



MELVIN'S TIPS



A PRE-KINDERGARTEN GUIDE TO NURTURE YOUR
CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Tips on Nurturing My Development for a Better Today, Tomorrow and Future

When we ask parents what they would like to see for their children 30 years from now, we often hear the word “happy”. Growing happy adults’ means that we need to grow happy and emotionally healthy children first. We can nurture social and emotional skills in our children from the day they are born in all areas of their learning. Parenting is hard work and it is common to feel confused or uncertain about your child’s learning, growth and development. This guide, with **Melvin’s Tips*, is intended to support you, the big person in your little one’s life, in the nurturing of your child’s emotional health and happiness. Helping your child learn emotional literacy skills when they are young, lays the foundation to support “happiness”, health and wellness across their life span.

Produced and Funded in Partnership with:



*Melvin the Monkey is the main character from a social and emotional program called The CALM Curriculum© which has been implemented in many early learning and Kindergarten classrooms. The CALM Curriculum© connects neuroscience, theoretical research, and positive psychology to support and strengthen children’s social and emotional well-being.

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Gross Motor Development

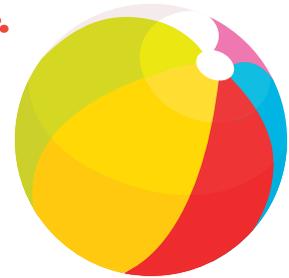
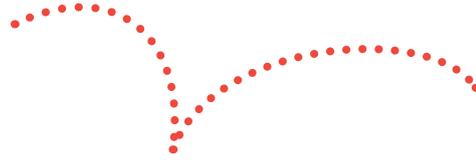
(How I Use My Big Muscles)



I crave movement and need to be moving at my age. My body can seem very wiggly when I don't move because I really want to get some of my energy out. Using my big muscles often helps me to think better and pay closer attention to what you are asking me to do. I will have a better understanding of where my body is in space when I am given opportunities to practice my gross motor skills.

"Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing up is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing."

- Phyllis Diller



Make it FUN!!!

Ideas for developing my balance...

- ★ Riding my tricycle or a strider bike helps me to develop my core (tummy) muscles (this will also help me with sitting and balancing on chairs).
- ★ Games that will encourage me to balance on or hop on one foot (Simon Says, Freeze Dance, Hokey Pokey).

Ideas for developing and strengthening my upper body movements...

- ★ Playing catch with me with a big ball (this helps with developing coordination too!).
- ★ Hanging from the Monkey Bars at the park.
- ★ Pretending to be like an animal, and walking like they might walk (like a bear, crab, etc.).

Ideas for developing and strengthening my lower body movements...

- ★ Climbing up and down ladders at the park.
- ★ Climbing up the slide.
- ★ Jumping off low platforms or playing jumping games (Simon Says).
- ★ Walking up and down stairs.

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Fine Motor Development

(How I Use My Little Muscles)



I feel confident when I can create, imagine and explore freely as I play with different art and building materials. It helps me when you focus on how I can use my hands in play - not on the final product I might "make". When a big person gives me an example to copy from, it takes away my creativity and imagination which can provoke anxious feelings in me. I would like to be a critical thinker when I grow up, and how you expect me to use my hands for playing and constructing right now will help me so much when I am older.

Make it FUN!!!

Ideas for nurturing my imagination and skills in fine motor play...

- ★ Creating with paper, crayons, scissors, glue and household "beautiful junk" (coffee cans, yogurt cups, newspaper flyers, paper towel rolls, cereal boxes etc.) that can be turned into a creative masterpiece.

Ideas for developing my hand strength and dexterity...

- ★ Playing with playdough, Tupperware containers (pulling off lids), zipping up zippers or zippered bags.
- ★ Playing a matching game with cards on the carpet so that I have to use more finger muscles to turn them over.
- ★ Letting me unzip my lunch bag at meal time.

Ideas to help develop my eye-hand coordination...

- ★ Providing me with lacing activities (put hole punches around a shape and tape a string of yarn for threading), puzzles, beading or stringing cheerios onto yarn – makes for a fun treat later too!
- ★ Playing catch with a big ball or rolling a ball back and forth while sitting on the floor with our legs in a V shape in front of us.
- ★ Letting me put the straw into my own juice box container at lunch time.



**"While we try to teach our children all about life,
our children teach us what life is all about."**

- Angela Schwindt

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Language Development

(How I Communicate What I Know)

I am a very curious learner who is continually constructing meaning about the world around me. Sometimes (or often), I may ask a lot of questions – even if you think (or know) I might already know the answer! This helps me understand why and how things work around me. I like it when you respond to me positively and are interested in my curiosity. I am building my vocabulary and every day I am learning new words. I love looking at books and I like listening to the words in stories when they are read to me by my big people. Sometimes I even look at the pictures in a book and create my own story. I like playing with my words, such as silly rhyming games, especially when you play with me!



Make it FUN!!!

Ideas for nurturing my language skills...

- ★ Put the screens away for a little while... let's talk or sing together. Or, if I can't "talk" yet, talk to me about what you and I are doing, so I can hear the words and make meaning.
- ★ Playing sound matching games with me such as I will say "bike" and you have to come up with a word that starts with the same sound.
- ★ Playing rhyming games with me by saying a word and then having me find a word that rhymes.
- ★ Looking at books together. I love it when you read me the words in the story, but I also love it when you talk to me about the pictures in the book. I love to read stories to you as well. It is okay that I am not reading the words on the page. I am learning that those "words" have a purpose every time we read together.
- ★ Read repetitive books to me so that I can begin to predict the story and "read" it back to you. Some great titles include Eric Carle books: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Very Busy Spider*, *Brown Bear Brown Bear*, *What Do You See?*; or Robert Munsch books: *Love You Forever*, *Mortimer*, *Alligator Baby*, *The Dark*, *50 Below Zero*.
- ★ Ask me about my day, or things that I am doing in the moment ("*Tell me about your picture*", "*Tell me about what you are making*") Asking me these questions help me to think and make connections to what I am doing.

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Reading and Printing Development

(How I Convey Meaning From, and To, Others)



I want to love books as I get older and I want to become a confident reader. I like it when my big people sit with me and show me lots of things around us that have print, including books, birthday cards and menus. As I grow, I start to connect that words and symbols convey meaning to people. I know sometimes big people want me to learn to read and print before I start kindergarten because they are proud of how "smart" I can be. When I am coached to read and print before my brain and hands are really able to work together, I sometimes get anxious feelings when I don't want to or can't make the letters. I want to love reading and printing when I am growing up, so please give me opportunities to learn letters and develop my reading skills through playful activities.

Make it FUN!!!

Ideas for nurturing my reading skills...

- ★ Books, books and more books. Read to me and give me opportunities to "read" to you through pictures and repetitive books.
- ★ Read signs as we are driving. I may already recognize the McDonald's sign, Tim Hortons, Walmart and Dollar Store signs.
- ★ Bring attention to my first name – especially my first letter! Develop menus while I am playing a make-believe restaurant game.

Ideas for nurturing my printing skills...

- ★ Lacing activities are a fun way to develop my small muscles in my hands as well as my eye-hand coordination skills required for printing.
- ★ Encourage me to create my own thank you or birthday cards. I am interested in letters that have meaning to me, such as printing a card to "mom," "dad" and/or other family members.
- ★ Help me or have me cut out pictures of food items from a weekly newspaper flyer or magazine and glue those pictures onto another piece of paper to make our "shopping list" for when we get our groceries.
- ★ Let me explore what it feels like to play with sand, water, goop, shaving cream, rice, and many other ideas for sensory play. Some of these things are really fun to play with in the bathtub.
- ★ Let me paint! Or use thick crayons and markers. It's okay if I scribble.



**"Kids: They dance before they learn
there is anything that isn't music."**

- William Stafford

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Cognitive Development

(How I Think About and Recognize My World)



I am very curious and I want to learn how the world works around me. I learn best through frequent opportunities for exploration and play. I can learn about colours by identifying them through my favourite clothes or toys, especially when I am given choices (*Do you want to wear your yellow shirt or red shirt today?*) I can also learn lots when I am in the car with you, or during our walks to the park – especially when you ask me fun questions (*How long can you hang from the monkey bars... lets count, 1, 2, 3... How many blue cars do we see?, etc.*). I might or might not like those workbooks they sell in the store that are “meant” to teach me things like colours, shapes, letters, etc. I really like learning in the moment when we are together, and when it has meaning for me.

Make it FUN!!!

Ideas for nurturing my cognitive development...

- ★ Playing games with me such as ‘I Spy’ to help me learn my colours and explore new things in my environment.
- ★ Reading to me so that I can learn about new ideas and words in the story.
- ★ Counting my toys with me and help me sort them out in fun ways (How many of your toys have wheels? How many of your cars are red? etc.).
- ★ Sorting the laundry by colour, or by item (e.g. socks in one pile, shirts in another, pants in another).
- ★ If we are eating together today, let me help you set the table. One fork for me, and one fork for you! One napkin for me, and one napkin for you!



"When a child is cared for by others, there is more caring in that child to give to others"

-Dr. Deborah MacNamara

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Cognitive Development

(How I Think About and Recognize My World)

Nurturing my memory and attention skills



My brain is growing quickly every day. Each time I have an experience, my brain wants to remember that information, so I can use it again later. For example, some instructions you ask me require two steps and I can't always remember all the steps because I am still developing my memory skills. It's common for me to seem like I don't "hear" you, but really, with my practice and your patience, I will get it in time!

"Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning."

- Mr. Rogers

Ideas for nurturing my memory and attention skills...

- ★ Playing matching games with me with a deck of cards. It is a good way for me to remember what card you just turned over so I retain it in my memory while I look for the match.
- ★ Playing "Guess what's missing?" with me by hiding objects under a blanket and taking one away and then having me guess what is missing. As I get better at this game you can increase the number of or change the type of objects you hide.
- ★ Having me remember a few items on the grocery list and see if I can remember them when we get to the grocery store. You should try this too!
- ★ Singing songs with me that require a long list such as the ABC's or finger plays that require me to count backwards, such as Five Little Ducks Went Swimming One Day or Five Green and Speckled Frogs.
- ★ Encouraging me to complete a puzzle to support my visual memory skills.

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Cognitive Development

(How I Think About and Recognize My World)

Nurturing my flexible thinking

Flexible thinking is important for me to develop because it helps me from becoming overly rigid about rules and having difficulties when I move between activities or routines. I want my brain to be flexible so that I can cope more easily when activities or patterns in my life that I am used to, may change.

Ideas for nurturing my flexible thinking...

- ★ Play familiar games with me such as Red light, Green light – Red circle means I need to stop and the green circle means I can go. Change the shapes and colours of the lights so that I have to become familiar with the new rules of the game (The yellow triangle now means stop and purple square means go). I can help you make and cut the shapes so we can play the game together.
- ★ Have me sort my toys by colour, then change the rules and have me sort them by shapes, or numbers.
- ★ Help me develop a dance routine or a rhythm routine where I have to remember all the steps and learn new ones as we add them on.
- ★ Have me map out an obstacle course at the park and then change it each time I finish the course.
- ★ "Simon Says" is a great game to develop my cognitive flexibility skills.



★ ★

"Almost all creativity involves purposeful play."
- Abraham Maslow

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Cognitive Development

(How I Think About and Recognize My World)

Nurturing my impulse control

Impulse control is important for me to develop because it helps me to pause and think before acting. I can also make better choices when I have learned to control my impulses. Impulse control is not something I will master at my age. I will continue to work on this right up until I am all grown up!

I might have a difficult time with some of these skills, just like when I learned to ride a bike, and sometimes I may get really frustrated. It is important to me that you acknowledge and validate my feelings. Telling me that this new skill must be hard for me will help me feel better.



Ideas for nurturing my impulse control...

- ★ Playing games such as Go, Go, Stop; What Time is it Mr. Wolf; Duck, Duck, Goose; Freeze Dance, and Simon Says are all games I love to play that help me learn to stop my body in a fun way and pay attention to the next direction.
- ★ Playing board games or any game that requires turn taking skills helps me learn to wait even though I want it to be my turn right away.



"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

- Benjamin Franklin

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Social Development

(How I Get Along With Others)

I like to be involved in many forms of play, including by myself, with my family, and with my friends. Playing is hard work for me. It requires me to use a lot of skills that I am still learning to master, all at the same time. I need encouragement to share some of my favourite toys, and wait for my turn (even though my body is having a hard time waiting)! Playing allows me to integrate imagination, planning, creative, and critical thinking skills. I need these skills to help me be a good team player, to participate with others in my classroom and my community, and when I am working in my job when I grow up.



Make it FUN!!!

Ideas for nurturing my social development...

- ★ Give me lots and lots of opportunity to play in imaginative play. There are so many skills I learn when I am involved in playing different roles and characters. It helps with:
 - ★ Self-regulation skills: Many times I play the role of someone older than I am and I have to learn to act like an adult character or family member. I also engage in self-talk which helps me make sense of what is going on by taking external thoughts and internalizing them.
 - ★ Creative Thinking – I have the opportunity to generate and develop ideas as I explore and play. I can turn my bedroom into a Tim Hortons Restaurant and you and my friends can come and place your orders.
- ★ Critical Thinking – I can plan my play and generate ideas about what I need to help develop my ideas. I may need menus, construction paper to make doughnuts, money for payment.
- ★ I learn to share ideas and take turns when there is other friends or family involved in the play.
- ★ Playing any game with me that requires me to take turns and share. As I get better at this we can add more people in our play so that I get better at waiting longer and sharing with more people.

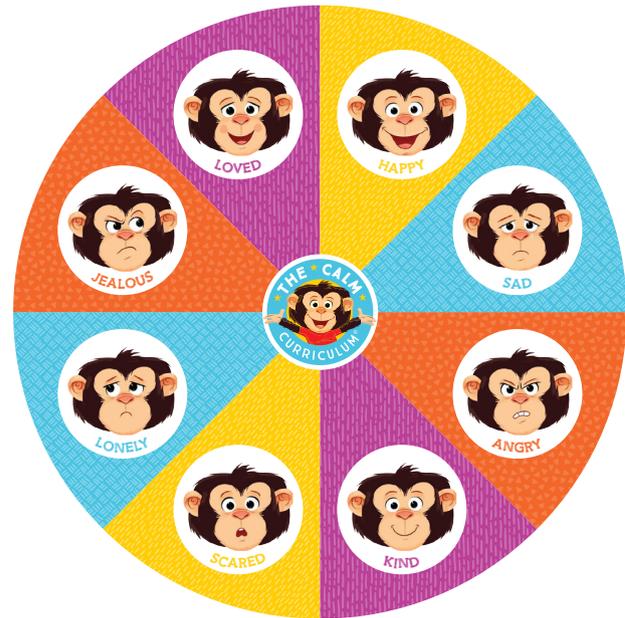
Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Emotional Development

(How I Recognize My Feelings)

"At best, IQ contributes about 20% to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80% to other forces: forces grouped as emotional intelligence."

- Dr. Daniel Goleman

Current research is stating, that nurturing my emotional intelligence when I am little can lead me to have a happy and successful life later on. This means that I need to learn about my own emotions and how to manage them in difficult situations. Learning about my emotions takes a lot of time and practice, and sometimes I can seem quite confused about what I am feeling, especially strong emotions such as jealousy. I am often told that being jealous is the ugly green monster, but I still can't help it when I feel this way, so then I may become angry. I need help to learn about my strong emotions, and I rely on you to tell me that it is okay to have the feelings that I do.



Make it Meaningful!

Ideas for developing my emotional skills...

- ★ Helping me label my feelings in the moment so I can start putting words to how I feel. Phrases such as "you look really sad," "you look like you are frustrated," or "your body looks like you are very excited".
- ★ Playing games with me or stay close to me when I am playing with others. When I have a hard time or I get frustrated validate my feelings by saying, "This must be really hard for you." I may get really angry and escalated and the best way you can help me is by telling me that "I can see that this is hard for you. I am here for you." Avoid fixing the problem or coming up with a solution right away. It is ok for me to sit with my feelings especially when you are there supporting me.
- ★ Books are great way for me to identify with the emotions of the characters in the book. Ask me how the character might be feeling and ask me when I have felt the same way.
- ★ Using the Emotion Wheel to help me identify some of my feelings.

Understanding & Responding to My Big Emotions

What About Discipline?

Use the **I CARE** approach to help foster my passionate emotions.

The true definition of discipline is to teach, so how can you teach me to do things in a desirable way? The best way I learn to do things differently is through your gentle guidance and caring support in helping me understand how to manage a situation differently.

Sometimes I can have some very big emotions and during these moments, it is important that you **Connect** with me using genuine or **Authentic** approaches of care and nurturance. Please do not send me on a "Time-Out" to calm down because I cannot calm down on my own. I need you and I want to know that you are here for me. During these times my brain instinctively activates into a fight, flight or freeze response and I will need your safe and caring response to help me recover from these big emotions. A caring response includes **Responding** to me with **Empathy**.



"Too often we forget that discipline really means to teach, not to punish. A disciple is a student, not a recipient of behavioural consequences."

- Dr. Daniel Seigel



I **C**onnect

Authenticity &

Respond

Empathetically

Understanding & Responding to My Big Emotions



During moments of escalation it is hard for my adults not to be in the fight, flight part of their OWN brain. This is a natural response and we tend to move to the survival part of the brain when there is any type of threat. It is important to take a few moments to allow yourself to get into a rational state and use the thinking part of your brain to Connect Authentically and Respond Empathetically to me. I know that sometimes this is hard to do and sometimes you will react instead of responding. Coming to me later and apologizing for a reaction that did not sit well with you is powerful in repairing our relationship. It takes practice to respond with CARE.

— ★ —

"Many people think that discipline is the essence of parenting. But that isn't parenting. Parenting is not telling your child what to do when he or she misbehaves. Parenting is providing the conditions in which a child can realize his or her full human potential."

- Dr. Gordon Neufeld

Once I am feeling safe, secure and heard, than you can gently tell or show me how to do things differently. Learning this way will help me learn to treat others the same way too.

I still do need you to set limits for me, even though I may not agree with them all the time. When I have a hard time with a limit, I like it when you validate my feelings even as you are following through with the limit. It is also helpful when you limit the use of "no" and "but" when you are responding to me. For example, when I ask for a cookie before dinner, I like it when you say "Yes you can have the cookie after we have dinner." When I become persistent, your supportive words of "I know it is hard to wait and it will be dinner time soon." The word "No" can automatically result in a reactive response and then it gets hard for me to listen to your words.

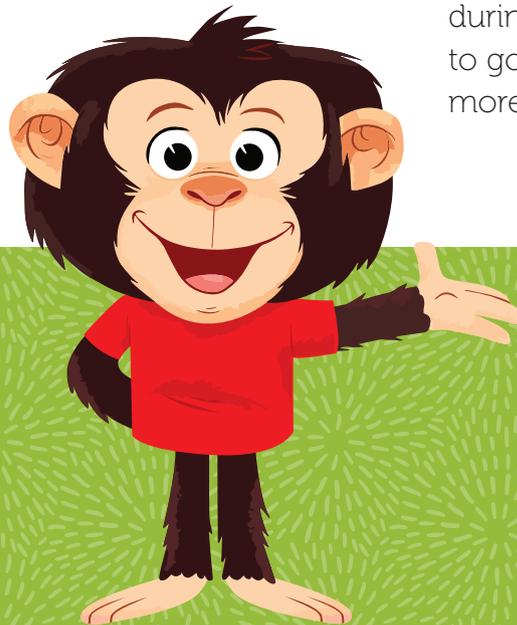
Do's and Don'ts of Responding to Empathy

Don'ts of Responding with Empathy

- ✗ Silver line/sugar coat the issue... "At least..." Statements "At least you have crayons..." when a child is upset because they can't find a particular colour of crayon.
- ✗ Try and Fix it... "Have you tried" or "If you just..." when a child is struggling with problem solving.
- ✗ Compare: "I know you didn't get the blue cup but I don't always get what I want either."
- ✗ Disregard the situation as important: "Just build another one," when a child's block tower falls down.
- ✗ Redirect... "Don't cry... do you want some snack?"

Do's of Responding with Empathy

- ✓ Try and see the child's perspective as their truth, "I am hearing you say the train was yours, and now your brother wants a turn" even though you saw your child take it away from their sibling, they may perceive the train as theirs because they had it originally.
- ✓ Recognizing the emotion and communicating it... "you look frustrated" "you look really sad" "this is really hard for you".
- ✓ Feeling with your child and being authentically present, by saying things like "I am here with you" "I care for you" especially during moments of distress. Even if I tell you to go away, interpret it as I need you now more than ever and stay close to me!



Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Prosocial Development

(How I Want to Be Kind to Others)

When I get older I want to live in a community where people are kind to each other, help each other, and create a safe sense of belonging. These ideas need to be nurtured with me from the time I am born. In fact, how you model kindness to others and how you respond to me will highly influence how I learn and respond to others. The three main prosocial abilities that you can help me to learn include: empathy (being able to view others perspective); altruism (doing something for someone else with no expectation of anything in return), and; having an ethical sense of morality (right from wrong).



Make it Meaningful!

Ideas for nurturing my prosocial skills... Nurturing Empathy (Perspective Taking):

- ★ Once I start to make meaning of my own emotions, I can start to notice that other people have feelings too. As you read stories to me, first ask me how I might feel in the situation, and then ask me what the characters in the story may be feeling. Ask me why I think they are feeling this way.
- ★ Use in-the-moment learning opportunities. For example if we are in the park and one of the other children are having a hard time waiting for a turn on the swing, ask me how I think that child may be feeling.
- ★ During pretend play opportunities with me, invite the characters to talk about their feelings and then ask me if my character has ever felt that way.



"You can't make kids feel gratitude by instructing them to be grateful. Gratitude is an experience rather than an action."

-Dr. Vanessa Lapointe

Melvin's Tips on Nurturing Prosocial Development

(How I Want to Be Kind to Others)

Nurturing Altruism (Selflessness):

- ★ Modeling, modeling, and more modeling. When I see you helping someone else, I am more likely to copy you and develop these same qualities. I learn the most from watching others... especially my important big people!
- ★ Providing me opportunities to help others through subtle prompting. For example, "Sara looks like she is feeling cold. What can we do to help her warm her up?"
- ★ Using in-the-moment learning opportunities. For example, when someone opens the door for us in the shopping mall, acknowledging these acts of kindness so I learn the value of kindness.

Many of my favourite books have lessons of kindness that you can highlight for me. *Have You Filled Your Bucket Today* by Carol McCloud, *How Kind* by Mary Murphy, or *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* by Philip Stead.

Nurturing Morality (Understanding different perspectives based on rules, rights or on the care needs of others):

- ★ Modeling, modeling and more modeling. When I see you work out issues of right and wrong, or make choices due to the care needs of others, I will learn to problem solve using these same values as well.
- ★ Many of my favourite books have lessons of morality. It would help me if you didn't finish the ending on these stories and have me think of what may be the right thing for the characters to do. Once I have given you my response, read the rest of the story for me. Here are some great stories: *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister, *The Ant and the Grasshopper* by Aesop, *The Little Red Hen*, and *The Tortoise and the Hare* by Aesop.



★★

**"It is vital that when educating
our children's brains that we not
neglect to educate their hearts."**

-Dalai Lama

Melvin's Final Tips

I know that you are doing the best you can as my big person and growing me up to be happy and healthy can be complicated, especially in this changing world where life has become busier. There are many stressors today for both you and for me. Some of the stressors that affect me may be hard for you to see so please try to understand my world through a lens of curiosity.

For example, some foods, smells and textures may be overwhelming for me, so when I reject the food offered to me it could be because I don't like the smell or texture of the food. Other stressors such as clothing textures, certain sounds and lights may also influence how I respond to the environment or to some of your requests. This constant stress may be making me very agitated, and at times, I might be unable to put into words how this is making me feel.

To help me cope, I may have lots of energy in my body, or the opposite - I may curl up like a snail. It is helpful for me when my big people recognize and reduce these stressors so that I can cope better in my environment. Please try to understand, it's not that I won't do things, it's simply that I can't right now.

This sometimes can be hard to figure out but there are people in our community that can help me and you understand this better.

Please call us if you have any questions about your child's development. We are here to help.





www.connectwithcalm.ca