



Grand Erie District School Board
Fostering the Development
of Self-Regulation Skills
in the Classroom
2023-24

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This resource was created by administrators, educators, and support staff in Grand Erie. It provides foundational information on Self-Regulation to support students' learning, wellbeing and belonging. It includes articles and videos to support this professional learning.

This document is not intended as a fulsome overview of Self-Regulation or for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes.

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Fostering the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom

Understanding Self-Regulation

Self-Regulation has become recognized for its foundational role in learning and well-being. Self-Regulation skills development is the process that assists students in managing their thoughts, emotions and behaviours to support learning, achieving goals and fostering overall healthy development. There are no universally accepted definitions of Self-Regulation. This document will focus on an understanding of Self-Regulation found in social-emotional learning literature, Dr. Shanker's Self Reg framework and Executive Functioning literature.

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework that guides practices in classrooms and schools. This work needs to be done in collaboration with administrators, school personnel, support staff and families/caregivers.

Based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model, the five-core social emotional competencies include self-awareness, Self-Regulation /self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. When Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is implemented with a culturally responsive anti-oppressive and anti-racist lens, educators can use it to cultivate equitable learning opportunities, responsive relationships, and inclusive practices. An equity lens helps educators affirm identities, strengths, and cultures of all students; elevate their voice and agency; create a sense of belonging; cultivate curiosity and collaborative problem-solving; and more fully nurture the strengths and social emotional and emotional development of all students.

Dr. Shanker has written extensively on Self-Regulation. He refers to Self-Regulation as the child's ability to deal with stressors effectively and efficiently and then return to a baseline of being calmly focused and alert. Within the Shanker and Hopkins Self-Reg framework, there are five domains: biological, emotional, cognitive, social, and prosocial. More information can be found at:

<https://self-reg.ca/five-domains/>

Executive Functioning skills (EF) are responsible for guiding, directing, and coordinating cognitive, emotional and behavioural functions. These skills enable purposeful goal-directed problem-solving, which involves maintaining attention/concentration, persevering with tasks, and thinking things through. Although interrelated, the EF literature tends to differentiate Emotional and Behavioural Regulation.

Regardless of definition, most theories and programs emphasize the importance of education about Self-Regulation, identification of lagging or under-developed skills and explicit teaching of skills.

As an educator, teaching Self-Regulation starts with a reflection on yourself, the classroom, and students' lived realities. Students face a range of challenges relative to their personal, social, and cultural experiences. Always consider sources of stress, protective factors, and existing ways of coping. When students' identities are affirmed, through an anti-oppressive and anti-racist lens, and skills are introduced in a developmentally appropriate and sequenced manner, students can then select and adopt strategies that build on their strengths.

Fostering the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom

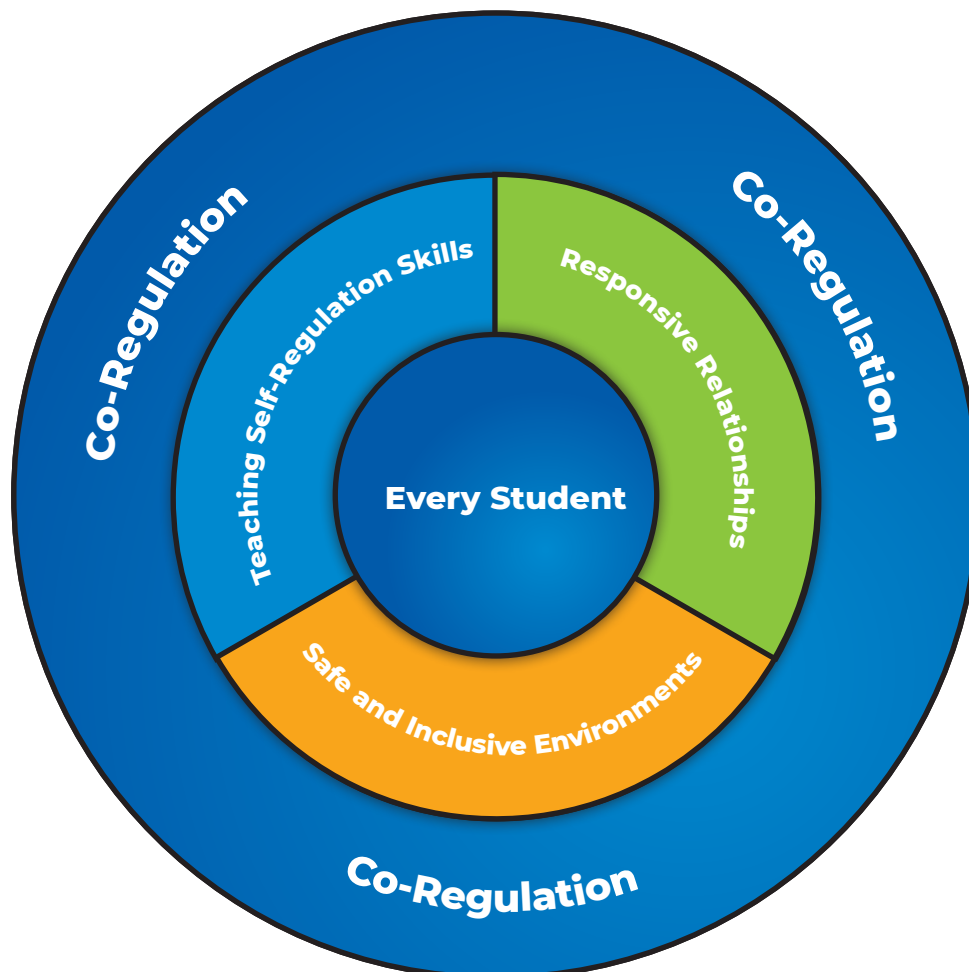
Self-Regulation Connections to Program and Curriculum

Self-Regulation is embedded in the four frames of the kindergarten program, and in the Learning Skills and Work Habits for Grades 1-12. These learning skills and work habits promote student achievement of the curriculum expectations. Self-Regulation skills and habits can be demonstrated by a student across all subjects, courses, and grades and in other behaviour at school.

(Growing Success, page 149). <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growSuccess.pdf>

Framework for Developing Self-Regulation in Students

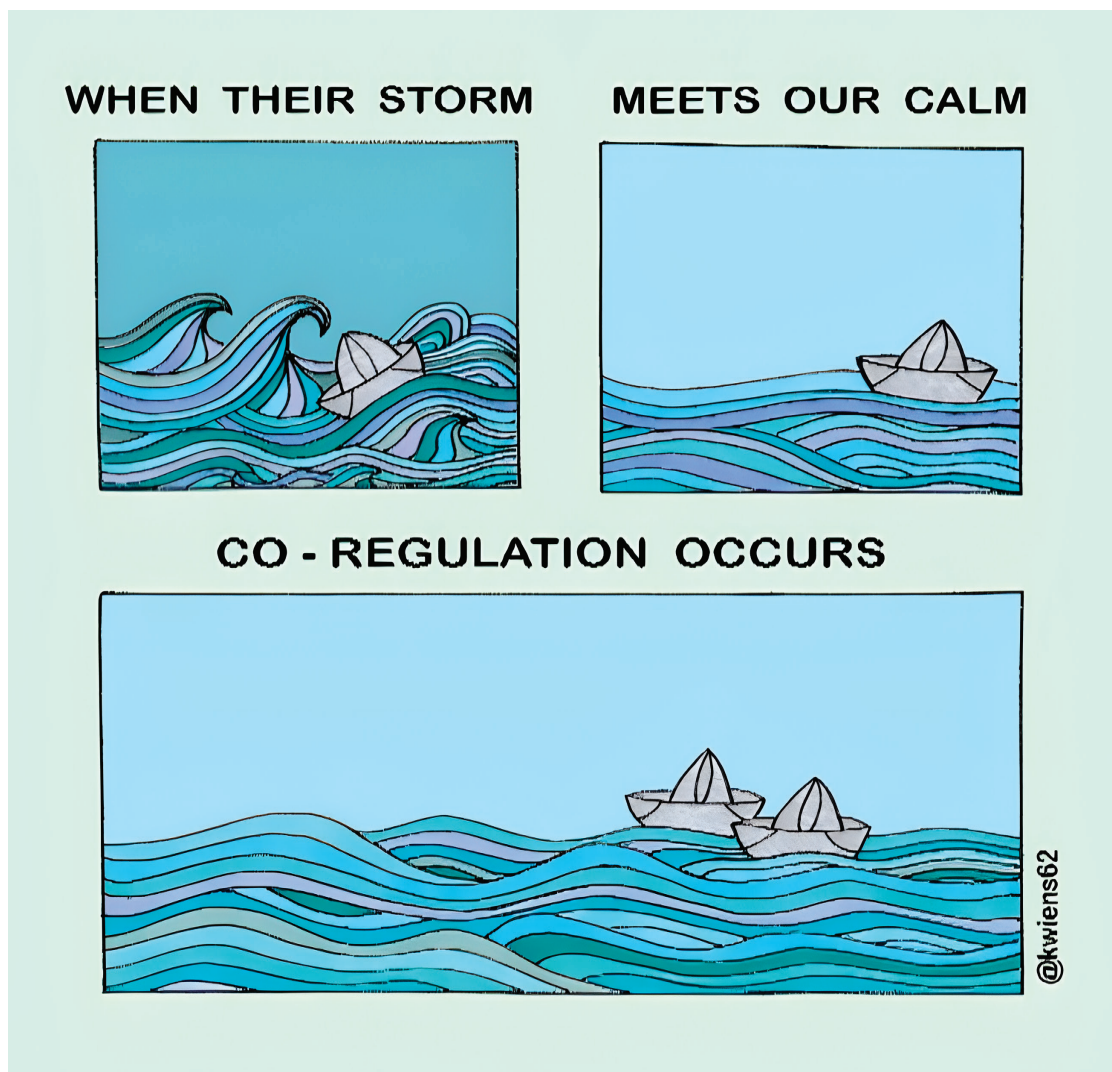
There are three broad categories of support that adults can provide to children and youth within a classroom that helps develop Self-Regulation skills. These categories are Responsive Relationships, Safe and Inclusive Environments and Teaching Self-Regulation skills. This graphic is a visual representation of key considerations when supporting the development of Self-Regulation skills.



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Understanding Co-Regulation

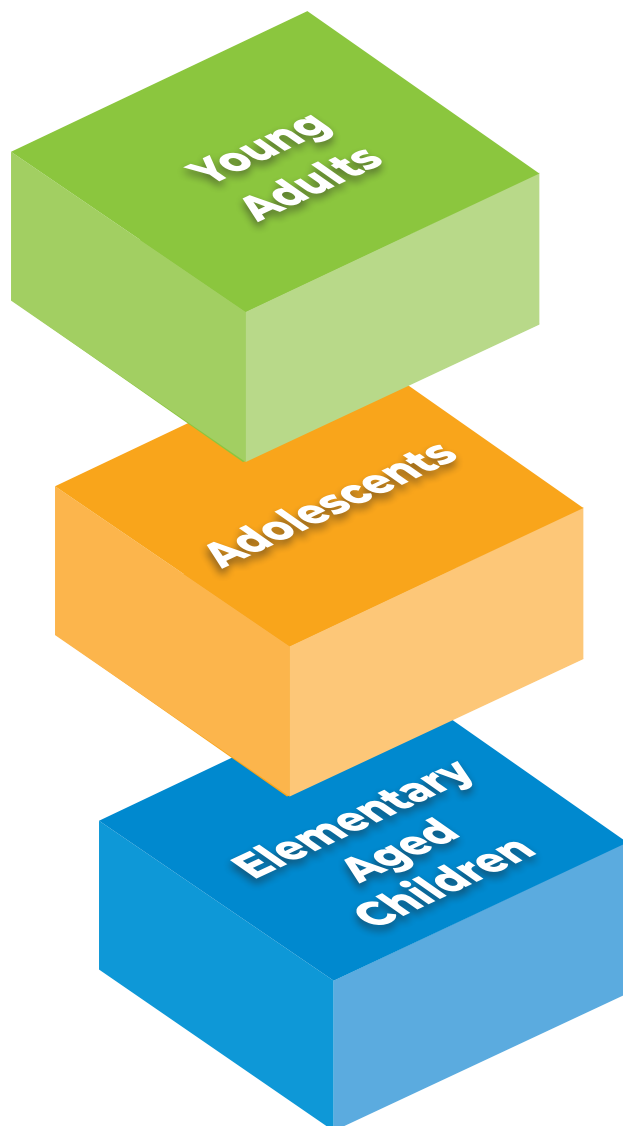
Self-Regulation must also be understood within the context of Co-Regulation. Co-Regulation can be described as the supportive relationship between an adult and a child or youth. Co-Regulation fosters the development of Self-Regulation. Co-Regulation skills and strategies, which look different at different ages and stages of an individual's life, are outlined in the article [Co-Regulation for Birth Through Young Adulthood: A Practice Brief](#).



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Co-Regulation Over Time

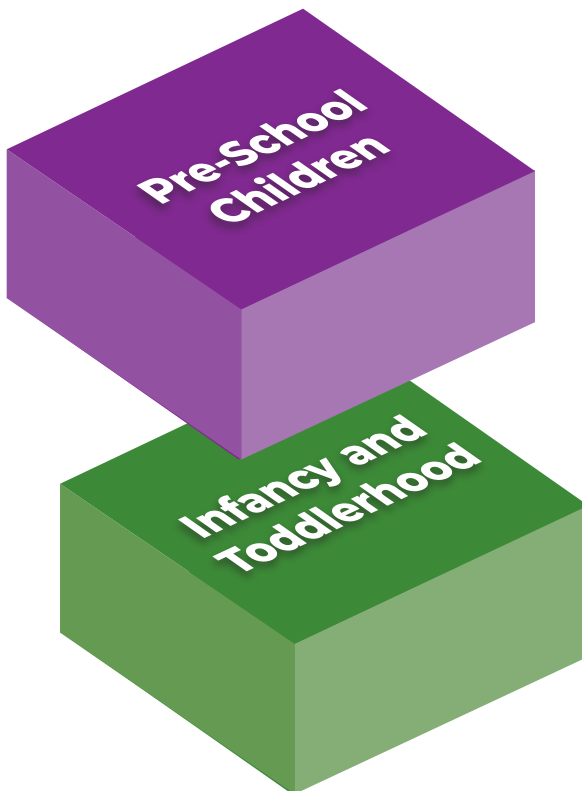
As children age, consider their co-regulation needs. Chronological age and developmental age do not always align for all students. Regardless of the age of the individual, it is important to be aware when you cannot provide calm support. At those times, it may be best to step away or have someone else provide support.



- Provide an ongoing warm and supportive relationship
 - Support long-term goal achievement by encouraging effective planning, awareness of consequences, and task completion activities
 - Share perspective and provide coaching for complex problem-solving and decision making
 - Ultimately, allow space for the young adult to make his/her/their own decisions and experience the consequences of those decisions
-
- Provide support and empathy in times of intense emotion
 - Model, monitor, and coach more sophisticated self-regulation skills across different contexts
 - Monitor and limit opportunities for risk-taking behaviour while providing opportunities to make decisions and self-monitor behaviour in less risky situations
 - Give time and space to calm down in times of conflict
 - Continue to provide clear rules, boundaries, and consequences to incentivize good choices
 - Continue to provide clear rules, boundaries, and consequences to incentivize good choices
-
- Assist in problem solving, organizing and planning in more complex academic, behavioural, and social situations
 - Model conflict resolution strategies
 - Prompt and coach coping skills and calm-down strategies, including self-talk and relaxation
 - Provide opportunities to make decisions and self-monitor behaviour

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Co-Regulation Over Time



- Teach and coach identification of solutions to simple problems
 - Coach and incentivize rule-following and task completion
 - Prompt, and reinforce self-calming strategies such as taking a deep breath
 - Provide external structure for calming down, including a calm-down space and materials
 - Provide clear and consistent consequences, carried out on a firm, yet calm, manner
-
- Provide structure and consistent routines and expectations
 - Provide physical and emotional comfort when a child is distressed or dysregulated
 - Teach and coach the use of words to express emotions
 - Model self-calming strategies

*They succeed because they think they can -
Virgil*

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Responsive Relationships

Responsive relationships:

- value diverse ways of knowing and being
- nurture individual identities and cultures
- engage in actions that promote self-efficacy and feelings of safety.

Responsive Relationships between students and educators also build communication, emotional regulation, thinking and problem-solving.

Back and forth discussions can only flourish when dialogue between students and families/ caregivers is based empathy and possibility, not shame and blame.

Self-Reflective Questions for Educators

- Start with self-reflection related to yourself in the classroom.
- What upsets or elevates your emotions?
- What beliefs and biases impact establishing relationships with students and families?
- What are some instances in which you recognize your personal perspective is limited (e.g. understanding the impact of different kinds of stresses and traumas and the importance of co-regulation), and that you should seek the perspective of others?
- What are the student's strengths, abilities, and interests? How are you using these assets and Universal Design to leverage learning and building relationships?
- How do you position yourself as a co-learner with students and elevate their voice, agency and lived experiences?
- What school-based experiences and activities allow you to connect with students, and to better understand their needs and stressors?
- How are you building strong relationships with parents/caregivers and the community?

Resources & Strategies

The Power of Relationships in School-Edutopia

- <https://youtu.be/kzvm1m8zq5g>
- **Video length** 3:40
- **Snapshot:** Educators and students' voices on the importance of taking time to get to know students to confirm what research shows that when students feel safe and supported by adults at school, they are better able to learn.

The Power of Relationships in the Lives of Youth- Search Institute

- <https://youtu.be/NPW3ko6GoNE>
- **Video length** 4:06
- **Snapshot:** Presentation of a 5 key element framework used by educators to build relationships: Express Care, Challenge Growth, Provide Support, Share Power, Expand Responsibility

Fostering the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom

Resources & Strategies

Experiences Build Brain Architecture- Centre on the Developing Child, Harvard University

- <https://youtu.be/VNNsN9IJkws>
- **Video length:** 2 minutes
- **Snapshot:** During child development neural circuits are created and strengthened by a child's experiences. Connections that are used and fostered grow strong including areas of behavioural control, language and memory.

Self-Reg Strategies in the 5 Domains

- [2_10_-Five_Domain_Strategies.pdf \(self-reg.ca\)](#)
- **Format:** 6-page checklist
- **Snapshot:** Strategies for improving Self-Regulation are sorted into the 5 Domains: Biological, Emotional, Cognitive, Social and Prosocial. This list can be used to help educators identify practices that are readily implemented and provide suggestions for areas of focus.

Fostering co-regulation through the relationship between a caregiver and a child or youth.

- [Visual_KW_You_are_the_Strategy.jpg \(1340×1948\) \(self-reg.ca\)](#)
- **Snapshot:** This visual can be displayed to remind educators of the impact they can have in the classroom and with children.

Helping children and youth meet their power needs

- [Visual_KW_Power_Needs-scaled.jpg \(1945×2560\) \(self-reg.ca\)](#)
- A colourful and thought-provoking poster that helps one "Re-think Power Needs"

Show up, light up, build up and never give up.

- [Visual_KW_Brighten_Up-scaled.jpg \(1980×2560\) \(self-reg.ca\)](#)
- A poster outlining key educator mindsets and activities that foster well-being, belonging, and learning.

When the environment is safe and secure, people exhibit lower heart rates, lower blood pressure, greater appetite, and the inhibition of a fight or flight response (Feifer, 2019).

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Safe and Inclusive School Environments

The ongoing process of creating a safe, nonjudgmental and inclusive environment that allows students to risk, to explore challenging tasks, and to express their ideas. During their time in schools, students may experience conflict, but compassionate and responsive educators guide and create opportunities to co-construct solutions; thus, promoting learning, wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

Self-Reflective Questions for Educators

- How is your classroom space reflective of your learners and how is it responsive to the needs and strengths of your students? What skills or changes to the environment will facilitate learning and belonging?
- How do you structure the classroom environment to ensure students are calm and ready to learn?
 - Co-creating classroom communities and norms
 - Building supportive relationships
 - Supporting routines and transitions for the return to learning
- What opportunities do you provide to help all students as diverse learners realize their fullest potential?
- How do you model authentic curiosity and “not knowing” to remain open to new information and solutions?
- How are you building your capacity to create learning spaces in which students are fully recognized and feel supported to build relationships across differences?

Resources & Strategies

Resources from Grand Erie’s Safe & Inclusive Schools:

- Unlearn-classroom Conversation about Equity and Inclusion
<https://youtu.be/u60-q4dTd3Q>
- Restorative Practices in Schools
<https://youtu.be/kLtpuJgcJGY>
- Power in Relationships- Bully vs Conflict
<https://youtu.be/VkHxWGFxfg8>

Re-framing Behaviour, recognizing stressors and lighten the load

- [2022_Toolkit_5_Practice_Portrait_Blank.pdf \(self-reg.ca\)](#)
- Grand Erie District School Board First 20 Days
- SMHO First 10 Days and Everyday SEL

Fostering the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom

Resources & Strategies

Fostering Belonging with Classroom Norms-Edutopia

- <https://youtu.be/oRXYc4xmvwg>
- **Video length:** 3:31 minutes
- **Snapshot:** By empowering students to be co-creators of classroom norms, educators are establishing the “pathway” to belonging in the classroom environment.

Building a Belonging Classroom-Edutopia

- <https://youtu.be/Q6niuYToam4>
- **Video length:** 4:17 minutes
- **Snapshot:** In a “belonging” classroom there is a community being explicitly built by the teacher. A sense of belonging is also one of the most important activators of a child’s engagement in learning.

Dr. Perry-Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Insights for Educators

Videos range from 4:00 to 7:00 minutes

- How Stress Impacts the Brain:
<https://youtu.be/COMwI2akgqM>
- Regulating Yourself and Your Classroom:
<https://youtu.be/nqW2Xv16bWw>
- Educator Strategies for the Classroom:
<https://youtu.be/cNzkyFPA7Lc>
- Neurosequential Model: Regulate, Relate, Reason:
https://youtu.be/TpsK_fY2BpQ
- Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Insights for Educators-The Neurosequential Model:
https://youtu.be/_3is_3XHKKs

“Behind every challenging behaviour is an unsolved problem and a lagging skill.”
Ross Green

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Teaching Self-Regulation Skills

Classrooms are an ideal place for students to learn how a range of human emotions and experiences impact thinking and responding and learn ways of coping. Explicit teaching, modeling, and coaching of identity-affirming Self-Regulation skills within an inclusive and caring classroom environment are essential to learning and achieving goals.

Reflective Questions for Educators:

- How are classroom practices identity-affirming and how have you embedded evidence-based social-emotional learning into your program?
- How are you recognizing and responding to stressors that impact each student's learning, and adapting the classroom environment based on this knowledge?
- How do you coach, model and practice calm strategies and coping skills to deal with a range of human emotions.
- How do historic and systemic issues of inequity contribute to your understanding of the root causes of the problems you see and how do you compensate?

Resources & Strategies

Grand Erie Mental Health & Well-being Digital Resource Binder found on Brightspace

School Mental Health Ontario Everyday Mental Health Practices Finding Calm – Guided Breathing

- https://youtu.be/le2TO_MNFxE
- **Video length:** 1:41
- A guided and scripted breathing exercise to follow along to help find your calm.

Understanding Stress Behaviour

- **Infographic Feb 2016 - Teacher (self-reg.ca)**
- A series of information posters that provide an overview for educators on:
 - What stress behaviour is
 - 5 Domains of stress
 - Signs of stress behaviour and
 - Tips to deal with stress behaviour in students.

Fostering the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom

Resources & Strategies

It's Smartest to Co-Regulate Poster

- [2_7_Smartest_to_Coregulate.pdf \(self-reg.ca\)](#)
- A 1-page poster that uses the mnemonic “smartest” to cue actions an adult can take to co-regulate a child to be calm and engaged.

Teaching Self-Regulation by Modeling- Edutopia

- <https://youtu.be/UD9m5n-ZpB0>
- **Video length:** 3:14
- **Snapshot:** A short video that models the inside of a classroom that demonstrates and explains how teachers can recognize and respond to their emotions in explicit ways that will then model to students' strategies they could employ in similar situations. This in-vivo teaching explicitly shows and verbally explains how the teacher is feeling while modeling a positive, healthy and productive strategy to use for students.

Getting Started with Trauma-Informed Practices-Edutopia

- <https://youtu.be/eWIV3wWygS4>
- **Video length:** 3:47 minutes
- **Snapshot:** this video discusses the impact of adverse experiences on learning and explains why trauma-informed strategies are good for all students.

The Break Shop – CPRI (teaching and understanding)

- <https://leakybrakes.ca/brake-shop/brake-shop-virtual-clinic/>
- A series of videos ranging in length from 4 to 6 minutes
- The videos focuses on understanding and teaching strategies to manage disinhibited behaviours.



Fostering the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in the Classroom

Where Do I Start?

- Understand that co-regulation and responsive relationships are the cornerstone of developing Self-Regulation skills.
- Ensure the environment is physically and emotionally safe, inclusive of every student, identity-affirming and differentiate instruction, as needed
- Explicitly teach and model the ability to identify and respond to a range of emotions.
- Build skills and communication using a Universal Design approach.
- Improve students' emotional vocabulary (irritated, annoyed, happy, giddy, sad, etc.) and self-advocacy skills. Share and teach lists of emotion words. Refer to these words when teaching other skills such as literacy and numeracy.
- Validate and acknowledge the student's feelings like, "You seem angry. I understand that you are disappointed by..."
- Teach breathing strategies, tense and relax exercises and visualization, and praise and reinforce attempts and practice.
- Maintain routines and post schedules but also explicitly teach and practice how to handle change
- Learn and incorporate identity-affirming social-emotional learning and mental health promotion.
- Use priming, warning, and use visual cues for transitions or changes in schedule
- Teach and model executive functioning skills as they are essential to the learning process
- Collaboratively develop classroom community and post classroom norms such as:
 - Listen when others are talking
 - Respect other people's ideas, opinion, choices and lived experiences
 - Offering specific and targeted choice, when appropriate
 - Refer to the Brightspace Mental Health Digital Resource Binder



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