

# Self Regulation



School  
Mental Health  
Ontario

Santé mentale  
en milieu scolaire  
Ontario



Well-being  
St. Clair Catholic District School Board



## Facts

- Basic concept - Self-regulation is the ability to manage your own energy states, emotions, behaviours and attention, in ways that are socially acceptable and help achieve positive goals, such as maintaining good relationships, learning and maintaining wellbeing.
- Self-regulation does not involve the inhibiting of impulses but, rather, being able to deal effectively and efficiently with stressors – for example, noise, light, and movement, or frightening experiences during infancy and childhood – that can result in a chronic state of energy-depletion
- Whatever a child is actively doing demands fuel, and the size of that cost will vary according to the activity, the situation, and most importantly, the child. In other words, two children might have to expend very different amounts of energy – be at very different points on the arousal continuum – in order to engage in the same activity.
- The problem is not that some children have less of a natural self-control reserve, however, but that some children have to work much harder than others to perform the same tasks, and it is this expenditure that so seriously depletes their capacity to meet subsequent challenges.
- Five Aspects of Self-Regulation We have determined that there are five aspects of self-regulation. These take into account different factors such as biological temperament and social skills. The ability to self-regulate is a result of a combination of these five factors. The five aspects of self-regulation are:
  - 1. Biology (Temperament)
  - 2. Emotion-regulation
  - 3. Cognitive factors: • display effortful control • sustained attention, not easily distracted • attention switching, able to transition between tasks • inhibit impulses • able to deal with frustration, delay, distractions
  - 4. Social: able to develop and use socially-desirable behaviours
  - 5. Moral: the development of empathy and values.

## Tips

### Four Key Practices to Enhance Children's Self-Regulation

- Be a detective!** Try to figure out your child's stressors, what helps the child stay calm and alert, what leaves a child hypo- or hyper-aroused?
- Exercise!** For a child who wakes up irritable, exercise that works their deep muscles is very effective.
- Mindfulness programs.** By using mindfulness principles we can help children to identify their own arousal states. Try using the car analogy for example my engine is running really fast, really slow or just right. Once they begin to understand their own arousal states we can help them to learn how they can get to "Just Right" on their own. A physical activity such as stretching, push-ups, or star jumps can be very regulating: if we make it fun!
- Play.** When play emerges from children's interests it will engage their focus. It will help them to consider the perspectives of others and figure out what they are thinking. Play encourages communication about wants and fosters connections between objects, people & ideas. It is a challenge that children can take on which requires self-direction in order to maintain.

### Tips for helping kids and teens stay calm:

- NOISE LEVELS IN CHECK:** A noisy environment can lead to chaos.
- PRIVACY AND PERSONAL SPACE:** For everyone.
- REASONABLE RULES:** Decide on these together.
- GET INTO ROUTINES:** Kids and teens respond well to having structure in their day.
- FREE TO CHOOSE:** Offer a choice whenever possible to help your child/teen feel some control.
- CATCH THEM BEING GOOD:** Reward good behaviour.

## Resources

- <https://self-reg.ca/>
- [http://www.self-regulation.ca/uploads/5/6/2/6/56264915/foundations\\_magazine-self0regulation\\_by\\_stuart\\_shanker.pdf](http://www.self-regulation.ca/uploads/5/6/2/6/56264915/foundations_magazine-self0regulation_by_stuart_shanker.pdf)
- <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/self-regulation-calm-alert-and-learning/>

## Sources

- The Mehrit Centre
- Education Canada
- Child and Parent Resource Institute (Ontario)