



**Dr. Lori Rappaport**  
[office@lorirappaportphd.com](mailto:office@lorirappaportphd.com)  
858-481-2188



**Resource 1: Quick Reference Cards (Pocket-Sized).** \*These can be printed/laminated and carried with you.

### **Card A: Panic Attack Support (Anxiety-Focused)**

*Goal: De-escalate the physical "fight or flight" response.*

1. **Stay Calm:** Your calm voice is their anchor.
2. **Move to Safety:** If on a narrow trail, move to a flat, stable area.
3. **Acknowledge & Validate:** "I can see you're having a hard time. You are safe. I am right here."
4. **Focus on Breath:** Have them breathe with you. "In for 4, hold for 4, out for 4."
5. **Limit Questions:** Don't ask "Why?" or "What's wrong?" Their brain can't process logic right now.
6. **Wait it Out:** Panic attacks usually peak within 10 minutes. Stay until the physical symptoms subside.

### **Card B: Meltdown Support (Autism/ADHD-Focused)**

*Goal: Reduce sensory input and provide a safe "reboot" space.*

1. **Reduce Input:** Stop talking. Dim lights (if at camp) or move away from the group noise.
2. **Safety First:** Ensure they won't hurt themselves or others. Clear the immediate area of gear.
3. **Give Space:** Do not touch them unless necessary for safety.
4. **Use "Low & Slow":** If you must speak, use a low volume and slow tempo. Use short phrases: "You are safe," "Take your time."
5. **The "Quiet Presence":** Sit nearby so they know they aren't alone, but don't demand interaction.
6. **Recovery:** After a meltdown, they will be exhausted. Allow for a nap or quiet rest before resuming the hike.

### **Card C: Grounding Techniques (The 5-4-3-2-1 Method)**

*Goal: Pull the brain out of a "spiral" and back into the physical environment. Ask the girl to identify:*

- 5 things you can **SEE** (a pinecone, a cloud, a boot, etc.)
- 4 things you can **TOUCH** (the texture of a rock, the strap of a pack, the dirt)
- 3 things you can **HEAR** (birds, wind, footsteps, distant water)
- 2 things you can **SMELL** (pine needles, rain, campfire smoke)
- 1 thing you can **TASTE** (a sip of water, a piece of trail mix)

## Resource 2: Calming Activities & Sensory Tools for the Trail

### Trail-Friendly Sensory Tools (Lightweight)

- **The "Buff" or Bandana:** Can be pulled over the eyes to block out visual overstimulation or used as a "fidget" to twist in hands.
- **Earplugs or Noise-Canceling Headphones:** Essential for "quiet time" at camp if the group is loud.
- **Fidgets:** Small items like a "worry stone," a carabiner to click, or a piece of paracord to tie/untie knots.
- **Weighted Pressure:** A backpack serves as a natural "weighted vest." If a girl is anxious at camp, having her wear her pack for a few minutes can provide grounding "deep pressure."
- **Temperature Shock:** Splashing cold stream water on the face or wrists can "reset" the nervous system during high anxiety.

### Calming Activities (No Gear Required)

- **The "Alphabet Game":** Pick a category (Animals, Trail Gear, Snacks) and find one for every letter of the alphabet. (Engages the logical brain).
- **Rhythmic Walking:** Encourage the girl to match her steps to a simple beat or a song lyric.
- **"I Spy" (Color Edition):** "Find 5 different shades of green." This forces the eyes to focus on external details.
- **Humming or Singing:** The vibration of humming can soothe the vagus nerve and reduce anxiety (Note: might exacerbate a girl with autism).
- **Heavy Work:** Give the girl a "job" that requires physical effort, like helping move a heavy rock for a fire ring or hauling a water jug. This "proprioceptive input" is very calming for ADHD and Autism.

**Resource 3: The "Check-In" Scale (Visual Tool)** *Use this during breaks to gauge the group's "battery" without making them explain complex feelings. Can create a visual to teach them what each color means before trip. Can even provide each girl with a visual or have them create one (card, block, chip, etc).*

**Ask: "Where is your battery right now?"**

- **Green (100-80%):** I feel strong, I'm enjoying the view, I'm ready to go.
- **Yellow (80-40%):** I'm getting tired, I'm a bit "peopled out," I need a snack or a 5-minute quiet break.
- **Orange (40-10%):** I'm struggling. My pack feels heavy, the noise is bothering me, I need help.
- **Red (10-0%):** I am at my limit. I need to stop immediately. I cannot process instructions right now.

**Leader Tip:** If a girl is in the **Orange**, don't wait for her to hit **Red**. This is the time to use a grounding technique or a sensory tool.