

Puffy Learns to Be Brave for His Shots & You Can Too!



By Rochelle Lentini

Photography by Rochelle Lentini.

Images by Lance Rodgers and from Vecteezy.com

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A scripted story to assist young children who may feel anxious or scared about shots.
Families, counselors, child life specialists and medical professionals can use the story to guide young children how to go through the steps in getting shots, while also teaching feelings and self-regulation.

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Tucker Turtle terminology used with permission from the National Center on Pyramid Model Innovations, <https://challengingbehavior.org/>

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Puffy gets a lot of shots, and he doesn't quite know why. The doctor said that shots are medicine to help his body feel better. He gets nervous but is learning how to calm himself, and keep his hands, feet, and body to himself. Puffy tries really hard to be still, calm, and brave.





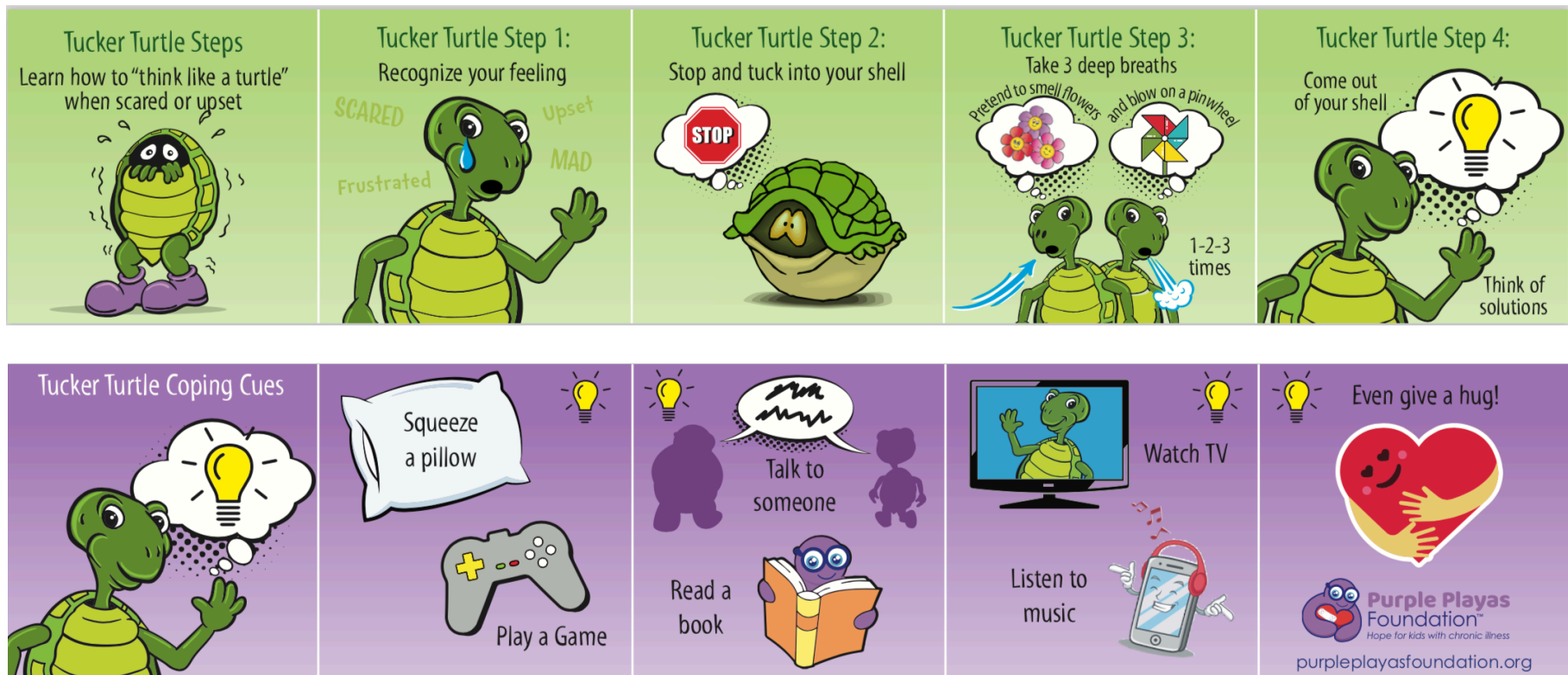
Puffy used to be scared of the pointy needle on shots. He would yell, hit, kick, pinch, and pull hair. After his shot, Puffy would feel sad and sorry for hurting people.

Sometimes when you are scared, you may feel anxious and might do things you don't really mean to do.



Most people don't like to get shots. Puffy's friend, Tucker Turtle, has had a lot of practice with shots. Tucker Turtle said his child life specialist taught him how to "think like a turtle", be brave, and keep his body calm.

So, Tucker Turtle taught Puffy how to think like a turtle. He told Puffy, “When you are scared, upset, frustrated or nervous, you can stop and pretend to tuck inside your shell like a turtle. Then, you can take 3 deep breaths. Breathing deeply helps you calm and keep your body still. It also slows down your heart beat. Then, you can think of solutions, follow rules and make good choices. There are lots of choices you can make to help you cope with getting shots.”



Just like Tucker Turtle, Puffy's child life specialist helps him with his shots. She plays with him and teaches him how to calm his body and be brave.

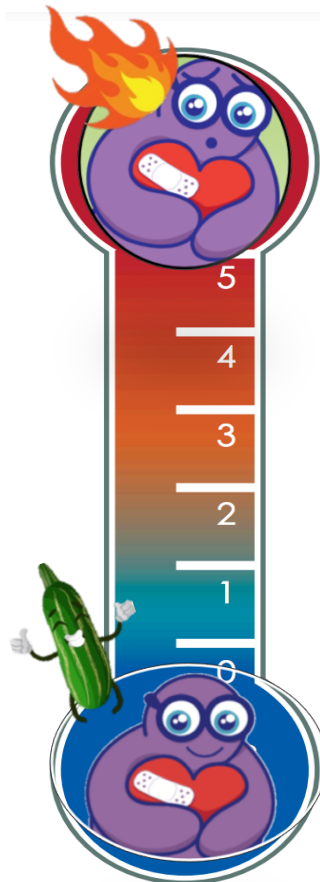
An adult usually gives Puffy his shot. Doctors, nurses, or physician assistants can give shots. At times, Puffy's mom, dad, or caregiver gives him his shot at home.



Did you know that some kids even give themselves their own shot?

Puffy's child life specialist explained all the steps of getting a shot and how you might feel: "If you feel scared or anxious, your heart could pound or beat super fast. Your belly might even feel funny and your head could hurt. Some kids may feel dizzy, hot, or even sweat. This makes it hard to think. Taking deep breaths can help these feelings go away. "

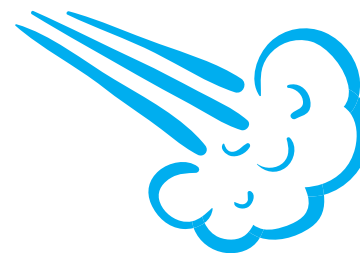
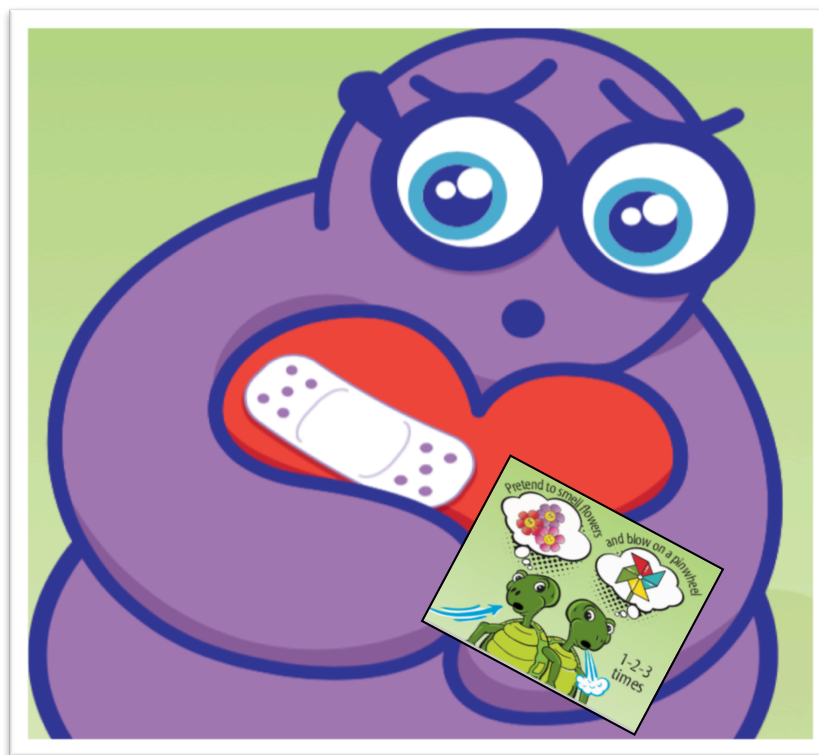
When I am scared, my head might hurt and my heart beats faster. I feel hot, like I might "explode" but I need to be cool as a cucumber.



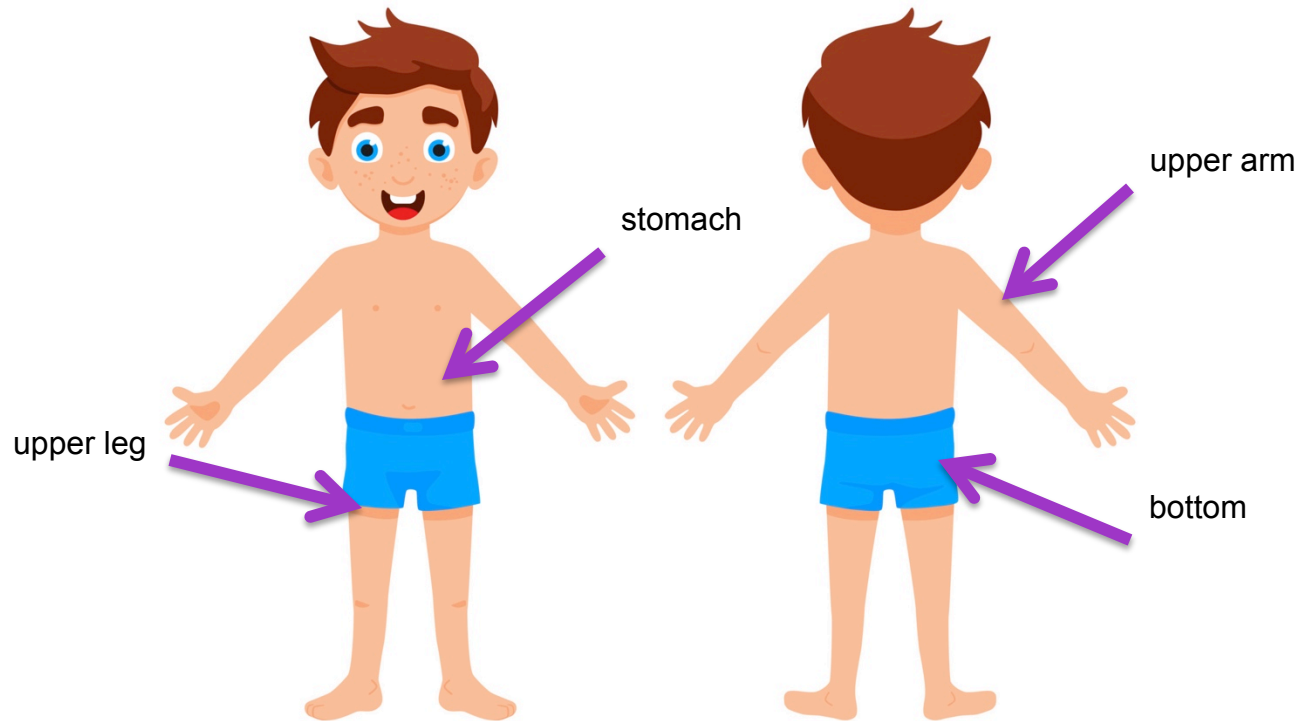
If I breathe deeply, my body calms, my heart slows down, and I can breathe easier. I then feel cool as a cucumber.

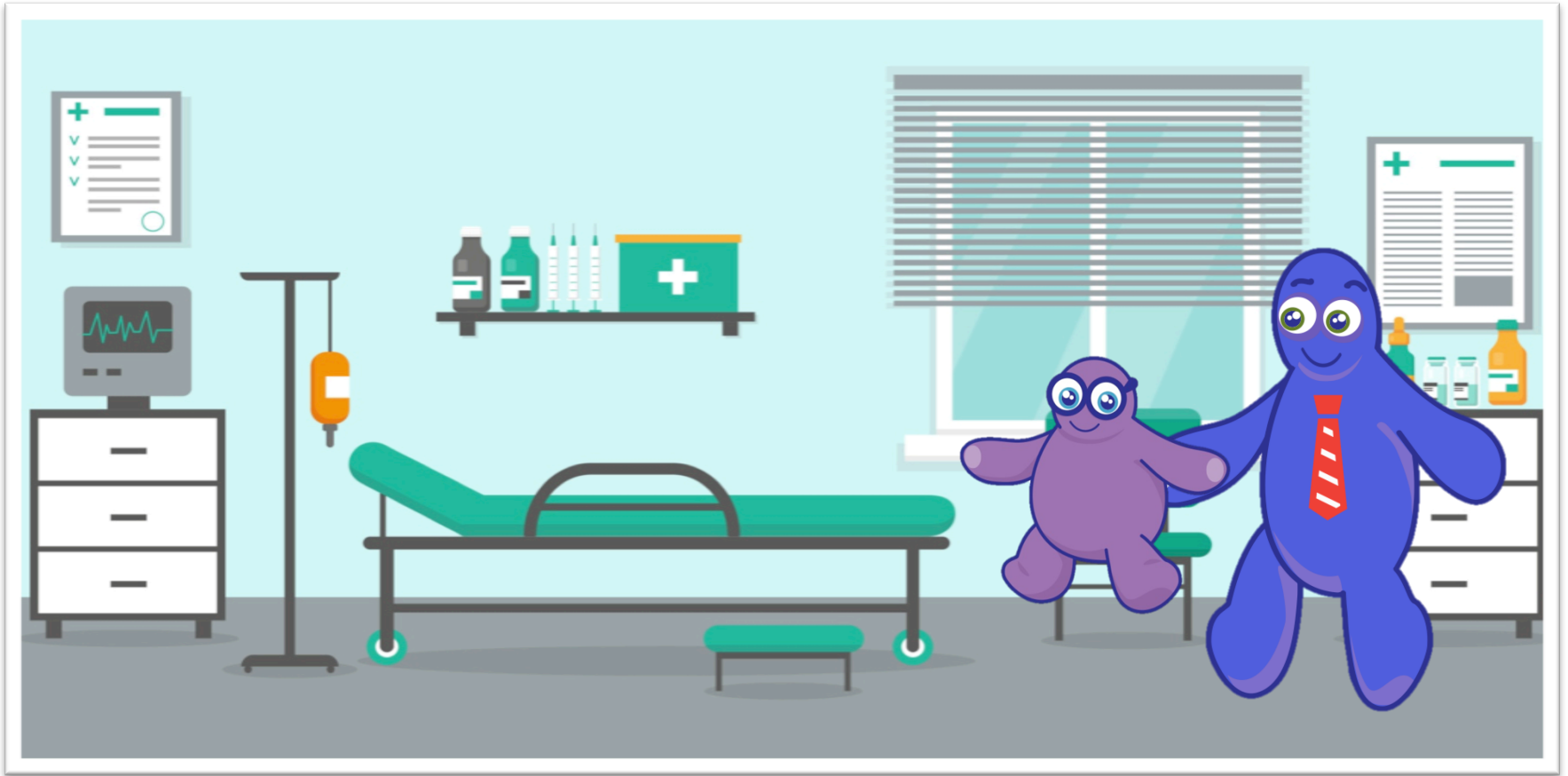


Just like Puffy, I sometimes have to go to the doctor to get shots. Even though I might get scared, I can still breathe to calm my body and be brave.



There are kids who get their shots at the doctor's office, others might get their shots at home. Some shots are given in the leg or arm and some shots may have to be done on the stomach or bottom. Sometimes, I can choose where I want to get my shot. Other times, I might not have a choice.





If I go to the clinic for my shot, I check-in at the front desk.
Then, I go to a room and wait for the nurse or child life specialist.

There are things I can do to make the shot a little easier.
I can choose how to numb my shot spot. Numbing helps my skin not feel the needle poke as much.

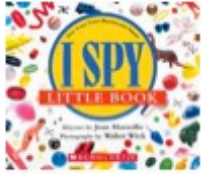
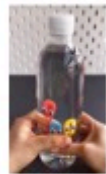


Puffy uses numbing cream and Buzzy Bee to numb his shot spot. Others might use Freezie Spray, Ladybug, a Shot Guard, or an icepack to numb their shot spot.

I can also choose how to take my deep belly breaths. Breathing deeply helps my body stay calm inside. When I am calm and loose like spaghetti, my shot spot feels squishy. This helps the shot go in smoothly.

B E L L Y * B R E A T H I N G	Pinwheel (smell flower/blow pinwheel) 	Bubbles 	Birthday Cake (smell frosting/blow candles) 	Dragon Breathe 	C H O I C E S
	Dandelion Wishes 	Balloon Breathe 	Hawk Hug 	Yoga Breaths 	
	Super Power Breath 	5 Fingers 	Buzzy Bee (smell honey/buzz out) 	Santa (smell/ho-ho-ho) 	
	Rocket 	Puffer Fish 	Elephant 	Hot Cocoa (smell, blow steam) 	

Some kids like doing an activity when they get a shot. It helps keep their minds busy. I get to make a choice of an activity to do while I try to stay calm for my shot.

A C T I V I T Y	Sing a song 	I spy 	Read a book 	View Master 	C H O I C E S
	Bubbles 	Pinwheel 	Squeeze ball 	Count 	
	Hug a stuffy 	Use iPad 	Watch TV 	Play a game 	
	Squeeze pillow 	Listen to music 	Mirror Mirror 	Visual fun 	



Puffy likes to help kids out with their shots. He lets kids practice giving him a shot.

FIRST

I make a plan of how to numb
my shot spot, belly breathe,
and what activity I want to do.

I want to use...

to numb my shot spot.



to belly breathe.



as my activity today.



THEN

Then an adult helps me do my
activity and shot. I either sit in a
“comfort position” on a lap or by
myself.





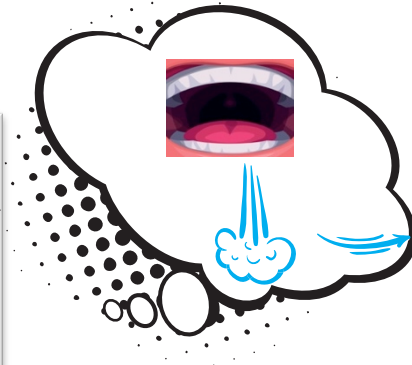
When Puffy is scared or anxious, he might feel like screaming, hitting, kicking, pinching or pulling hair. This could make it even harder for the shot to go in because muscles tighten. If his shot doesn't go in smoothly, he might get a bigger bruise.

When I get my shot, it is really important to stay “cool as a cucumber” so that my muscles are squishy and my body stays calm. Breathing slowly, in through my nose and out through my mouth, helps my body stay calm.





While I wait for the nurse or doctor to wash hands and put on gloves, I can practice my deep belly breathing. I breathe **in through my nose** and **out through my mouth**.





Most kids use an alcohol swab to clean their shot spot. It might feel cold and smell funny. Puffy sometimes uses soap and water to clean his shot area because the smell of alcohol makes him feel yucky.

We review the rules before my shot.

Stop conversations.
(Nurse has to concentrate.)



Sit & belly breathe.



Keep my body still.



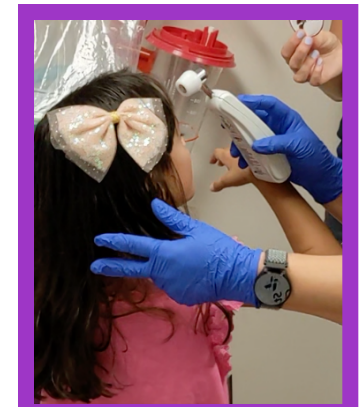
FIRST

When I get my shot, we count together, and I take my 3 to 5 deep belly breaths. If I want, I can watch or look away.

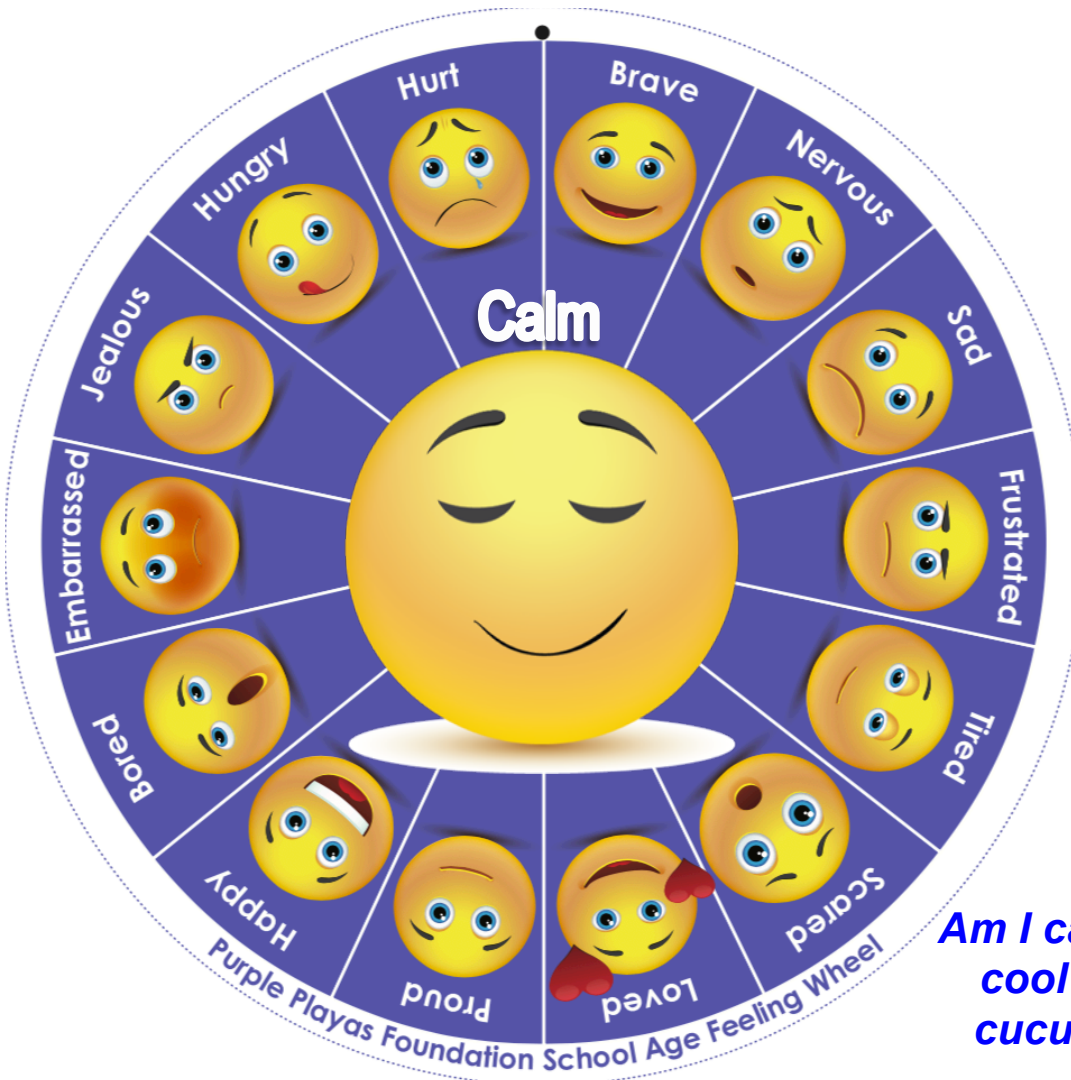


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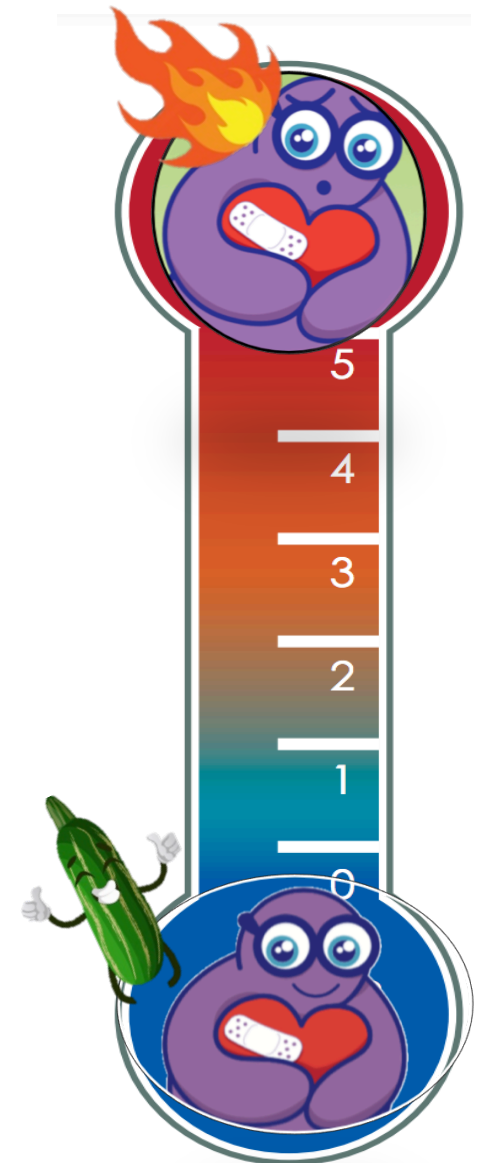
Like Puffy, I cover my shot spot with a Band-Aid. I might also need a temperature check.



Then, I use my relaxation thermometer to check inside my body to see if I feel **calm**.



Am I calm and cool like a cucumber?



When we're all done, we can celebrate. I can tell the person at check-out how calm and brave I was while I got my shot.



My family is so proud of me for being calm and brave.
I am proud of myself too!

Volunteers drive our mission to provide support and resources in the area of pediatric complex chronic care needs and gifting smiles to children and their families.

100% of proceeds fuel our 3 goals:

1. Social-emotional resources on coping with medical trauma.
2. Funding and resources, resulting in SMILES
(i.e., gas/food gift cards, camp, family connect days, holiday gifts, and educational grants).
3. Funding pediatric fellowships due to shortages in specialty fields.

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