

What is self-regulation?

- Self-regulation is the ability to adjust your attention, thoughts, behaviours and emotions to meet the demands of a situation.

Why is self-regulation important?

- Self-regulation is key to being able to engage with others, cope with changes or transitions and participate in academics with clear thinking.

How to promote self-regulation in the classroom?

- The strategies below can help students to calm and organize themselves within the classroom. These can be designed for an individual student, the whole class or as an activity option between other work tasks.

1) Deep Breathing Exercises

- Use a visual to support breathing in and out (e.g. flower or candle).
- Have students lie on their backs with knees bent and hands placed on their stomachs. Practice deep breathing in and out and encourage students to watch their hands move up and down as they inhale and exhale.
- Ask students to practice deep breathing paired with movement while standing up or sitting in their chairs. Exhale completely while bending down to touch their toes and then inhale deeply as they stand/sit back up (5-10 repetitions).
- Set up breathing activities such as blowing bubbles (outside), blowing pinwheels or moving a feather, pom pom or other light item across a table using deep breaths and blowing.



2) Quiet Corner

Designate a small area in the classroom for quiet, calming activities and consider including some the following items:

- Book shelf to create a boundary and a selection of books geared to all reading levels
- Seating that provides gentle movement or deep pressure (e.g. bean bag or glider)
- Mat or soft carpet with cushions for students to sit or lie down
- Listening materials (e.g. nature sounds or soft music) or noise reducing headphones
- Fidget toys or touch materials (e.g. stress/squish balls or tactile bins)
- Soothing visual materials (e.g. fibre optic wands, kaleidoscope, sensory bottles, string lighting or seek-and-find bottles filled with dried rice and small objects to find)
- Dome-style shade or pop-up tent with flaps tied open or a table cloth over the back and sides of a small table



3) Reduce sensory stimulation:

- Use natural light whenever possible.
- Use a quiet voice to address the students.
- Play soothing nature or instrumental music after transitions or during seatwork.
- Use soft sounds as transition cues (e.g. rainstick or chimes).
- Reduce visual clutter (keep classroom clutter-free by rotating learning materials, limiting unnecessary décor and making use of dividers or study carrels).
- Close down centres or block visual access to distracting toys.
- Designate time for classroom quiet activities (e.g. resting, reading, colouring, drawing, repetitive tasks like stringing beads, lacing, solving puzzles or sorting).
- Use a fan or white noise to block out other distracting sounds.
- Provide noise-reducing headphones for more sensitive or easily distracted students.



4) Provide Movement with Resistance:

- Instruct the students to sit on the carpet while hugging their knees to their chests. Then, have them lift their feet off the floor and hold for a count of 10.
- Practice bent knee floor push-ups or holding an upper plank or push-up position, holding for a count of 10.
- Allow students to lie on their stomachs for work (e.g. reading, colouring, drawing or manipulative play).
- Lead the class in a short simple yoga sequence, using YouTube as a resource if needed (remember to encourage deep breathing).
- While sitting on their chairs, have students place their hands flat on the seats to the side of their legs then press their arms straight while breathing out to a count of 5.



Seek consultation with your school's occupational therapist regarding students that require additional assistance with self-regulation. Trials of specialized items such as body socks, weighted toys, resistance bands, movement cushions or dynamic seating may be suggested.