

ADHD RISE

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07

GROUNDING SCRIPTS

When the nervous system cannot hear reason.

Seven field-tested scripts for returning to the window of tolerance — for parents, kids, and the storms in between.

PRINTABLE · FRIDGE-ABLE · FIELD-TESTED

Free Edition · 11 pages · from adhdrise.com

Educational content. Not medical advice.

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INTRODUCTION

Before you begin.

When an ADHD brain floods, words stop working. Lectures, logic, and "use your words" are trying to reach a part of the brain that has gone offline.

What does work is grounding — short, concrete phrases or actions that pull the nervous system back into its window of tolerance.

These seven scripts are short. They're meant to be used mid-storm, not memorised perfectly. Keep this page visible — on the fridge, beside a screen, inside a journal — and let your body learn where to reach for it.

FOUR QUIET RULES

- 01** Grounding works near the edge, not in the storm's centre. If a meltdown is in full flood, co-regulate first.
- 02** Short beats clever. Five words will land. Twenty-five will not.
- 03** Lower your voice. A calm tone signals safety to the nervous system.
- 04** Your nervous system is the first script. A calm you says more than any sentence.

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT. NOT MEDICAL ADVICE.

If your child's dysregulation is severe or trauma-linked, please work with a licensed clinician.

SCRIPT 01 OF 07

01

The 5-4-3-2-1.

USE WHEN

A pre-flood moment — anxiety climbing, sleep refusing to come, homework pressure rising, everyone stretched thin.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

Let's do a 5-4-3-2-1 together. Name 5 things you can see. Now 4 things you can touch. Now 3 things you can hear. Now 2 things you can smell. Now 1 thing you can taste.

WHY IT WORKS

Classic sensory grounding, widely used in trauma-informed and DBT-adjacent practice. It pulls the brain out of the panic loop and into present-moment data — and it works because attention to physical sensation activates parasympathetic pathways that do not require executive function.

FOR A CHILD

Do it with them, not to them. Name your own answers first. Their nervous system joins in before their words do. Works from roughly age 5 through adulthood.

SCRIPT 02 OF 07

02

The Temperature Shift.

USE WHEN

Rising arousal, about to lose it, stuck inside a loop of frustration that won't release.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

Let's cool you off. Splash cold water on your face for twenty seconds. I'll count.

WHY IT WORKS

Cold water on the face (forehead, cheeks, area around the eyes) activates the mammalian dive reflex through the trigeminal nerve — a vagal response that slows heart rate within seconds. This is the TIP skill in DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy), used clinically as a distress-tolerance tool. Cold on the wrists or back of the neck is a gentler variation that may help via general cooling but does not trigger the full reflex.

ALTERNATIVES

An ice pack on the face, or holding ice cubes briefly. For young children, supervise — do not leave a child with extreme cold for more than 20–30 seconds, and always check skin tolerance.

SCRIPT 03 OF 07

03

The Press & Release.

USE WHEN

Anger, rage, big-body feelings, post-school meltdowns — the moments where words have already stopped working.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

Press your palms into mine — hard. Harder. Good. Now push the wall with your back. Now hug your knees as tight as you can. Release. Again.

WHY IT WORKS

Proprioceptive input — deep pressure and muscle engagement — shifts the autonomic nervous system from sympathetic (alarm) toward parasympathetic (rest). It gives the body a sense of completion that words cannot deliver during dysregulation. Same principle behind weighted blankets (Mullen et al., 2008).

FOR YOU, TOO

Stand in a doorway and press your palms against the frame for 30 seconds. A classic parent-on-the-edge reset.

SCRIPT 04 OF 07

04

Name it to tame it.

USE WHEN

Your child is visibly upset but hasn't quite erupted. A feeling is brewing and needs room to land.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

Looks like a big feeling is showing up. It might be frustration. It might be disappointment. You don't have to know. You don't have to talk. I just see it, and it's okay that it's here.

WHY IT WORKS

Affect labeling research (Lieberman et al., 2007 — UCLA fMRI studies) shows that naming an emotion engages the prefrontal cortex and reduces amygdala activation. Dan Siegel popularized this as "name it to tame it." You are not fixing the feeling — you are giving it a shape so it stops being a storm with no edges.

AVOID

"You shouldn't feel that way." "It's not a big deal." "Calm down." None of these label. All of them dismiss — and dismissal escalates dysregulation rather than easing it.

SCRIPT 05 OF 07

05

The Box Breath.

USE WHEN

Pre-sleep, pre-homework, pre-transition, pre-anything hard. A rehearsal breath to prepare the nervous system for what's next.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

*Let's do a box. Breathe in, 1-2-3-4. Hold, 1-2-3-4. Breathe out, 1-2-3-4.
Hold, 1-2-3-4. One more box together.*

WHY IT WORKS

Slow-paced breathing (around 5–6 breaths per minute) is one of the most evidence-supported regulation tools — it activates the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system via vagal pathways (Zaccaro et al., 2018, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*). The box version works because the structure is concrete: draw the box in the air as you go.

FOR LITTLE ONES

"Smell the flower, blow out the candle." Same principle, easier for ages 3–6.

SCRIPT 06 OF 07

06

The Physical Anchor.

USE WHEN

Overwhelm in a public place — the grocery store, the classroom, the park. Somewhere movement and noise are unavoidable.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

Feet flat on the floor. Hands on your thighs. Eyes on my eyes, or on my shoulder if that's too much. Three slow breaths. You're here. I'm here. We're okay.

WHY IT WORKS

When the brain floods, the body often loses its sense of where it is. Anchoring through contact points — feet, hands, gaze — gives the nervous system data that says: I am here, I am not in danger, I can pause. The calm voice of a co-regulating adult amplifies the effect.

THE BONUS

Teach your child to do this for themselves. It becomes a portable regulation skill they can carry anywhere.

SCRIPT 07 OF 07

07

The Repair.

USE WHEN

The fire is out. You are both quiet. The storm has passed and they are back inside the window.

SAY THIS — ALOUD, SOFTLY

That was a big one, huh? I love you whether you yell or whisper. When you're ready, we can figure out what hit hard. No rush.

WHY IT WORKS

Research on rupture-and-repair (Tronick, Schore) suggests that consistent repair after dysregulation prevents shame from becoming internalised as "I'm broken." Repair rewrites the story: the flood doesn't define you, and my love doesn't leave when you're hard. It may be one of the most underused tools in ADHD parenting.

OVER TIME

Hundreds of repairs become your child's inner voice. This is the script that changes the trajectory the most.

THE NEXT STEP

You made it.

That is already regulation.

Stick these scripts on the fridge. Inside a cupboard. Near the kitchen sink — where the evenings often begin to unravel.

And when you're ready for the system behind these 7 scripts — the why, the how, and the 60+ other tools that go with them — here's where to go next.

THE PARENT REGULATION GUIDE

The complete system.

123 PAGES · 16 CHAPTERS · 60+ TOOLS · 22 SOURCES

These 7 scripts are part of something bigger. The full guide includes your personal trigger map, the PAUSE protocol for your own dysregulation, 17 emergency scripts adapted for ages 2–5, 6–10, and 11–15, repair & reconnection, and a 30-day plan.

If the 7 scripts helped, the system is where the real change starts.

\$47

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adhdrise.com/parent-regulation-guide/

SCAN TO BUY



SOURCES & FURTHER READING

The science behind these scripts.

Every script in this guide is anchored to published research. The sources below are where to go if you want to verify the mechanism yourself.

Lieberman, M. D., et al. (2007).

Putting Feelings Into Words: Affect Labeling Disrupts Amygdala Activity in Response to Affective Stimuli. *Psychological Science*, 18(5), 421–428.

The fMRI research behind Script 04 (Name it to tame it).

Siegel, D. J., & Bryson, T. P. (2011).

The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind. Delacorte Press.

Clinical framing for naming emotions and co-regulation.

Linehan, M. M. (2015). DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Source for the TIP skill (Temperature, Intense exercise, Paced breathing) — Script 02.

Zaccaro, A., et al. (2018).

How Breath-Control Can Change Your Life: A Systematic Review on Psycho-Physiological Correlates of Slow Breathing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, 353.

The parasympathetic mechanism behind Script 05 (Box Breath).

Feldman, R. (2017). The Neurobiology of Human Attachments. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 21(2), 80–99.

The biobehavioral synchrony research behind co-regulation.

Mullen, B., et al. (2008).

Exploring the safety and therapeutic effects of deep pressure stimulation using a weighted blanket. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health*, 24(1), 65–89.

Deep pressure stimulation — Script 03 (Press & Release).

Tronick, E. (2007). The Neurobehavioral and Social-Emotional Development of Infants and Children. W. W. Norton.

Rupture-and-repair framework — Script 07 (Repair).

CHADD. Emotion Regulation and ADHD. chadd.org/attention-article/emotion-regulation-and-adhd/

Clinical overview of emotional dysregulation in ADHD.