

TEACHING KIDS SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is the ability to control behavioral and emotional responses. It's having the skill to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change, and to handle frustration without outbursts. And it's a foundational developmental skill!

Teaching self-regulation takes practice and patience. Here are some simple ways to support your kids' self-regulation skills on a daily basis.



1	FRESH AIR		Provide opportunities for outdoor play to let the energy out. Increased heart rate = more blood flow to the brain = more brain power.
2	BUBBLES		Blowing bubbles is a kid-friendly way to practice deep breathing, because to blow them you need to breathe from the belly, at a regular tempo.
3	READ TOGETHER		Reading books about emotions is a great way to discuss all the feelings kids have.
4	LISTEN TO MUSIC		Calm music can help settle kids down. Making up simple, silly songs can also help children remember self-regulation strategies.
5	REST & NUTRITION		Lack of sleep, dehydration, or a hungry tummy can take a toll on anyone's social-emotional skills! Sometimes all a kid needs is a snack or a nap.



12 SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Alert and Engaged



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Secure and Calm

1. Take a Time-In

Spend 5 minutes in a calm, quiet space with the child. Connection is a key component of self-regulation.



7. Smell the Flowers

The scent of lavender can reduce anxiety. Mindfully smell fresh or dried lavender flowers with the child, focusing on how the smell makes them feel.



2. Listening Break

Auditory stimulation such as a meditation, soothing music, or an audio book can help re-focus children's attention.



8. Move Like Animals

Invite the child to move like an animal that they would like to feel like, such as a carefree bird or proud lion. Somatically, this can help them shift their state.



3. Rainbow Breath

Inhale and raise your arms above your head, painting a rainbow with your fingers! Exhale and return arms to your sides. Deep breathing regulates the vagus nerve.



9. Smiling Contest

See how long you can smile for together! Turning a frown upside down can really make you feel happier!



4. Sing Vowel Sounds

Singing long, open vowel sounds such as "ahh" and "ohh" can balance sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.



10. Tense and Release

Invite the child to clench their fists as tight as they can, then exhale to release. Repeat with various body parts to lower cortisol levels and heart rate.



5. Face Painting

Pretend to "paint" the child's face in imaginary hues with the tip of your finger to provide sensory input.



11. Freeze Dance

Play upbeat music and instruct the child to freeze every time the music stops. Linking movement to their senses helps children regulate their bodies and minds.



6. Cool Down

Offer the child a cool glass of water or a popsicle, or run their wrists under cold water to help their nervous system reset.



12. Reflect Together

Fostering a self-reflective environment can help children learn to make better self-regulation choices in the future.

