

FIRST WAVES

My Body Tells Me

A Tide Pool Introduction to Ocean Zones

COMPREHENSIVE TEACHER GUIDE

12-Week Curriculum for Students with Significant Support Needs

Includes:

Quick-Start Guide • Phase Progression • Complete Weekly Lessons

In-the-Moment Scripts • Family Materials • IEP Goals

Calm Connections Learning Lab LLC

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QUICK-START GUIDE (Read This First!)

You have 5 minutes before students arrive. Here's everything you need:

THE 30-SECOND SUMMARY

First Waves teaches Calm vs Not Calm (Weeks 1-2), then teaches 5 taught feelings (Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared, Calm). Tired is included as an always-available Not Calm feeling (no standalone unit). Every day: 5 minutes. Show card -> Point to body -> Name it -> ONE breath -> Celebrate.

MINIMUM DAILY SETUP (DO THIS EVERY DAY)

- 2-Zone visual (Calm / Not Calm)
- Not Calm Menu (Break / Help / Squeeze Cushion) + Squeeze Cushion
- Today's feeling card

If you only remember one thing: This is a skills routine, not a discussion. Keep language short, repeat the same script, and measure progress by participation (not perfect answers).

TODAY'S 5-MINUTE ROUTINE

| Time | Step | Say This |
|--------|---------------|---|
| 30 sec | GATHER | "Let's check our bodies!" |
| 30 sec | SHOW | Hold up card: "This is [FEELING]. [Feeling]. [Feeling]. [Feeling]." |

| Time | Step | Say This |
|--------|------------------|--|
| 1 min | BODY | "Where do you feel it?" + point to body part |
| 1 min | NAME | "Show me [feeling]!" or "Point to how you feel." |
| 1 min | BREATHE | "Let's take a belly breath. In... Out..." (just ONE) |
| 30 sec | CELEBRATE | "You LISTENED to your body! That's AMAZING!" |

WHICH FEELING THIS WEEK?

| | | | |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Weeks 1-2 | CALM / NOT CALM | Weeks 7-8 | MAD |
| Weeks 3-4 | HAPPY | Weeks 9-10 | SCARED |
| Weeks 5-6 | SAD | Weeks 11-12 | CALM |

NON-VERBAL STUDENTS?

Success is ANY response:

- Looking at the card = participation
- Any sound = communication
- Body movement toward card = choosing
- Being present = learning

STUDENT IN CRISIS?

Skip the routine. Just say: "**Your body is telling you something. I'm here. Let's breathe.**" One breath. That's it. Return to routine tomorrow.

That's it. You're ready. The rest of this guide is details.

PROGRAM FIT (USE WHAT YOU ALREADY DO)

First Waves is designed to fit inside your existing classroom routine.

Default implementation: 5-minute whole-group routine once daily, plus 30–60 second 1:1 micro-lessons for students who need errorless practice.

What to keep consistent

- Prompting: ask once, then prompt (use your team's method)

- Reinforcement: use your existing system (tokens/praise/items)
- Data: track independent vs prompted (or your existing codes)

For Schools With Structured Teaching Programs (STAR, TEACCH, etc.)

First Waves fits inside your existing system. Keep your prompt hierarchy, reinforcement system, and data codes. Run First Waves as a 5-minute daily routine.

For Schools Without a Structured Teaching Program

First Waves includes everything you need: scripted lessons, prompt rules ("ask once, then prompt"), I/P data tracking, and built-in reinforcement (celebration step). No additional system required.

IMPLEMENTATION DEFAULTS (USE AS WRITTEN)

Use these defaults unless your team already has standard wording and visuals.

Language (use consistently)

- Zones: **CALM / NOT CALM**
- Script: "Calm means my body is ready. Not Calm means my body needs help."

Not Calm Menu (start with 3)

- **BREAK**
- **HELP**
- **SQUEEZE CUSHION**

Delivery rule: Student selects -> adult delivers immediately.

Visual standard

- Use one consistent style across the set (icons or photos).
- Use large text labels on all visuals.
- Colors are for consistency only; do not teach zone colors during First Waves.

What counts as a response

Any of these count:

- Point/touch
- Place token/Velcro
- Eye gaze (2 seconds)

- AAC selection
- Stand/move to zone (if mobile)

Prompting + data (default)

- Ask once, then prompt.
- Data: **Independent** or **Prompted**.

Primary metric (keep it simple)

Track one primary skill:

- Student indicates **CALM** or **NOT CALM** (I/P)

Breathing rule

- Phase 1: breath is offered, not demanded.
- Always: **one breath only**.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

First Waves is a **12-week curriculum** that teaches the 2-Zone system, then teaches named feelings (Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared), and ends with **CALM** so students finish with: "I can GET calm." Across the program, there are **5 taught feelings** (Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared, Calm). Tired is included as an always-available Not Calm feeling (no standalone unit).

The 12-Week Sequence

| Weeks | Focus | Body Cue | Key Learning |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1-2 | FOUNDATION | Calm body vs Not Calm body | 2-Zone + Not Calm Menu |
| 3-4 | HAPPY | Smiling face, bouncy body | "My face goes UP!" |
| 5-6 | SAD | Tears, heavy body | "My body feels heavy" |
| 7-8 | MAD | Tight fists, hot face | "My hands go TIGHT!" |
| 9-10 | SCARED | Big eyes, fast heart | "My heart goes FAST!" |
| 11-12 | CALM | Soft body, slow breath | "I can GET calm!" |

WHY CALM IS LAST: Calm is introduced in Weeks 1-2 so students learn the difference between Calm and Not Calm right away. The middle weeks teach other core feelings so students can notice and name different Not Calm states. In Weeks 11-12, students practice the ultimate goal: returning to Calm.

What About TIRED?

Tired is introduced during Weeks 1-2 as an example of "Not Calm — low energy" and is treated as an always-available option during daily check-ins, but it is **not a standalone teaching unit**. Why?

- Tired is often confused with sad (both low energy)
- The intervention for tired (rest) is different from emotional regulation
- Ending with CALM is more empowering than ending with TIRED
- **Extension option:** Add Weeks 13-14 for TIRED if your students need focused teaching

THE THREE-PHASE SYSTEM

First Waves uses a **3-phase progression** to build skills systematically. Students move through phases based on mastery, not time.

| Phase | Focus | Format |
|----------------|--------------------------------|---|
| PHASE 1 | Calm vs Not Calm + What Helps | 1:1 micro-lessons (30-60 sec each) |
| PHASE 2 | Named feelings + body cues | Small group (2-4 students, 5 min) |
| PHASE 3 | Full routine with all feelings | Whole class (5 min daily) |

Minimum daily setup:

- 2-Zone visual (Calm / Not Calm)
- Not Calm Menu (Break / Help / Squeeze Cushion) + Squeeze Cushion
- Today's feeling card

See Phase cheat sheets:

- [First_Waves_Phase_1_Cheat_Sheet_V1.md](#)
- [First_Waves_Phase_2_3_Cheat_Sheet_V1.md](#)

Phase 1 Mastery Criteria

Move to Phase 2 when student can:

- Indicate Calm or Not Calm (any response mode) with 80% accuracy
- Select from Not Calm Menu with gestural prompt or less
- Attend to routine for 30+ seconds without elopement

Phase 2 Mastery Criteria

Move to Phase 3 when student can:

- Identify 3+ feelings with verbal/gestural prompt or less
- Point to 2+ body locations when asked "Where do you feel it?"
- Participate in belly breath (any effort counts)
- Attend to routine for 3+ minutes

IMPORTANT: Some students will stay in Phase 1 all semester. That's success. The goal is connection to their bodies, not advancing through phases.

Prompting + data (keep it simple)

Prompting rule: Ask once, then prompt.

Data rule: Track either:

- Independent
- Prompted

WEEKS 1-2: FOUNDATION

Calm vs Not Calm + The Not Calm Menu

The Foundation

Before students can identify specific feelings, they need the most basic distinction: ***Is my body CALM or NOT CALM?***

| CALM (Blue) | NOT CALM (Red) |
|---|--|
| Also called: • Safe body • Ready body • Relaxed body | Also called: • Upset body • Busy body • Body needs help |

Colors are for consistency only; do not teach zone colors during First Waves.

The Not Calm Menu

When students indicate "Not Calm," they immediately select **what helps**. Start with **3 options only**:

| Option | What It Means | How to Deliver |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--|
| BREAK | Pause demand, go to calm spot | 30-60 sec in designated calm area |
| HELP | Adult co-regulation needed | Adult sits near, breathes with student |
| SQUEEZE | Sensory/proprioceptive input | Give squeeze cushion immediately |

THE SQUEEZE CUSHION (suggested default support): Use ONE consistent, small, soft pillow in every classroom. Call it the "Squeeze Cushion." Standardization means students recognize the tool anywhere.

Week 1 Daily Script (1:1 Micro-Lessons)

Duration: 30-60 seconds per student, multiple times daily

1. **Show 2-Zone visual:** "Check your body."
2. **Ask:** "Calm or Not Calm?" (*Prompt immediately if needed*)
3. **If Calm:** "Your body is calm! Great listening!" (*Done*)
4. **If Not Calm:** "Your body needs something. What helps?" (*Show 3-option menu*)
5. **Deliver immediately:** Give the break/help/squeeze right away
6. **Celebrate:** "You listened to your body! You told me what helps!"

Week 2 Daily Script (Adding Group)

Continue 1:1 micro-lessons AND add brief whole-group practice:

7. **Gather:** "Let's check our bodies!"
8. **Show:** Hold up 2-Zone mat. "Calm... or Not Calm?"
9. **Model:** "My body feels calm today. See? My shoulders are soft."
10. **Check:** "Point to your zone." (*Accept any response*)
11. **Breathe (offer, don't demand):** "I'm going to take ONE belly breath. You can join if you want."
12. **Celebrate:** "You checked your bodies! AMAZING!"

CRITICAL: "Not Calm" is NEVER bad. It is **information**, not misbehavior. We never punish, shame, or negatively reinforce the red zone.

Using TIRED in Weeks 1-2 (always available)

- If the student looks droopy/slow or you suspect low energy, offer the card: "Your body might be TIRED."
- Ask the same question: "Calm or Not Calm?" (TIRED can be Not Calm.)
- Run the Not Calm Menu first, then return to the routine.

WEEKS 3-4: HAPPY

Body Cue: Smiling face, bouncy body **Zone:** Calm

Key Phrase: "When I'm happy, my face goes UP!"

If a student is Not Calm during Happy week, run the Not Calm Menu first (Break/Help/Squeeze Cushion), then return to the Happy script.

Week 3: "This Is Happy"

Goal: Students recognize the word "happy" and the happy face.

13. **GATHER:** "Let's check our bodies!"
14. **SHOW:** Hold up HAPPY card. "This is HAPPY. Happy. Happy. Happy."
15. **BODY:** "When we're happy, our face goes UP! Like this!" (*Big smile*)
16. **NAME:** "Can you show me happy? Show me your happy face!"
17. **BREATHE:** "Let's take a happy breath! Breathe in... breathe out..."
18. **CELEBRATE:** "You showed me HAPPY! Look at that beautiful smile! AMAZING!"

Week 4: "I Feel Happy When..."

Goal: Students connect "happy" to their own experiences.

- Review HAPPY card: "Remember our friend Happy?"
- Connect: "I feel happy when I eat ice cream! What makes YOU happy?"
- Accept all responses: pointing, looking, sounds, words
- Celebrate: "You know what makes you happy! Your body knows!"

WEEKS 5-6: SAD

Body Cue: Tears, heavy body **Zone:** Not Calm

Key Phrase: "When I'm sad, my body feels heavy."

If a student is Not Calm during Sad week, run the Not Calm Menu first (Break/Help/Squeeze Cushion), then return to the Sad script.

Week 5: "This Is Sad"

Goal: Students recognize the word "sad" and the sad face.

19. **GATHER:** "Let's check our bodies!"
20. **SHOW:** Hold up SAD card. "This is SAD. Sad. Sad. Sad."
21. **BODY:** "When we're sad, our body feels heavy. Our face goes down." (*Slump shoulders*)
22. **NAME:** "Can you show me sad? Show me your sad face."
23. **BREATHE:** "When we're sad, a breath can help. Let's try one together."
24. **CELEBRATE:** "You showed me SAD! It's okay to feel sad. You listened to your body!"

Week 6: "I Feel Sad When..."

Goal: Students connect "sad" to their own experiences.

- Review: "Remember our friend Sad? Sometimes we all feel sad."

- Normalize: "I feel sad when my friend goes away. That's okay!"
- Connect: "What makes YOU feel sad?" (Accept all responses)
- **Key message:** "Sad is not bad. It just IS. And a breath can help."

WEEKS 7-8: MAD

Body Cue: Tight fists, hot face **Zone:** Not Calm

Key Phrase: *"When I'm mad, my hands go TIGHT!"*

If a student is Not Calm during Mad week, run the Not Calm Menu first (Break/Help/Squeeze Cushion), then return to the Mad script.

Week 7: "This Is Mad"

Goal: Students recognize the word "mad" and the mad face.

25. **GATHER:** "Let's check our bodies!"
26. **SHOW:** Hold up MAD card. "This is MAD. Mad. Mad. Mad."
27. **BODY:** "When we're mad, our hands go TIGHT!" (*Make fists*) "Our face feels HOT!"
28. **NAME:** "Can you show me mad? Show me your tight hands!"
29. **BREATHE:** "When we're mad, we can SQUEEZE... then RELEASE. Let's try."
30. **CELEBRATE:** "You showed me MAD! Mad is okay. You used your breath! AMAZING!"

Week 8: "I Feel Mad When..."

Goal: Students connect "mad" to their own experiences.

- Review: "Remember Mad? Sometimes we ALL feel mad."
- Normalize: "I feel mad when someone takes my things. That's okay!"
- **Key message:** "Mad is not bad. It just tells us something is wrong."
- Practice: Squeeze fists tight... breathe... release. Repeat.

WEEKS 9-10: SCARED

Body Cue: Big eyes, fast heart **Zone:** Not Calm

Key Phrase: *"When I'm scared, my heart goes FAST!"*

If a student is Not Calm during Scared week, run the Not Calm Menu first (Break/Help/Squeeze Cushion), then return to the Scared script.

Week 9: "This Is Scared"

Goal: Students recognize the word "scared" and the scared face.

31. **GATHER:** "Let's check our bodies!"
32. **SHOW:** Hold up SCARED card. "This is SCARED. Scared. Scared. Scared."
33. **BODY:** "When we're scared, our eyes go BIG! Our heart goes FAST!" (*Hand on heart*)
34. **NAME:** "Can you show me scared? Show me your big eyes!"
35. **BREATHE:** "When we're scared, a slow breath helps our heart slow down."
36. **CELEBRATE:** "You showed me SCARED! And you took a breath! You're SO brave!"

Week 10: "I Feel Scared When..."

Goal: Students connect "scared" to their own experiences.

- Review: "Remember Scared? Everyone feels scared sometimes."
- Normalize: "I feel scared when it's dark. That's okay!"
- **Key message:** "Scared keeps us safe. And a breath helps us feel better."
- Practice: Hand on heart, feel it beat, slow breath, feel it slow.

WEEKS 11-12: CALM

Body Cue: Soft body, slow breath **Zone:** Calm

Key Phrase: "I can GET calm."

If a student is Not Calm during Calm week, run the Not Calm Menu first (Break/Help/Squeeze Cushion), then return to the Calm script.

Week 11: "This Is Calm"

Goal: Students recognize the word "calm" and calm body cues.

37. **GATHER:** "Let's check our bodies!"
38. **SHOW:** Hold up CALM card. "This is CALM. Calm. Calm. Calm."
39. **BODY:** "When we're calm, our body is soft. Our breath is slow." (*Soft shoulders*)
40. **NAME:** "Can you show me calm?" (*Prompt a calm body position or point to calm*)
41. **BREATHE:** "One belly breath. In... out..."
42. **CELEBRATE:** "You showed me CALM! Your body can be calm! AMAZING!"

Week 12: "I Can Get Calm"

Goal: Students practice one simple return-to-calm sequence.

43. **GATHER:** "Let's check our bodies!"
44. **CHECK:** "Calm or Not Calm?" (*Prompt as needed*)
45. **IF NOT CALM:** "Your body needs something. What helps?" (*Run Not Calm Menu. Deliver immediately.*)

46. **RETURN:** "Now let's try to get calm." (*Back to CALM card + body cue*)

47. **BREATHE:** "One belly breath. In... out..."

48. **CELEBRATE:** "You listened to your body and got calm! You did it!"

TROUBLESHOOTING

| Problem | Solution |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Student won't look at card | Hold card near preferred item. Accept proximity as success. |
| Student picks same feeling daily | That's okay! They found a word. Model variety but don't force. |
| Student upset during mad/scared | Frame as success: "Your body knows this feeling!" Breathe. |
| Can't/won't do belly breath | Use bubbles, parallel breathing, or just watching. |
| 5 minutes is too long | Start with 2 min. Just SHOW + BREATHE + CELEBRATE. |
| Student elopes during routine | Don't chase. Try shorter routine tomorrow. Presence = success. |

IEP GOAL BANK

Copy and adapt these goals. All goals reference **5 taught feelings** (Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared, Calm) plus Tired as always-available.

Emotion Recognition Goals

Goal 1: When shown a feeling face card and asked "Show me [feeling]," [Student] will point to/look at the correct card for 4 out of 5 taught feelings, across 3 consecutive sessions, as measured by teacher data collection.

Goal 2: When presented with 2-Zone visual, [Student] will indicate (point, eye gaze, AAC, or movement) the correct zone (Calm/Not Calm) matching their current state, with 80% accuracy across 10 opportunities.

Goal 3: When asked "How do you feel?" during daily check-in, [Student] will select a feeling from their choice board for 4 out of 5 days per week, across 4 consecutive weeks.

Body Awareness Goals

Goal 4: When asked "Where do you feel [feeling]?" [Student] will touch an appropriate body part for 3 out of 5 taught feelings, across 3 consecutive sessions.

Goal 5: During daily check-in, [Student] will imitate the teacher's demonstration of a body cue (e.g., tight fists for mad) with 80% accuracy across 10 opportunities.

Self-Regulation Goals

Goal 6: When prompted "Let's take a breath," [Student] will participate in a belly breath (inhale/exhale visible) for 4 out of 5 opportunities, across 4 consecutive weeks.

Goal 7: When experiencing mild dysregulation, [Student] will use a breathing strategy OR select from the Not Calm Menu to return to calm within 3 minutes, for 3 out of 5 occurrences.

Goal 8: When in "Not Calm" state, [Student] will independently select from the Not Calm Menu (Break, Help, or Squeeze) with 80% accuracy across 10 opportunities.

BRIDGE TO OCEAN ZONES

After completing First Waves, some students may be ready for the full Ocean Zones curriculum.

For First Waves graduates, begin Ocean Zones using:

First_Waves_to_Ocean_Zones_Transition_Protocol_V1.md.

Readiness Indicators

- Indicate Calm or Not Calm consistently (any response mode)
- When Not Calm, select from Not Calm Menu (Break/Help/Squeeze Cushion) with gestural prompt or less
- Identify at least 4 out of 5 taught feelings consistently (Happy/Sad/Mad/Scared/Calm)
- Point to body location for at least 3 feelings
- Participate in belly breath without distress
- Express current feeling (with or without support)
- Attend for full 5-minute routine
- Tolerate 10-15 minute group activities

NO PRESSURE TO ADVANCE: Some students will thrive repeating First Waves 2-3 times. The goal is connection to their bodies, not curriculum completion.

Concept Mapping

| First Waves | Ocean Zones |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Calm | Blue Zone (Manny the Manta Ray) |
| Happy | Green Zone (Stella the Starfish) |
| Sad | Blue Zone (low energy) |
| Scared | Yellow Zone (Shelly the Seashell) |
| Mad | Red Zone (Crabby the Crab) |

| First Waves | Ocean Zones |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Belly Breath (1 breath) | 16 breathing techniques |

CELEBRATION & COMPLETION

Week 12 Celebration Ideas

- **Feelings Parade:** Each student holds their favorite feeling card
- **All the Feelings:** Review all 6 cards together (5 taught + Tired)
- **Breath Circle:** Group belly breath — "We ALL know how to breathe!"
- **Certificate Ceremony:** Present certificates individually
- **Photo with Feelings:** Student with favorite feeling card

Completion Certificate

FIRST WAVES CHAMPION — This certifies that ____ has completed First Waves: My Body Tells Me. They learned to recognize feelings in their body, name their feelings, and take a calming breath. They learned: I CAN GET CALM! They are a FEELINGS CHAMPION!

First Waves: My Body Tells Me

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Version 4.0

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