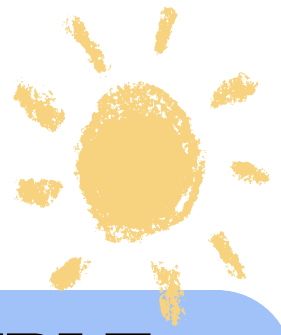


A Way of Being with Children

Practical Tools for Connection, Safety, and HOPE in Early Childhood



CO-REGULATION MADE SIMPLE

How Your Calm Helps Children Find Theirs

Children's nervous systems are shaped by the adults around them. Young children are still learning how to manage big emotions – feelings like anger, fear, excitement, sadness, and disappointment can become completely overwhelming. When a child feels upset, they do not yet have the tools to calm themselves. Co-regulation is ultimately the process of “lending” our calm to help a child settle.

Co-Regulation Builds Emotional Strength

When an adult responds with steadiness, warmth, and understanding, the child's nervous system begins to slow down. This sends an important message: **Strong emotions are safe. You are not alone. We can handle this together.**

Over time and with repeated experiences of co-regulation, children internalize these skills. What begins as support from an adult gradually becomes self-regulation.

Co-regulation teaches children that emotions come and go, feelings are manageable, support is available during stress, and calm can return after big reactions. When adults stay connected during emotional moments, rather than rushing to fix or punish, children develop trust, emotional awareness, and control. These moments become powerful opportunities for learning and healing. They also become the foundation of resilience!



Skills and Practices for Co-Regulation

1. Start With Yourself

- Take a breath before responding.
- Notice your own body and emotions.
- Remember that children borrow your state of mind.

2. Use a Calm, Steady Presence

- Speak slowly and gently with few words.
- Keep your body relaxed and open.
- Lower yourself to the child's level when possible.

3. Offer Soothing Actions

- Slow breathing together
- Gentle touch (if welcomed)
- Rocking, humming, or rhythmic movement
- Sitting quietly nearby

4. Name Feelings Without Judgment

- Label emotions to help children make sense of them.
- “You're frustrated right now,” or “That felt really hard.”
- Naming feelings helps calm the brain and build understanding.

5. Stay Connected During Big Emotions

- Avoid sending children away to calm down alone.
- Your presence provides safety.
- Connection comes before correction.

A Way of Being Reminder

Co-regulation is not about stopping emotions - it's about staying present through them. Big feelings are a natural part of life, and when adults respond with patience, empathy, and steadiness, children learn that emotions are safe and can be experienced and handled without fear or shame. Over time, this teaches children that feelings come and go, support is available, and calm can return. As children grow, these early co-regulation experiences become internal skills, helping them manage stress, communicate their needs, solve problems, and build healthy relationships on their own. These everyday moments of connection and regulation lay the foundation for lifelong emotional health, resilience, and success at school, work, and in relationships.

Everyday Tips for Supporting Regulation

Create a Calm Space

Designate a cozy spot at home with soft items, books, or calming tools. This space is not a punishment - it's a place to feel safe and supported.

Celebrate Small Steps

Praise efforts at calming down, not just outcomes:

- "You took a deep breath."
- "You asked for help."
- "You're trying to settle your body."

Progress happens in small moments.

Remember Timing Matters

Teaching calming strategies works best after a child is calm — not in the middle of a meltdown. Regulate first, then reflect together later.

Use Predictable Routines

Consistency helps children feel secure. Daily routines reduce stress and make emotional regulation easier.

Practice Together When Things Are Calm

- Practice breathing
- Read books about feelings
- Play regulation games
- These moments build skills before they are needed.
- Learning to regulate emotions is like learning to swim. You cannot teach a child how to swim when they're already struggling in deep water. Instead, they need to learn in a calm, controlled, safe space. In the same way, coping skills work best when they're practiced during calm moments... not in the middle of a meltdown. When children practice breathing, naming feelings, or calming strategies while they feel safe and regulated, those skills are easier to access when emotions run high.

Adult Regulation Comes First

When emotions run high, pause and ground yourself before responding. A regulated adult is the most powerful tool for helping a child regulate.



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