

Emotion Regulation: What is it?

Developing skills in children.



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What is Emotion Regulation?

Emotion regulation is the ability to manage our emotions. Emotion regulation is also known as emotional self-regulation.

There are lots of emotions that we all experience such as happy, sad, and angry plus others. We experience these emotions in response to our thoughts and feelings and because of what is happening around us. We are all different so the same thing could happen to two people and yet they could both feel totally different emotions! For example, if a family member is having a baby one person might feel very happy and another might feel worried about the change.

Regulating our emotions is a skill. Some of us learn to regulate our emotions as we grow up. For example, when a child spills their drink they may be distraught, but as they grow up they no longer become upset by this and instead learn to pick up the cup, clean up the mess and get a new drink. We are all different so some people find it easier than others to regulate their emotions. It is also important to remember that at times everyone struggles to manage their emotions!

When supporting your child to regulate their emotions, you need to be aware of; your own emotions, your reaction to these emotions, and how they may affect your child's emotions (also known as co-regulation).

Younger children in particular will need your support to regulate their emotions. This can also be true of older children, particularly in times of crisis.

Steps for offering co-regulation

Using your presence and calm to reset your child's distressed brain.

1 Regulate yourself



2 Get close



3 Make eye contact



4 Listen



5 Be curious and seek to understand



6 Show empathy



7 Listen again



8 Offer warm affection
(with consent)

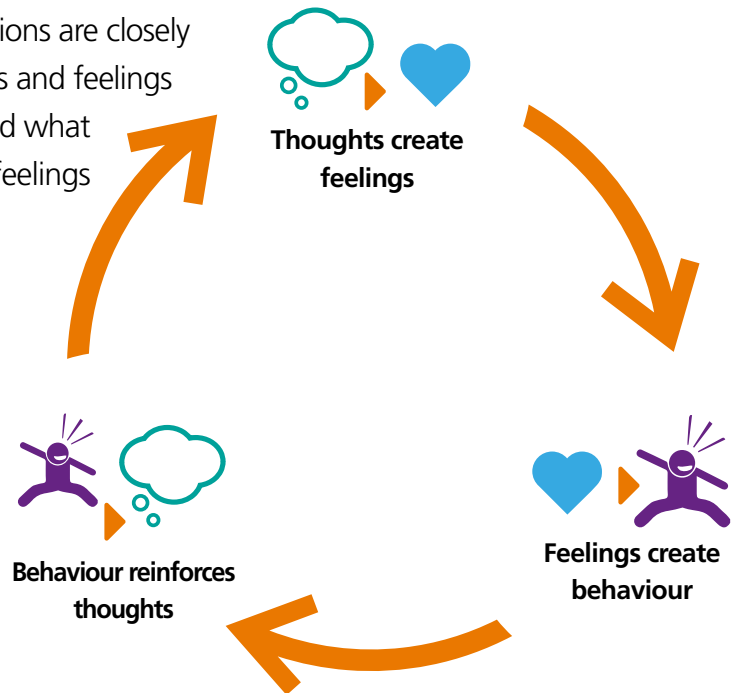


Why is Emotion Regulation important?

Emotion regulation is important because our emotions are closely connected to how we think and feel. Our thoughts and feelings help us to decide how to respond to a situation and what actions to take. In other words, our thoughts and feelings influence our behaviour.

If we learn skills to regulate our emotions then instead of acting impulsively and doing something we might later regret we are able to make smart choices. Making smart choices makes our life easier and helps with our mental health.

For example: Chloe was very excited about going to the seaside for her birthday. But on her birthday there was a storm and Chloe was unable to go. Chloe was very upset and disappointed.



Behaviour/actions

Impulsive reaction:
Shout and throw toys on the floor.

Outcome: Chloe upset, parents might be upset.



Regulated reaction:
Count down from 10 and take deep breaths.

Outcome: Do another fun activity instead.



Chloe used a calming strategy which gave her time to calm down instead of acting impulsively.

This aim of this resource pack is to support you to teach your child some new skills which will help them to regulate their emotions.

Emotion Recognition

The first step to successful emotion regulation is being able to recognise emotions. It is important that your child can recognise emotions in both themselves and others.

There are 6 key emotions that people have and they are feeling; happy, sad, scared, angry, worried, or bored.

All other emotions are variants and different levels of these emotions. If a child can recognise these six emotions in themselves they are well on their way to emotion regulation.



In order to help your child to recognise the emotions of themselves and others there are a number of things you can do:

- Label the emotions of characters in TV shows or Films you watch with your child. For example “Shrek (Shrek © 2020 DreamWorks Animation LLC) looks happy”
- Give a name to the emotions you are feeling so your child can learn what you look like when you are feeling a particular way.
- Use the five steps to teaching emotions (shown below)



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- Use an Emotion Coaching approach (Please see information on next page).

Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching is a parenting method devised by Professor John Gottmann of The Gottmann Institute. Emotion coaching is a technique by which a child is supported to recognise their emotions and come up with a plan to help them solve the problem. It can help your child to build close and trusting relationships with you. It also provides an opportunity for your child to learn how to manage their emotional ups and downs.

The steps of Emotion Coaching in practice are:

1. Tune in: Notice or become aware of your own and your child's emotions. Make sure you are calm enough to practice emotion coaching; otherwise, you might want to take a break.
2. Connect: Use this situation as an opportunity for you to practice and for the child to learn. State what emotions you think the child is experiencing to help them connect their emotions to their behaviour.
3. Practice empathy. Put yourself in your child's shoes, think about when you felt a similar emotion, and try to remember what it feels like.
4. Reflect: Once everyone is calm reflect on what happened and why it happened.
5. End with Problem Solving and Setting Limits: Whenever possible, try to end the situation by guiding and involving the child in problem-solving (Somerset Children & Young People).

For more information on Emotion Coaching please visit: <https://www.gottman.com/parents/>

Five Steps of Emotion Coaching

Dr. John Gottman

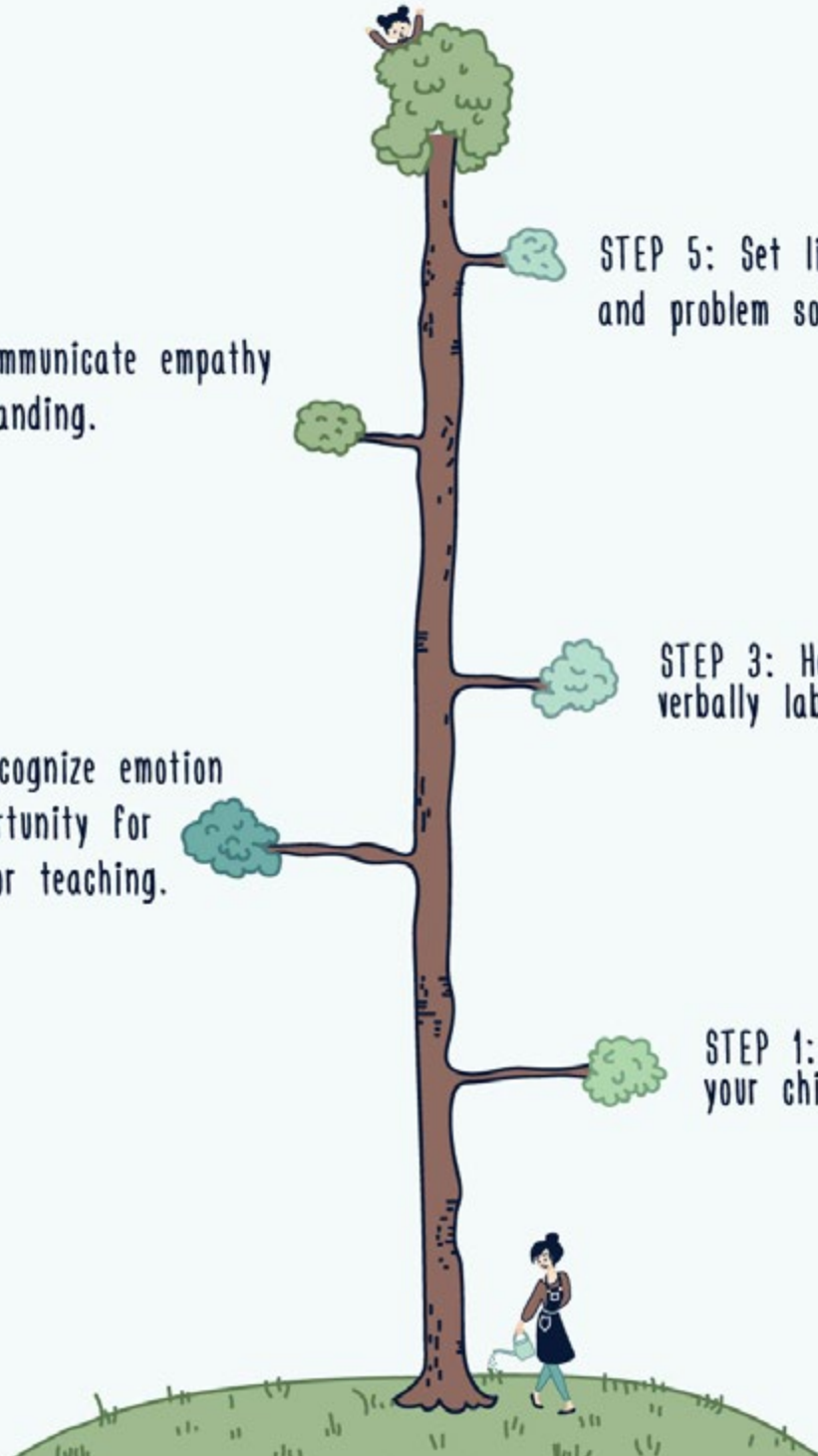
STEP 4: Communicate empathy and understanding.

STEP 2: Recognize emotion as an opportunity for connection or teaching.

STEP 5: Set limits and problem solve.

STEP 3: Help your child verbally label emotions.

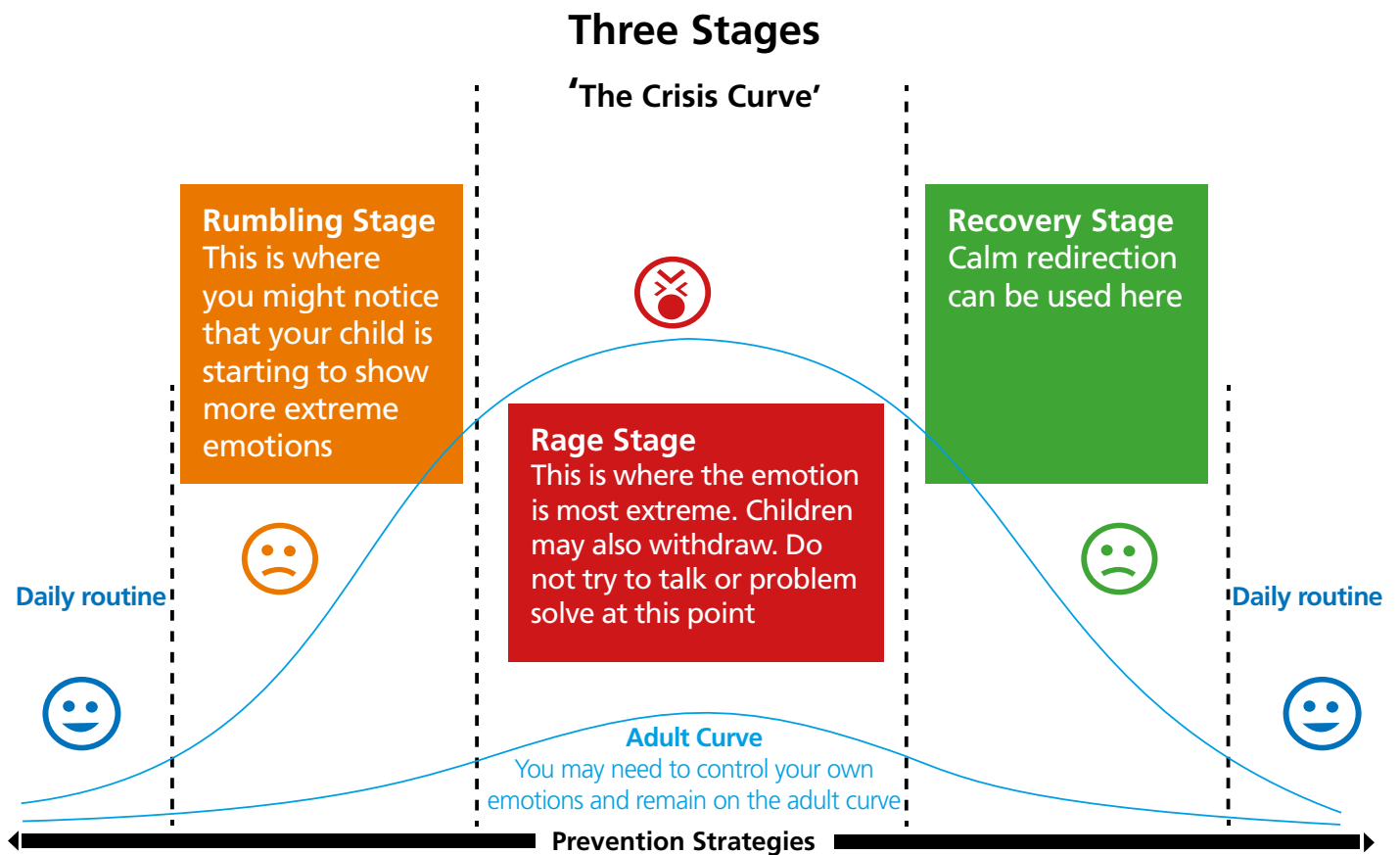
STEP 1: Be aware of your child's emotions.



The Gottman Institute

The Crisis Curve

The Crisis Curve shows the different stages your child will go through when they experience extreme emotions.



Helpful Parent Behaviours		
<p>Rumbling Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay calm Talk quietly Take deep breaths Stay close (if your child likes or wants this) Avoid conflict Don't get into a battle for power Be empathetic and understanding Use some of the suggested strategies Attempt to distract or redirect your child Be flexible; your child may not be able to. 	<p>Rage Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect your child and others from harm Don't punish Don't take your child's behaviours personally. Remove any witnesses. Be aware of your body language. Avoid conflict Remain calm. 	<p>Recovery Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that your child could go back to the Rage Stage Give your child time to become calm Offer gentle redirection and distraction Use calming and relaxation strategies Allow sleep Be aware that your child may become upset, embarrassed, and want to say sorry. Do not talk about the rage behaviours at this time unless your child wants to.

The Incredible 5-Point Scale

The Incredible 5-Point Scale is a simple visual system for regulating. It breaks down emotional concepts into 5 parts. It can be used to help a child understand when their emotions are getting out of control.

If a child is able to recognise that their emotions are approaching a '5' they can apply strategies to bring it down a level before they lose control. This could involve having a break, doing some deep breathing or another calming strategy that they have practised.

The 5-Point Scale can be personalised to reflect the situations and emotions that the child is finding hard to regulate. It is important to remember that a 1 is always little and 5 is always big – not wrong or right. In some situations a '5' response is justified!

The 5-Point scale was originally designed for children with autism; however it is still useful for anyone struggling to regulate their emotions. For more information and downloadable resources go to www.5pointscale.com

5	I AM GOING TO EXPLODE!!!
4	I AM GETTING ANGRY
3	I AM A LITTLE NERVOUS
2	FEELING OK
1	CALM AND RELAXED

© 2020 The Incredible 5-Point Scale, Kari Dunn Buron

Rating	Person Place Thing	Makes me feel like this:
5		This could make me lose control!!! 
4		This can really upset me. 
3		This can make me feel nervous. 
2		This sometimes bothers me. 
1		This never bothers me. 

Size of my worry

Referencing the size of a worry is a useful way for children to understand and manage how concerned they feel, especially if they are having difficulty verbalising their emotions.

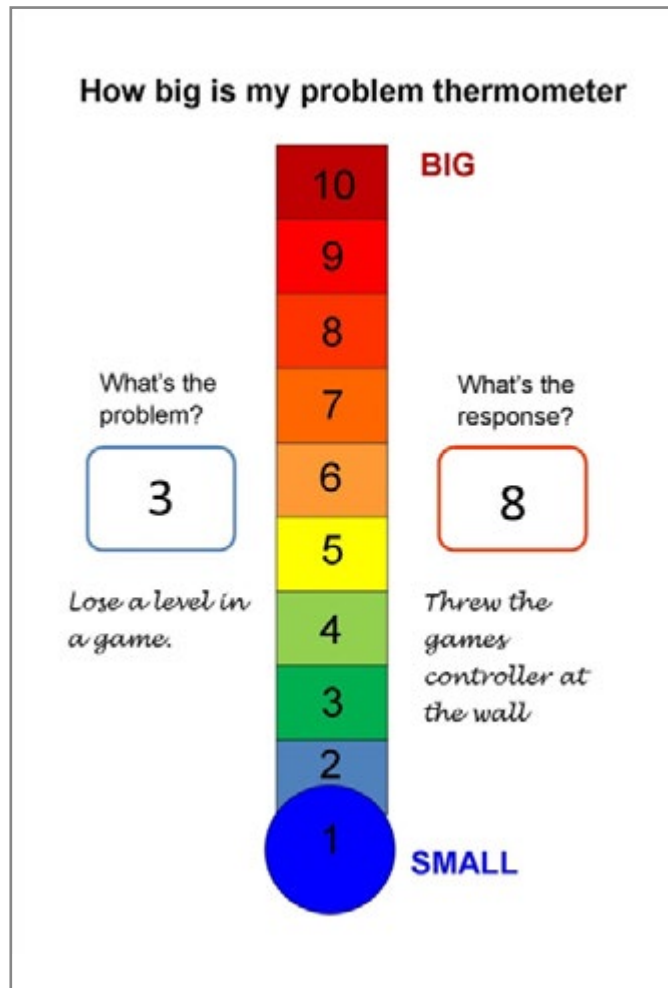
It can be helpful to think of small worries or problems as 'glitches'. Glitches can be easily fixed. Your child could solve this without needing help. For example, if a pencil breaks, they could easily sharpen it or use a different one.

Medium sized problems are problems that your child might need help with. For example, if the laptop crashes and needs restarting they might need help from you.

Big worries are worries or problems that your child will definitely need help with. Adults might even need other adults to help with the problem, such as natural disasters like hurricanes.

Here are some potential activities to do with your child to help them to understand and manage the size of their worries:

The 'How big is my problem thermometer' helps your child to see if they are under or over-responding by comparing the size problem to the size of the response.



For older children the 'How BIG is my worry' worksheet is a useful tool to talk about over or under responding and to develop coping strategies adapted to meet the needs of your child.

How BIG is My Worry?

How much danger am I really in right now?

What am I thinking that keeps me worried or afraid?



My plan to think new thoughts to manage this fear or worry better.

I will think _____

I will say _____

I will do _____

What am I afraid of or worried about?



Maybe I need to be a bit more concerned.

My fear or worry and the actual danger are reasonable.

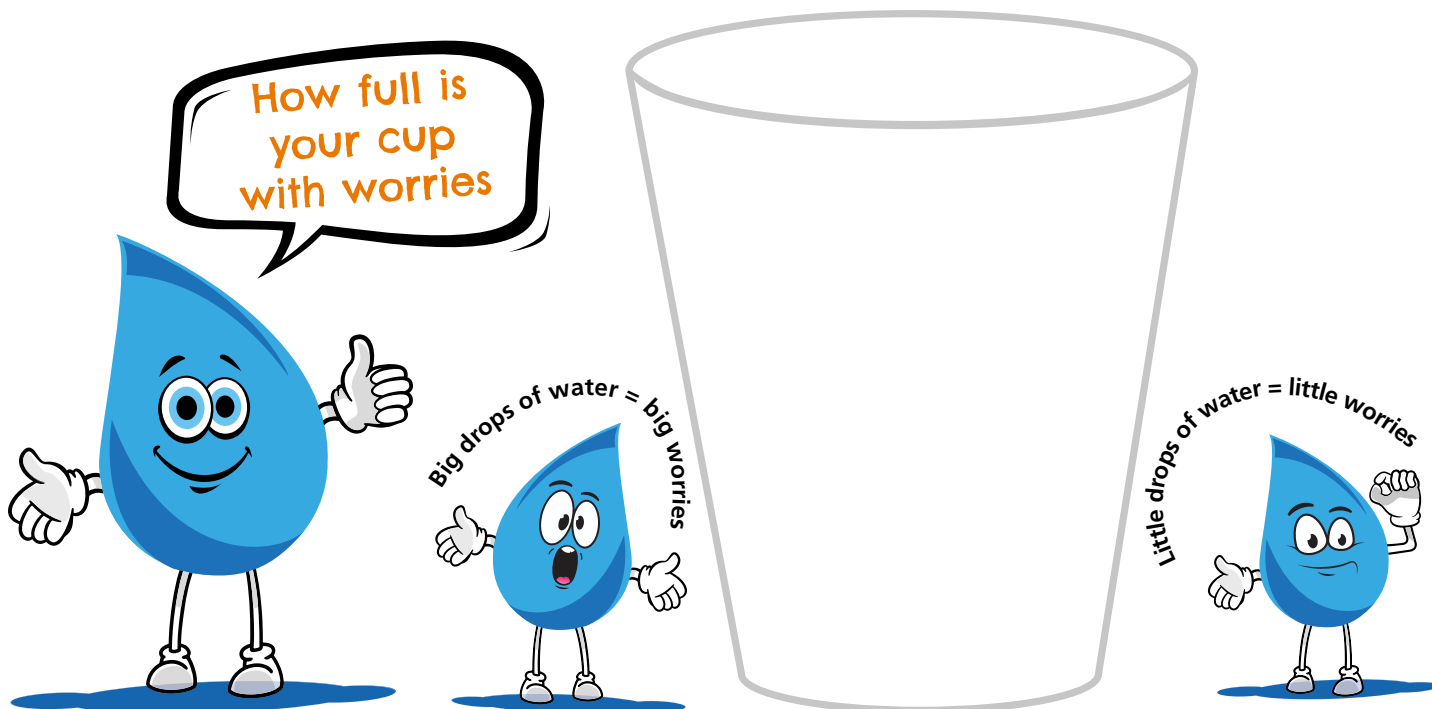
I am over-responding.

70 Play Activities - Dr. Lynne Kenney

More information can be found at: <https://www.lynnkenney.com/how-big-is-my-worry/>

For younger children an activity such as 'My worry cup' can be visual way for a child to show how worried they are without having to talk about it.

Children can draw different sized water drops to represent the sizes of their worries.

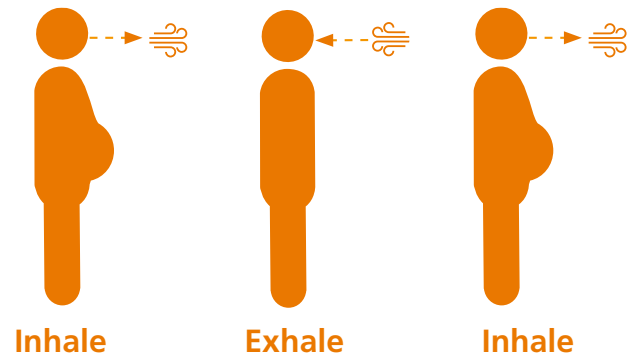


Strategies

There are hundreds of different strategies and things you can do to help your child manage their emotions.

It is important to remember that different people will find different things helpful; it is not the same for everyone. Some of these strategies are listed below.

- **Breathing properly.** One of the best ways to help manage emotions is to breathe correctly. This is known as diaphragmatic breathing (belly breathing). When belly breathing, the aim is for your belly to be further out than your chest when you breathe in. To practice belly breathing you can put one hand on your chest and one just above your belly button. When you breathe in you want the hand above your belly button to move out.



- **Listen to music.** Listening to music you enjoy can help keep you calm, it may also be used as a way to help you manage your emotions. When you are experiencing an extreme emotion (angry, terrified, about to burst) you could listen to calming music to help make you calm again. When you are feeling low, tired, or bored listening to upbeat music may help you to feel motivated or happier.



- **Activities you enjoy.** Another way to manage emotions is by doing things you enjoy or that make you happy. This could be colouring, drawing, dancing, singing, playing games, and much more.



- Sensory Strategies. There are lots of items that can be used to help your child manage their emotions by providing sensory input. Information about sensory input can be found in the Blurt Foundations Sensory Self Care Kit (please see the links for this on the additional resources page). Some sensory strategies you can try are:
 - Weighted items
 - Fidgets and fidget toys (some shown in picture)
 - Exercise balls (to bounce on)
 - Massage
 - Different smells
 - Squeeze hugs (nice tight hugs)
 - And many more

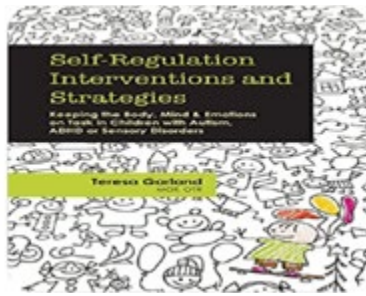
- Time Away. It might be that you or your child needs some time away to help manage your emotions. This strategy should only be used when it is safe to do so.



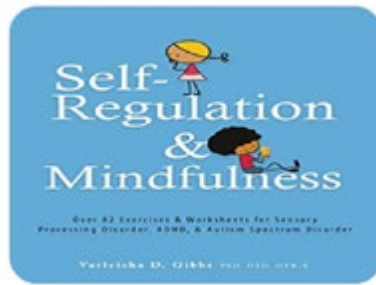
- Grounding Techniques. Grounding techniques are particularly helpful when experiencing anxiety as they can help you focus on your surroundings. A common grounding technique is the '54321' technique. This is shown in the image to the right.



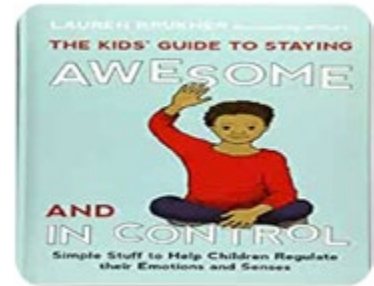
Book recommendations



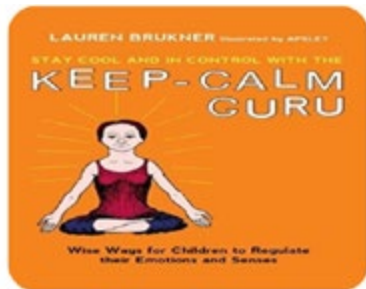
Self-Regulation Interventions and Strategies – Teresa Garland.



Self-Regulation and Mindfulness – Varleisha Gibbs.



The Kids Guide to Staying Awesome and In Control – Lauren Brukner.



Stay Cool and In Control with the Keep Calm Guru – Lauren Brukner.



The Boy with the Butterfly Mind (Kelpies) – Victoria Williamson.

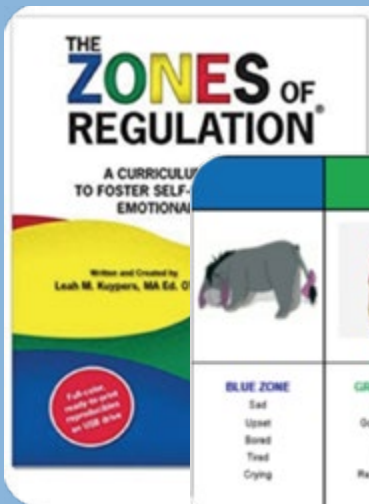


Mrs. Gorski I Think I Have the Wiggle Fidgets (The Adventures of Everyday Geniuses) – Barbara Esham and illustrated by Mike Gordon.




Kiki the Worry Monster – A book written by a 10 year old girl with Anxiety about managing worries.
<https://bit.ly/3oBWHP4>

Additional resources



The Zones of Regulation - Leah Kuypers

	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
				
BLUE ZONE	GREEN ZONE	YELLOW ZONE	RED ZONE	
Sad Upset Bored Tired Crying	Happy Good listening Calm Relaxed Ready to Learn	Anxious Nervous Excited Subtly Giddy Frustrated	Furious Terrified Ready to Burst Ecstatic Out of Control	

The Zones suggests that all emotions can be placed into four zones based on the level of alertness. Each of the Zones has its own colour: Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue. An example of how emotions fit into the four Zones is shown on the bottom left.

More information about The Zones of Regulation can be found at <https://bit.ly/3oCUOBJ>

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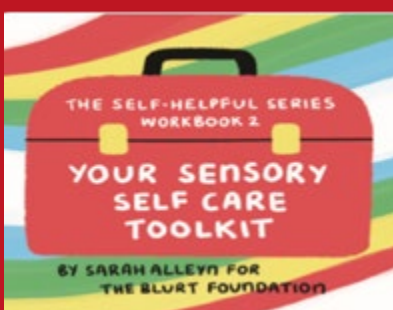


Regulation Pack- Clarissa Fry

Clarissa Fry has developed a regulation pack designed to help children understand and regulate their emotions.

She has combined ideas from different research and has developed a programme that provides information about regulation and lots of strategies to help your child manage their emotions.

The full regulation pack using animals of regulation is available to download here: <https://bit.ly/37I9V6I>



The Blurt Foundation Self-Helpful Series

The Blurt Foundation have created some handy guides to help with different problems you or your child may be having.

The sensory self-care toolkit has lots of helpful ideas to think about how different sensory activities can help to manage emotions.

The links to these guides are below:

<https://bit.ly/39ThNo0>

<https://bit.ly/36W6RUP>