "walk off" a minor obstacle or upset, so can you. Younger children may enjoy "marching off" anger while older children might prefer to "walk it off." Demonstrate walking or marching in place while saying, "I feel so mad because…(name something that can make you feel mad), but I can march/walk it off."
- Let your child march/walk off his/her madness by imitating your model. This is intended to be fun and playful!

Read *Cloud's Best Worst Day Ever*

Cloud® was having the BEST day ever, until everything started to go wrong. When Cloud® bursts and rains on everyone's parade, his nurturing friend Lovey Dove® helps him find a way to calm his mad feelings.

Sit in a comfortable spot with your child and begin to read the book aloud. An older child who reads may still enjoy having it read aloud by you or might prefer to read the book to you. Let your child choose. As you move through the book, stop to ask open-ended questions, such as the ones suggested below. These questions are designed to encourage your child to think beyond the text as a way to relate the characters' experiences to those in his or her own life. Point out the facial expressions and body language of the Kimochis® characters in the illustrations. Talk about the words the characters use when talking to each other. Follow the guidelines below to make reading Cloud's book a fun and positive experience.

Before reading the book:

- Ask your child about the title of the book: "What could it mean? Can you have a day that is the best and the worst both at the same time?"

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While reading the book:

- Point out Cloud's face and body language. Ask, "When Cloud® gets mad because Cat was eating his pudding, did he remember to use his Calm-Down Breath? What happened when he forgot to calm down?"
- On the page after Cloud® yells at his friends, point out the facial expressions and body language of Huggtopus®, Cat and Bug. Ask, "How do you think they are feeling?" Pull out the actual Feeling pillows and ask your child which ones match how each character is feeling.
- On the page where Cloud® comes back to Kimochis® Way, point out that his friends don't want to play with him. Ask, "Why do you think his friends don't want to talk to him? How does Cloud® feel now?" Look at Clouds' facial expression. Ask, "What does Cloud's face tell us about how he feels?"
- On the next page, Cloud® feels all mixed up inside. Ask, "Why do you think Cloud® felt mixed up?"
- When Cloud® apologizes, ask, "How did he feel after he apologized? Does his face change after he apologized? Why does he want to give Huggtopus® a hug now? Why did he brighten, puff and shine?"

After reading:

- Ask, "Is it possible to have a best-worst day? What did Cloud® mean by that? Have you ever had a best-worst day?" Describe a best-worst day of yours to get your child thinking about his/her own daily experiences.
- Use the Feeling pillows and go through the book to find examples of when the characters felt those emotions. Encourage your child to look at facial expressions and body language as well as words. Ask your child to find times that Cloud® could have used his Calm-Breath.
- Take turns drawing pictures of yourself and your child with a mad face. Then draw a picture of what you think your face looks like after you have both done your Calm-Down Breath (or other calm down strategy). Compare the drawings and determine which one looks and feels better!
- Read the book again and again. Ask different questions. Encourage your child to ask questions too. Have fun!

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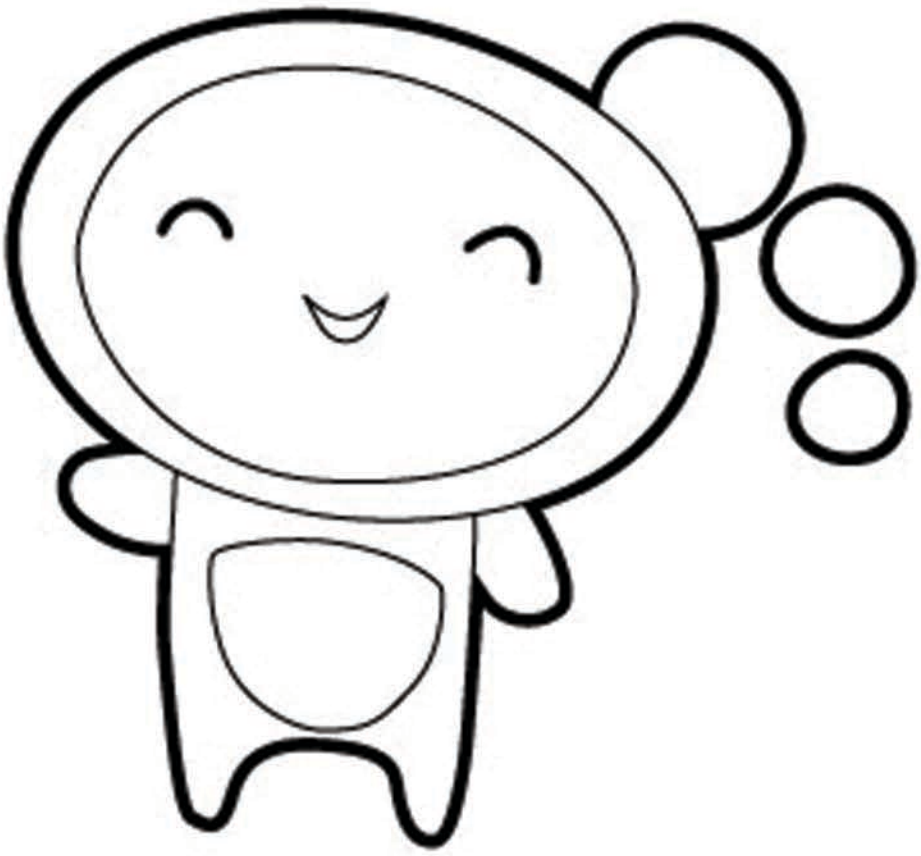

Remember to use my Calm-Down Breath.

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