School-Based Calming Strategies for Students

* Have available the use of a safe or private place the child can visit to regain control (e.g., guidance office or resource room) and to establish a secret signal for the child and teacher to covertly communicate the need to take a brief time-out during class.
* Preparation for episodes of intense emotion also may include the development of a crisis management plan that involves crisis prevention strategies. This crisis management plan should include the following:
  + Explicit instructions to manage unsafe behaviors (i.e., who does what, when, and where).
  + Details regarding the location, supervision of, and expectations surrounding safe and private places (e.g., designating the guidance counselor’s office as a safe place and making sure the child gets there and returns to the classroom as soon as possible after calming down).
  + The development and practice of a specific communication system to implement procedures quickly (e.g., a child could give a “T” hand signal to communicate the need to go to his or her safe place).
  + Alternative backup plans (e.g., walking around the gym with an adult if time in the safe place didn’t work).
  + Recovery procedure for all involved following the crisis (e.g., de-stress and debrief as a class, with the child included, in order not to ostracize the child).

Reference

Lofthouse, N. & Fristad, M. A. (2006). Bipolar disorders. *Children’s Needs III: Development,*

*Prevention, and Intervention, ch 16*, 211-224.