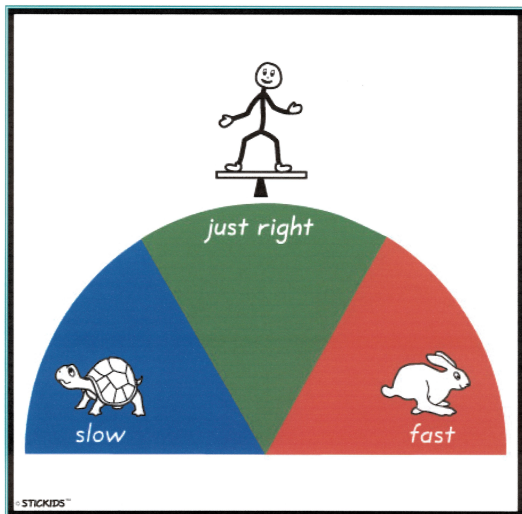


## What is Self-Regulation?

### WHAT IS SELF-REGULATION?

- The ability to use self-control to behave in socially appropriate ways (e.g. to stop doing something that is wrong even though the urge is there - like hitting someone when upset with them)
- The ability to manage our energy, emotions, attention and behavior.
- The ability to stay calm, focused and alert.
- To deal with things that stress our system (e.g. too much noise, fatigue, challenging tasks, etc.)
- It involves all sensory systems and many connections in the brain.

 Muscles, Motion 'n Touch



Children begin to develop their self-regulation skills as infants (e.g. looking away from a stimulus, sucking hand/thumb) and continue to develop these abilities as they get older (e.g. seeking out a hug from Mom, slowing down their bodies to sit and play).

## Self-Regulation



Many children learn to self-regulate without much thought. However, some children need extra support to learn and use these strategies effectively in a variety of settings.

There are many scenarios in life that can be difficult for your child to manage (e.g. loud noises, not getting their way, a change in routine, etc.). This is why it is important to be aware and teach self-regulation strategies to your child. This involves a lot of trial and error. Strategies will be different for every child.

## Strategies for Self-Regulation - Home or Daycare/School

### **BE A DETECTIVE:**

- Try to figure out things in the environment that can help your child stay calm and alert (e.g. squeeze hugs, reducing visual distractions, etc.).
- Figure out what it is that may cause your child to lose control and /or what causes them to become under or over-stimulated.



### **CREATE ROUTINES:**

Your child will have more control over their emotions when expectations are clear and they know what is coming next.

### **ENCOURGE PHYSICAL PLAY:**

There is research to support that opportunity for frequent physical play will help improve a child's behavior regulation

### **DEEP PRESSURE INPUT:**

“Heavy muscle work” or “deep pressure” to the muscles and joints can help to regulate our nervous systems. These actions in our muscles cue our brains to releases a neurochemical called serotonin, which acts to calm us down if feeling hyper-active or increase our alertness if too calm.

- Self-Hugs or Helper Hugs
- Squeeze and Wait:

- Place your hands together in front of you in a prayer position
- Press your palms together firmly
- Say “It’s hard to wait. I ‘squeeze and wait’. It helps me wait.”
- Some children find it easier to squeeze their arms in front of their chest in a self-hug, or to hang their arms down their sides while pressing their fists against their legs.

c) Gentle massage

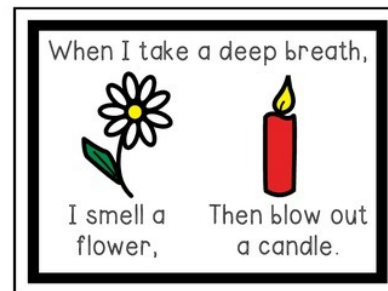
d) Curling into a ball

e) Wall pushes

f) Use of weighted items (e.g. lap snake/turtle, vest)

### **TAKE DEEP BREATHS:**

Taking deep breaths can act to calm and slow our nervous system. Do this activity together:



- Hold up one finger and pretend it is a candle
- Take a deep breath in and pretend to blow out the candle, to a count of 5.
- Repeat several times with more candles.

### **TACTILE SUPPORTS:**

Ready to Play Program

- Certain tactile sensory experiences can help to calm a child’s nervous system (e.g. squishy ball, bendy toys).
- Providing lots of opportunity for multi-sensory play with their hands is very important (e.g. finger painting, play with foam, puddy, water play).
- The use of a “fidget” object might help your child during times that are stressful (e.g. circle time, during transitions)



**AUDITORY SUPPORTS:**

- Some children need a break from the commotion and need a quieter space (e.g. tent, quiet corner)
- Noise level during activities should be kept in mind (e.g. to help prevent over-stimulation)
- Children’s headphones can be helpful in supporting those with noise sensitivity when the volume in the environment cannot be modified.



**VISUAL SUPPORTS:**

Take care to set up your child’s environment to promote success and respect possible sensory sensitivities:

a) **Reduce visual clutter** to avoid distraction and over-stimulation

b) **Lighting:** some children can be sensitive to different types and levels of lighting. Some children may require the lights to be dimmed or curtains drawn on a sunny day when trying to focus on an activity.

c) **Use visuals:**

- Even if your child understands the words, using visuals in addition can be helpful and may prevent frequent verbal reprimands (e.g. if a child doesn’t stop - you can keep pointing to the sign instead of talking/yelling).
- Visuals help to make expectations clear for your child (e.g. understanding what to expect or what is coming next will reduce stress).
- Examples: visual schedule, wait sign (see below), or create a bracelet with common visuals that help to support your child (e.g. stop, wait, sit).

