

C.H.E.F. *Outcomes* Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 2006

Featured Topic

Early Learning: *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments*™

Welcome to *Outcomes*

I'm pleased to welcome you to our inaugural issue of ***Outcomes***, a new publication from Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (C.H.E.F.®). This report offers inspiring and informative **outcomes** on key health education and prevention initiatives undertaken by C.H.E.F. and/or our partners.

Each issue of ***Outcomes*** will showcase key learning related to a specific health education topic, such as findings and testimonials from real people in the field. Our goal is to provide valuable outcomes that we hope you'll find relevant and useful.

The featured topic in this first issue of ***Outcomes*** is C.H.E.F.'s unique early childhood program, *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments*™. This interactive program helps young children and their caregivers manage stress. C.H.E.F. has gathered a number of valuable outcomes from early childhood professionals and family members who are using this program.

We welcome your feedback on our first issue of ***Outcomes***. I invite you to drop us a note with your comments at outcomes@chef.org, so we can make ***Outcomes*** even better.

Thank you for your efforts in health promotion for children and their families and for your interest in and support of our early learning programs and services.

Warmest regards,

Larry Clark

President & CEO

Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (C.H.E.F.)

[\[start page 2\]](#)

Background

C.H.E.F.'s Leadership in Early Learning and Development

For over 30 years, C.H.E.F. has been recognized as a national leader in educational programs and services that support the healthy development of youth. In support of that history, C.H.E.F. has developed three early childhood programs geared toward promoting early learning, school readiness, and healthy development: *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments*™, *Social Beginnings*®, and *Healthy Beginnings*™. For more information, please visit www.chef.org.

About the *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments*™ Program

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The Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program helps young children (ages 3-7) and their caregivers manage stress. It supports the important connection between health education practitioners, early childhood professionals, families, and children. With this program, adults learn to manage stress as they guide children to manage stressful moments.

In developing this program, C.H.E.F. incorporated the latest child-development research from leading experts in the field, including Robert Sapolsky, PhD; Herbert Benson, MD; James Humphrey, EdD; Jeffrey Allen, MEd; Roger Klein, PsyD; and Georgia Witkin, PhD. The program was written by Victoria Tennant, Med, an early childhood brain development and stress management consultant.

The Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program uses a combination of Calming Activities and The Calming Skill™ to help adults guide children to manage stress.

- Calming Activities: These fun, easy, calming strategies are supported by research as effective stress-management methods. The Calming Activities fall within three developmental areas: (1) moving and sensing; (2) seeing and imagining; (3) listening, talking, and singing.
- The Calming Skill™: A five-step process for adults and children to use to calm themselves. When adults and children use this skill, they feel, think, learn, and behave better—everyone benefits.

With over 25 years of experience in training educators, C.H.E.F. understands the importance of high-quality trainings to ensure effective program implementation. The Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program includes a 12-hour training for trainers and a six-hour training for early childhood professionals.

[Sidebar

The Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program includes:
Trainer's Guide (with CD-ROM)
Calming Cards
Stress-Reducing Booklet
C.H.E.F. also provides program training.]

[Sidebar

The Calming Skill™
Step 1: I Notice My Body Signals
Step 2: I Stop and Breathe
Step 3: I Calm Myself
Step 4: Now I Feel...
Step 5: I Tell Myself Positive Words
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Early Learning Outcomes

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Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™

Evaluation Background

C.H.E.F.® surveyed a large sample of participants from the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™ trainings to determine how they used the skills and materials after the training, and the degree to which the training was successful in changing behavior (based on real-life stories and testimonials).

The evaluation was designed to identify the specific activities that participants used, and how they rated the value of the training and materials after they had some experience using them.

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Evaluation Methodology

During the first phase of evaluation, each participant received four copies of a questionnaire along with stamped return envelopes to return each week in which they used activities from the program. They were given an incentive of a weekly prize drawing for a tote bag or a calming music CD.

Between March and June 2004, C.H.E.F. conducted 13 trainings with a total of 463 participants. In the follow-up, 90 participants returned 210 questionnaires.

During the second phase of evaluation in June 2006, each participant received an online questionnaire asking them to share a brief story about their use of the *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments* program with a child and/or adult, and what benefit, if any, the individual received from it.

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<#>73% rated the training **very useful** in helping them to use the activities and skills¶
<#>22% rated the training **useful in helping them to use the activities and skills**¶

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<#>60% rated the **Stress-Reducing Booklet very useful**¶
<#>21% rated the **Stress-Reducing Booklet useful**¶
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Evaluation Outcomes, Part 1

Was the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™ training valuable in helping participants use the activities and skills?

According to respondents, there was significant value in participating in C.H.E.F.'s *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™* training. It was perceived as practical, informative, easy to understand, and hands-on, with participants walking away ready to begin using the techniques immediately.

- 95% of respondents rated the training very useful or useful in helping them to use the activities and skills
- 81% of respondents rated the *Stress-Reducing Booklet* very useful or useful
- 93% of respondents rated the *Calming Cards* very useful or useful

"For the past two years, this has been the most requested staff training in our program for pre-service, and also at the local Early Childhood Conference in the spring. The teachers and early learning professionals both at our agency and in the community take it over and over again." [BJ Hellman]

"From the feedback we received from our staff, the program was well-received and useable not only in a classroom setting, but with the teachers themselves. One child I was working with could not get enough of the strategies for calming himself. We did two or so every time we met." [Rick Goudzwaard]

"I have done many trainings for child care providers for the past two years. Each time, the providers are very excited that they have some hands-on tools that they can use with the children in their daily life. The activities in the book are very useful. Some teachers said they can use the same activities for themselves." [Cam Do Wong]

"I have had adults in the training actually be brought to tears, realizing the amount of stressful moments they have and how to better calm themselves. Staff members have let each other know how helpful this training was to them and how they are using it in their classrooms." [Cheryl L'Ecuyer]

[start page 5]

Evaluation Outcomes, Part 2

How frequently are participants using the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™ program?

According to respondents, the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™ program has considerable practical value and is easy to apply to many everyday situations and locations, with both children and adults. Its simplicity and portability allows for use in schools, homes, stores, clinics, hospitals, the outdoors, and a variety of other venues.

- 91% of respondents reported using The Calming Skill™ at least once in the last week
- 61% reported sharing program information with parents in the last week

"I have been using the program constantly in my work. I work with kids who have experienced domestic violence, and the program works beautifully with my curriculum. I use it as a teaching tool throughout my

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"I have taught the calming strategies to adults who work with children. Those teachers who have implemented strategies for calming report that it makes a HUGE difference in their relationships and the coping capacity of their classrooms."

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"I have provided classes and taught this on an individual basis. Staff are very thankful for the input and feel it helps them to be calm, and gives them a helpful tool to calm a child or a group of children."

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<#>59% reported using The Calming Skill™ three or more times in the last week¶
<#>32% reported using The Calming Skill™ one or two times in the last week ¶

program, but especially during the anger management and conflict resolution skills-building sections.” [Kellie Rogers]

“The Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program reinforced skills that I use every day in my practice as a public health nurse. I use these skills on a daily basis at work in my clinic and my practice in the community (i.e., home visits). As a bonus, these skills are very effective at home with teenagers as well as with younger children.” [Kelly Anderson]

“After outdoor play, the children are wired up and some days are truly more stressful than others, but music soothes the children and my nerves. We use the music, turn down the lights, and sing quietly. Some even drift off to sleep.” [smallblessings@msn.com]

“Eight-year-old Mimi carries a lot of stress and has trouble going to sleep. Now at bedtime, she uses the Melting Snowman calming technique, and is able to go to sleep soon after going to bed. She’s getting more sleep, is more willing to go to bed, and her mom has more late evenings left for herself.” [Lanie Riley]

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Evaluation Outcomes, Part 3

How successful is the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program in reducing stress among children and/or adults?

According to respondents, the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™ program has been highly successful in reducing stress among a variety of children and adults in a range of situations. The resulting calming effect soothes both adult and child, creating a dual benefit.

- 87% of respondents rated the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program as highly effective or effective for calming themselves
- 94% of respondents rated the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program as highly effective or effective for calming children

“Your techniques come in very handy. We try to keep the big cards handy for those meltdown moments, and to remind ourselves what other methods we can try with our kids. We love the program!” [Becky Blake]

“Children were not relaxing for rest time. They get up at 6 a.m. and were very tired and in need of rest. I taught them some relaxation methods and they were able to relax, therefore falling asleep for much-needed naps.” [Deborah K. Hayford]

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"In a multi-age Camp Fire USA club, the leader noticed one young boy was becoming agitated. She recalled the steps for managing stress and immediately asked all the children to take a deep breath. All the kids loved the breathing break. It calmed the young boy who sparked the activity, and the rest of the meeting went great. The leader said they didn't do all the steps, but the boy was aware that he was less agitated." [Donna S. Fischer]

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"I shared that it is easier to calm yourself when you are singing. So we sang the song from class and it was like letting the air out of a balloon. It calmed everyone in the room. I also used the calming music CDs to start class and if I forgot, the students would say 'Where's the music?'" [Linda Starkenburg]

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"One day, we were grocery shopping and my son was beginning to lose it—so we stopped what we were doing and began shaking like puppies! Pretty soon, we were laughing too hard to be mad, and I have to say we received a few chuckles from other shoppers. One mom came up afterwards and asked me what we were doing, and said that she was going to use that tool with her toddlers." [Kellie Rogers]

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"I used the calming skills with my husband as he lived his final weeks with cancer, when he was scared and in pain. I also shared the information with hospice and they were happy to hear some new calming techniques." [Sherie Schmitt]

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"One day my little granddaughter came over to visit during child care hours, and she really 'busied' things up. She spilled her milk, and then rocked back in her chair and fell backwards, so lunch went everywhere, and she was crying. The rest of the lunch carnage was still on the table. I was feeling stressed, and the only thing I could think to do was shake like a puppy. It did help." [Jeni Meissner]

"When a little boy was very upset, I used some of the calming strategies to help him calm himself. After that, he would remind me when he got upset, and I would go through it with him." [krishaharris55@hotmail.com—could be deleted for space]

"I keep a bottle of bubbles on my desk at all times so it can be used by anybody who is stressed or just needs a fun minute." [dottie@nwinfo.net—could be deleted for space]

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C.H.E.F.[®] Helps Children and Adults Manage Stress Effectively.

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At C.H.E.F.[®], we're committed to improving the health of people of all ages through educational products and services that can help change unhealthy behaviors. *The Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™* program helps children, families, child care providers, and teachers ease their stress in positive and healthy ways. With early childhood professionals and family members working together on this unique educational program, children will learn positive stress management skills to use throughout their lives.

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We are grateful to our generous partners, including the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, former Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL), for supporting statewide trainings of the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program.

To Learn More

Our Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments web page features product details, a research list, sample pages, testimonials, and more. Please visit www.chef.org/calming.

For additional information on the Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments program, please contact us at 800-323-2433 or cs@chef.org.

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For additional program information, please visit C.H.E.F. at www.chef.org and *Kids Matter* at www.earlylearning.org/kidsmatter.htm !¶

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About C.H.E.F.[®]

Founded in 1974, Seattle-based Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (C.H.E.F.[®]) is dedicated to promoting health and quality of life through education. As a nationally known nonprofit organization, C.H.E.F. develops a variety of health promotion and prevention education programs and services for individuals and organizations working in the early childhood, school-aged youth, and healthy aging fields.

For information about C.H.E.F.'s programs and services, please visit www.chef.org or contact us at 800-323-2433 or cs@chef.org.

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Additional information on these early childhood programs can be found at

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and why was it Developed?

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Additional research further supports the specific calming strategies identified in the *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments™* program.

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The *Calming Ourselves in Stressful Moments* program is comprised of several elements:

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Calming Cards deck of 30 imaginative and easy-to-do stress reducing activities for adults and children to use in-the-moment to focus attention away from the stressful situation; actively relax their bodies; and use their imagination to calm their minds.

Calming Strategies supported by additional research as effective methods for reducing stress, including why they are important and sample calming activities.

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The Calming Skill™

At the center of the program is *The Calming Skill™*, which consists of five simple steps that you can use to calm yourself in stressful situations and guide children to use when they're stressed:

When adults and children use *The Calming Skill*, they feel, think, learn, and behave better, which ultimately benefits everyone.

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"I have done many trainings for child care providers for the past two years. Each time the providers are very excited that they have some tools on hands that they can use with the children in their daily life. The activities in the book are very useful. Some teachers said they can use the same activities for themselves."

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"In a multi-age Camp Fire USA club the leader noticed one young boy was becoming agitated. She recalled the steps for managing stress and immediately asked all the children to take a deep breath. "Hey everyone, let's take a breathing break. Let's all breathe in as

we move our arms up over our head." All the kids loved the "breathe break". It calmed the young boy who sparked the activity, and the rest of the meeting went great. The leader said they didn't do all the steps but the boy was aware that he was less agitated."

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Specific outcomes are outlined below:

Page 5: [11] Comment [tb12] **triciab** **9/20/2006 2:28:00 PM**

Based on something Kathy said—there's an important difference between % of total users and % of those who respond.

Page 5: [12] Comment [tb13] **triciab** **9/20/2006 2:28:00 PM**

Per Kathy, it's okay to use these stats as long as we're clear that it's a percentage of RESPONDENTS, not a percentage of those who USE it.

Page 5: [13] Comment [tb14] **triciab** **12/8/2006 8:15:00 PM**

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