

## Strategies for Adults to Help Children Self-Regulate

- The adults will consider every child's behavior and progress through a developmentally appropriate lens.
- The adults will assume every child is doing their best. If not, the adults will consider what is getting in the way and how they can help.
- Be consistent and predictable in your responses and relationship with the child. Consider the 4 S's of healthy relationships: Safe, Seen, Soothed, Secure.
  - **Seen** – you offer an accurate view of the child's inner mental life and are present and attuned. As a result, the child “feels felt.”
  - **Safe** – attend to physical and emotional safety. You are both a) not the source of fear and b) going to protect them from danger and discomfort. This includes setting healthy limits.
  - **Soothed** – you are a trusted other. Soothe to foster equilibrium in the child.
  - **Secure** – inner security is the result of being seen, safe, and soothed. The child develops a feeling of being able to rely on their own self.
- Co-Regulation: The adults will recognize that the child is working towards self-regulation over time but will often require co-regulation from supportive adults.
- When considering co-regulation:
  - Attend to adult regulation first
  - Validate what the child is feeling and attend to safety
  - Attend to healthy habits and problem solving only when the child is regulated (e.g. relatively calm)
- Look for successes and focus on areas of strength to grow.
- How you do things is often more important than what you do. Consider the process and the product.
- Adapt the plan or environment to facilitate success and small changes.
- Scaffold areas of challenge with support and collaboration with the child.
- Making changes is really hard. For this reason, only select 2 or 3 goals in each area of focus to increase the chance of successful progress. Continually support the student to **monitor and modify** their regulation, learning, and behaviour. Small changes lead to bigger changes over time.
- Change is a slow and windy process, be patient and optimistic.

# Understanding dysregulation: How to Support a Highly Emotional Child



Dysregulation occurs when the brain responds to sensory input in a manner that triggers the alarm state.



When a child is dysregulated, it is harder to listen, comprehend, and cope.

## Remember the Three "R"s

### Regulate

focus on soothing your child. Make them feel calm, safe, and loved.



### Relate

Validate their feelings with your words and tone of voice. "I know you're upset right now." "This is very hard". Focus on connecting with your child.

### Reason

Once your child is calm, now it is time to talk about alternatives to behaviors while reinforcing limits you set before. You can reassure them you love them but that the behavior they're exhibiting is not ok.



Until a child is regulated, they are unlikely to related to you (feel connected & comfortable). And until a child is related, they are unlikely to have the mental capacity to reason with you.