



A WAY OF BEING WITH CHILDREN

Self-Regulation

Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience

What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage our arousal state and what's going on in our heads and hearts. More specifically, it means being aware of our energy level, thoughts, and feelings that result from either external experiences or internal ideas. This awareness then allows us to decide on an appropriate approach to manage these thoughts and feelings and lets us find and execute safe, well thought out, adaptable behaviors to meet our needs.

Dysregulation

Dysregulation is not just bad behavior. The American Psychological Association defines dysregulation as "any excessive or otherwise poorly managed mechanism or response." Emotional dysregulation, for example, describes an extreme or inappropriate emotional response to a situation such as a temper tantrum.



Dysregulation is a Brain Problem

When your child is having a tough time (such as a tantrum), their fight, flight, or freeze system "hijacks" their brain and they lose control. When stress is high, skills are low, and it's very difficult to make wise choices. This does not excuse your child's responsibility for their outburst; there is still accountability for actions (especially for older children).

However, during the stress of the outburst, the parts of the brain not important for survival go "offline" temporarily. For a child to grow in emotional regulation and emotional intelligence, they need to calm down enough to get their frontal lobe back online and ready to process emotions.



Dysregulated Behaviors

- Outbursts or temper tantrums
- Overly emotional displays/crying
- Giving up easily
- Significant responses to seemingly small triggers
- Impulsivity and reckless behaviors
- Poor conflict resolution
- Avoiding talking about emotions
- Anxiety/excessive worrying



Self-Regulation at Home and School

Self Regulation Helps Children:

- Manage and organize thoughts
- Monitor progress and outcomes
- Redirect efforts
- Listen, concentrate, be attentive
- Foster resilience, so they don't give up
- With better parenting/teaching experiences

Benefits of Self Regulation

- Relationships
- Focus/concentration
- Academic/work performance
- Increased engagement
- Resilience
- Stress management
- Improved wellbeing and happiness



10 Tips for Promoting Self-Regulation

1. Provide a warm, responsive relationship.

Kids feel comforted and can learn from your modelling. They'll regulate faster when they feel safe and supported.

2. Show acceptance and patience.

Model, discuss, and encourage progress, even when it's small. Remind yourself of age-appropriate expectations for each child. Self-regulation skills develop over a lifetime.

3. Find a healthy balance.

Know when to offer guidance for self-regulation and when to simply let it go. Don't focus entirely on skill development all the time; allow your child to make healthy mistakes or missteps.

4. All emotions are valid; all behaviors are not.

We are all entitled to our feelings but some resulting behaviors are not acceptable and need to be managed, in adults as well as children.

5. Talk about emotions.

The more children can name feelings, the more validated and understood they feel. Assigning words to what they are thinking or feeling helps a child improve their emotional vocabulary.

6. Play games that focus on self-regulation.

Enjoy age-appropriate games that target taking turns, sharing, winning/losing, Simon Says, etc. as well as ones that require you to pay attention, remember rules, and inhibit impulses.

7. Structure environments for self-regulation.

Use routines and structure so that things are consistent. When environments are predictable and reliable, children feel safe.

8. Model self-regulating behavior.

Use your experiences to model your own skills in the moment. Redirect your child and provide age-appropriate instruction, so they can follow your lead and implement adaptive, positive behaviors themselves.

9. Offer choices and develop plans.

Provide choices throughout the day to create a sense of control, problem-solving, and decision-making. This helps your child sort through his/her thoughts and emotions, reduce distractions, and develop well-regulated thought processes.

10. Acknowledge that self-regulation is hard.

Validate your child's struggle to master this skill and work together to come up with strategies to meet new challenges and find a happy balance.



Get more resources at: www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing