


<p><b>Resource:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>'Calming Cushions'</b></span></p>	
<p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>Calming cushions are a great way of helping children to release their feelings of anger and frustration in a safe and supportive way. Sometimes children get so frustrated that dealing with their emotions in a calm and rational way is not possible; as opposed to letting children kick and punch others to 'get it out of their system', calming cushions help children to compose themselves after a safe 'release' of their emotions. The cushions are simply normal cushions which children can use to squeeze, pull, twist, punch, wrestle with or 'drop kick' so that they can exert their feelings without causing harm to another person. Once the child has had a chance to calm down, they can then return to their activities effectively.</p>	
<p><b>Handy Hints</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider where you might allow the children to 'use' the cushions – letting other children watch as a child has an 'aggressive release' is not appropriate.</li> <li>• Calming cushions should not be used by all children, every day. They need to be kept in a special place (in a box or in a cupboard) so that children appreciate they are not part of the 'furniture' of the setting.</li> <li>• Let frustrated children explore the cushion in their own way – this is not a resource which necessarily needs to be modelled to the children by practitioners/teachers.</li> <li>• Ask the children how they feel once they have 'used' the cushion – you will find that children feel a lot better after using it.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calming cushions are a relatively cheap resource to purchase and use in your setting.</li> <li>• Calming cushions allow children to express their physical emotions in a safe way.</li> <li>• The release that children feel from 'using' the cushions helps children to appreciate the importance of expressing strong emotions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adaptations</b></p> <p>Alternatives to the calming cushions include stress balls, plastercine, Blu-Tack®, stretchy slime and balls of wool.</p> <p>For older children, practitioners/teachers can let children handle the calming cushions as they talk to them about their feelings.</p> <p>Children with special educational needs and disabilities can be encouraged to handle and 'use' sensory cushions.</p>
<p><b>Questions for Consideration</b></p> <p>Which children in your setting struggle to deal effectively with their strong emotions?</p> <p>When particularly do you think calming cushions would be useful during the day – <i>after playtime? At the end of a lesson/session? Why?</i></p>	
<p><b>Linked Resources</b></p> <p><b>Anger Management</b> – See page 68</p> <p><b>Physical Games</b> – See page 89</p>	