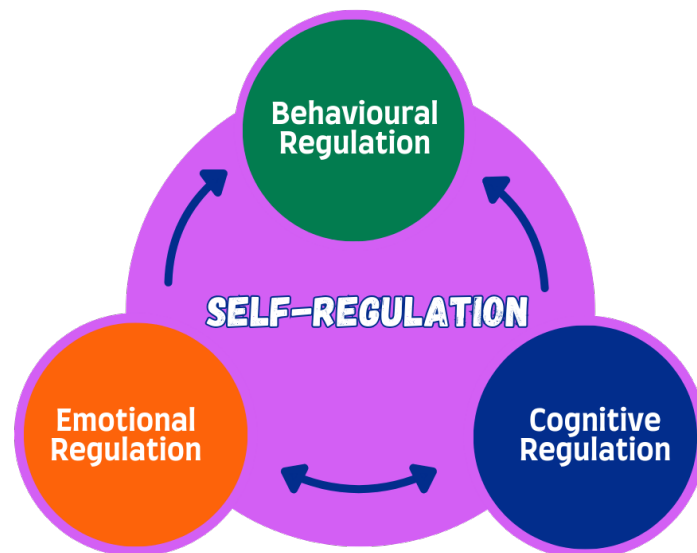


Self-regulation

Self-regulation is defined as the ability to identify and control our own behaviour, emotions, and thinking, and the ability to amend these allow us to respond appropriately to various situations.

Play is necessary for the development of children's self-regulation and can be supported through adult-led, adult-guided and child-directed time.

These opportunities provide children with enjoyable and natural context in which they can learn to make decisions, explore social interactions and manage their impulses.



Neurodiverse children

All children develop self-regulation in different ways and at different rates. Keep in mind that neurodiverse children may excel in some aspects of self-regulation acquisition, while also struggling with other aspects.

Some things to consider:

- Some children may have sensory sensitivities, which can lead to being over stimulated or not being able to process these feelings well.
- Some may have intense emotions.
- Some may develop specific coping strategies to self-soothe.
- Some may need routine and structure. This is actually good for most children, irrespective of neurodivergence or neurotypical.

Strategies to support the development of self-regulation through play.

In the early years, challenging situations teach children perseverance, patience and understanding of themselves. Self-regulation usually refers to emotions and behaviour, however self-regulation can be supported through physical activities/playing, as managing physical energy can impact their emotional energy.

Children can also discover what their limits are and how far they can push and challenge themselves in all ways.

Strategy ideas:

1. Hints and Cues

- Support children through modelling, hints, and cues throughout child-directed and adult-led activities. This is much more effective than instructing them how to complete a task.

2. Positive Distraction

- To support children to learn to wait for their turn, you could distract them with something creative, active and imaginative, such as a song to sing, play a game or act out a story while they are waiting.

3. Timing

- Concepts such as time, taking turns and sharing are abstract for children. Using a stop-watch or egg timer can help develop their understanding of waiting for their turn.
- Eventually, children will develop an understanding of these concepts and initiate taking turns and sharing without our help.

4. Playing Out

- When children have "big feelings", it can sometimes help them release the tension through fun, energetic activity.
- This could include make loud animal sounds or act out an animal movement (stomping like an elephant or running very fast like a cheetah).

5. Talking it Out

- When a child gets frustrated or finds it hard to self-regulate, discuss the feelings with them.
- Ask questions about how they think they are feeling, always remain positive, calm, showing your understanding and empathise.

6. Choices

- Give children opportunities to make choices during adult-led activities, start by asking them to choose between two options and then build from there.
- This will also support the development of their decision-making skills.

7. Agency

- During adult-led time, create many opportunities for children many opportunities to plan their own activities, either with you, with other children or on their own.
- Through the day, support children to make choices and decisions, problem-solve, and feel confident in their own choices, this will help build agency.

8. What's in a Name

- Name emotions, helping children to understand what they are feeling.
- Emotional literacy takes time to develop and when this happens in real-world context, it can help children to make sense of all the feelings.

9. Modelling

- Model emotional regulation to support children to understand and learn about how to appropriately deal with how they feel. This will also help them understand that we all experience different emotions and that it is natural.

10. It's OK!

- Help children to understand that it is ok to feel all emotions. This can occur through discussions, modelling, stories, etc. during play.

11. Reflecting

- Support children to be self-reflective about how they feel through open-ended questions about how they are feeling and how they think they would like to deal with the emotions.