

# Assisting Students & Families with Regulation during the “New Normal”

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## Session Recording

This online session was conducted on May 21, 2020 by Michelle Dow, Arlene Foley and Kelly Huck from the ATA's Council for Inclusive Education and Melissa Purcell of the ATA's Professional Development Program Area ([melissa.purcell@ata.ab.ca](mailto:melissa.purcell@ata.ab.ca)). This session will be recorded by the ATA Professional Development staff for posting to various online collaboration, social media services, and platforms for use by the ATA members and the general public. The recording will be available on these services and platforms until at least (June 30, 2020). Please note that this session's recording may be housed on services outside Canada and beyond the ATA's control. Your participation in this session is voluntary and indicates your consent for the collection, use, and disclosure of your personal information during the session under the provision of the Personal Information Protection of Alberta (PIPA). The ATA privacy officer is available to answer any questions or concerns at [margaret.shane@ata.ab.ca](mailto:margaret.shane@ata.ab.ca).

# What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation is the ability to manage your emotions and behavior in accordance with the demands of the situation. It includes being able to resist highly emotional reactions to upsetting stimuli, to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations, and to handle frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables children, as they mature, to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.”

- Child Mind Institute: How Can We Help Kids with Self-Regulation

# Self-Regulated Learning

- Self-regulated learning is a process that assists students in **managing their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions** in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011).
- According to Canadian researcher, Shanker (2012), “self-regulation refers to a child’s ability to **deal with stressors** effectively and efficiently and then return to a baseline of being calmly focused and alert” (p. 5).

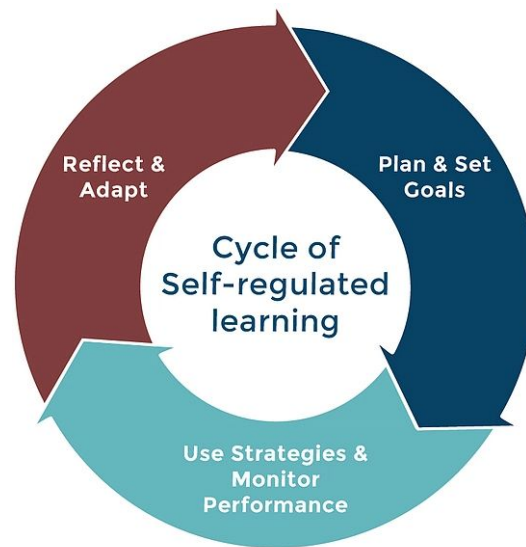
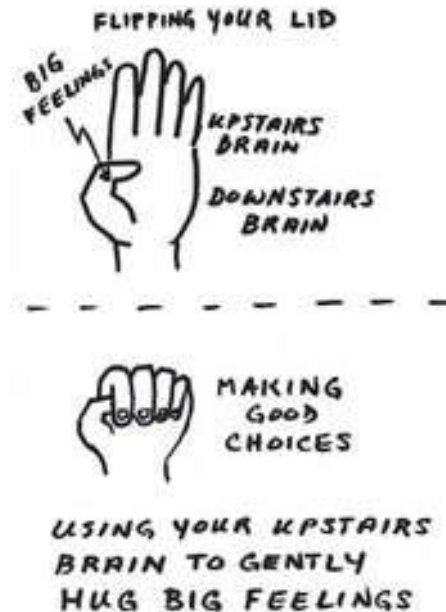


Image by Kristin O'Connell



# How does stress relate to regulation?

- Stress is any type of strain on the body that requires it to use extra energy - when extra energy is used to deal with stress, less is available to modulate emotions
- Flipping one's lid - hand model to teach children about their big emotions
- Big emotions are OK - everyone has them but how we learn to deal with them is important







# Losing Control of Our Emotions

Why do we lose  
**CONTROL**  
of our  
emotions?



# What happens if a child has difficulty with regulation?

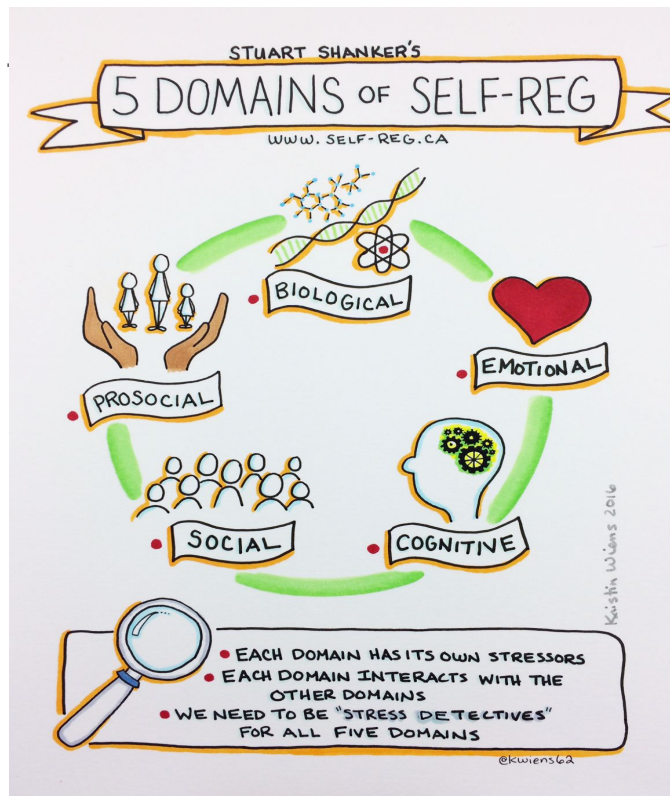
## The **ZONES** of Regulation®

			
<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control

- Teach children how to recognize and name emotions (Zones of Regulation)
- Teach and Model Expected vs Unexpected Behaviour
- Teach children to recognize the changes in their body - Interoceptive System



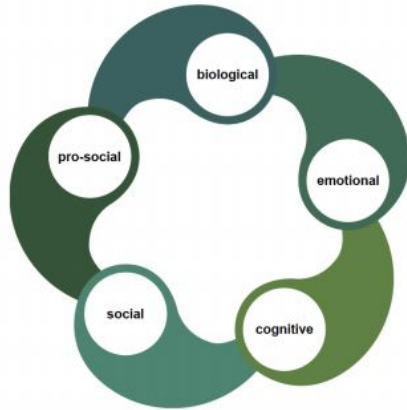
# The Five Domains of Self-Regulation by Stuart Shanker



- Interact together
- Determining the stressor helps with appropriate response
- Different strategies for each domain



# The Five Domains of Self-Regulation by Stuart Shanker



## Biological

Noises, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise, lack of sleep, junk food

## Emotion

Strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)

## Cognitive

Difficulty processing certain kinds of information

## Social

Difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding effect of behaviour on others

## Prosocial

Difficulty coping with other people's stress; sense of injustice (may include misinterpreting stress behavior as misbehavior)



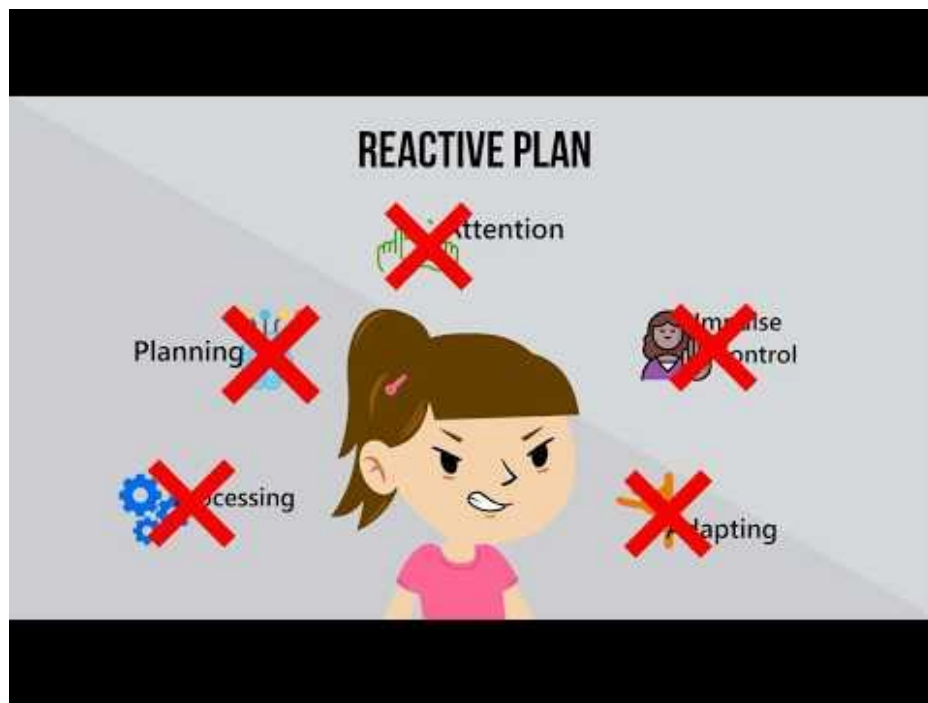
# How do we respond to struggling children?



1. Reframe the behavior.
2. Recognize the stressors (across the five domains).
3. Reduce the stress.
4. Reflect: enhance stress awareness.
5. Respond: develop personalized strategies to promote resilience and restoration.



# Why Practicing Can Help with Emotional Regulation





# What is Co-Regulating?

**Co-regulation** is the ability to develop self-regulation through connections with caregivers who are able to sooth and model emotional management and self-control. It is an **interactive process**.

- Co-regulation happens before self-regulation.
- Students need to be taught how to do this through strategies:
  - Developing verbal skills
  - Labelling feelings
  - Identifying and practicing appropriate responses
  - Using strategies

## Co-Regulation Techniques

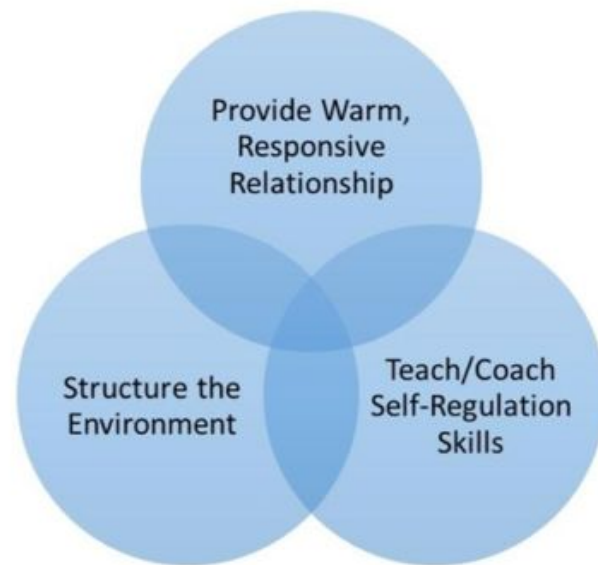
TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION
 <b>Label Feelings</b>	Help your child identify big feelings by labeling your child's feelings in a neutral tone of voice. For example, "It seems like that really frustrated you," or "I can see it made you sad when ..."
 <b>Breathe Together</b>	Calmly take deep breaths so your child can see you practicing self-calming. If it does not make your child more upset, sit next to or hold your child while you breathe deeply so your child can feel the rhythm of breathing.
 <b>Body Calming</b>	Slowly and rhythmically rub your child's back, feet, etc, when they are recovered. Connecting like this lets them know that you will be there when they are ready to talk.
 <b>Back Stories</b>	Tell your child a story while drawing on the top half of your child's back. For example, draw a circle with rays for the sun, draw triangles for mountains, tap your fingers to walk up the mountain, and brush your hand back forth to make wind. Then, switch places and let your child tell a story on your back.
 <b>Music</b>	Sing or play relaxing songs. Model how to sing/dance/play an instrument. Your child will learn to use music as an active calming tool.
 <b>Sensory Activities</b>	Creating a soothing environment can reduce distress. Try lowering lights and turning off noisy toys and devices. Weighted blankets or other objects that children can touch or feel can help them focus and calm down. A cold washcloth over the eyes can reduce visual stimulation and calm an overly stressed system.



# Co-Regulating: What do we do?

- Take the time to LISTEN! Focus on the emotions driving the behaviour (unless there is danger). Avoid interrupting!!! WHY are they...?
- Create a PREDICTABLE, RESPONSIVE and SUPPORTIVE environment.
- Provide an environment free of stressors with clear goals, expectations and reasonable consequences.
- Teach skills and strategies, model appropriate behaviours and provide opportunities for practice (different depending on age).

## How to Co-Regulate



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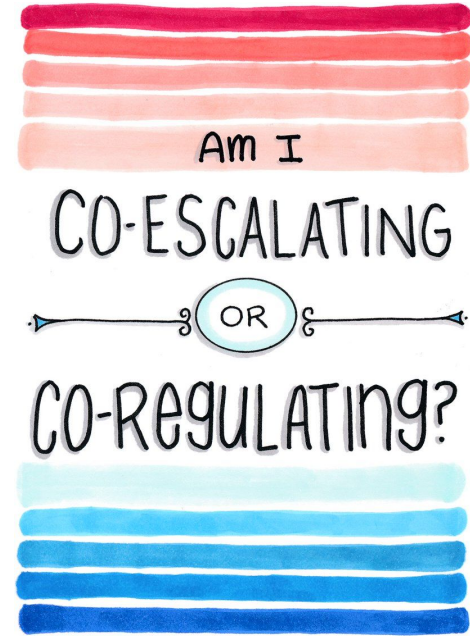
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# Caregiver Self-Regulation

A **caregiver** is any adult who has a relationship with a child and provides care and support to that child (i.e. parent, teacher, coaches, bus drivers, school administrators, lunchroom supervisors, etc...)

- Caregivers **must** be self-regulated before they can co-regulate.
- Attend to own feelings and emotions. Use strategies to **calm oneself** and regulate own emotions during stressful times before co-regulating with a child.
- Be careful not to “mirror” the angry impulsive behaviour of the child.



@kwiens62





# Still Face Experiment: Dr. Edward Tronick

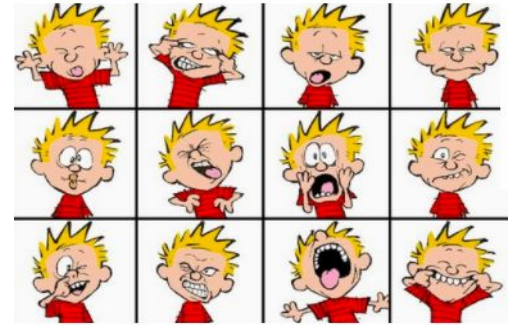


The video shows an example of co-regulation, specifically how a child's behaviour is influenced by someone else - the mother.

# What is Dysregulation?

Emotional dysregulation refers to when a child experiences difficulties with:

- registering emotions
- responding with emotions appropriate to contexts
- regulating emotional responses in social situations



- Child becomes reactive because emotional system is easily activated. Children with high reactivity push themselves into a dysregulated state in order to get themselves regulated.
- Front part of brain shuts down when child is in a high reactive state. Physiological more than behavioral and requires physiological responses.



# What does Dysregulation Look Like?

- Decrease in some academic skills
- Unwilling to attempt tasks
- Screaming, crying, running, hitting
- Meltdowns that display angry outbursts or behavior outbursts like destroying or throwing objects
- Aggression toward self or others
- Can occur in seconds to minutes or hours
- Can lead to behavior problems
- Can interfere with a person's social interaction and relationships at home, school or work



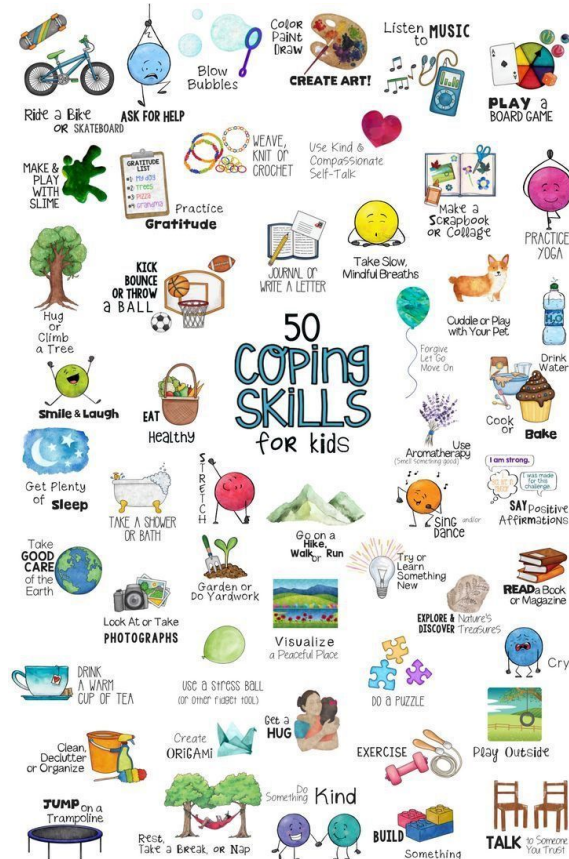
# Strategies to Support Dysregulation

The body needs to get regulated by slowing the heart rate and decreasing blood pressure.

- Belly breathing rather than chest breathing
- Remain calm
- Don't engage in a conversation right away until child has emotions under control
- Calm down options: Take a walk, sit in a quiet space, listen to music
- Visual imagery: look at a picture - describe what you taste, hear, see, smell and feel
- Draw my feelings
- Use play-doh to create things



# Transferring Regulation Skills between Environments



- Provide a list of strategies to parents/caregivers
- Small ball or soft toy child can use as a fidget or stress object
- Build in regular breaks during the day (snack, walk, play in the yard, NAP...)
- Sitting on exercise balls or ball chairs (safer)
- Mindfulness activities (yoga for kids/youth)
- Listen to music
- Play a game for 30 minutes
- **IMPORTANT:** stay away from screens if students are on screens all day

# Yoga for Kids



- Yoga can be a good way of calming one's mind and body.
- Here are some easy yoga moves that can be done with kids and teenagers.
- Throw on calming music and take time to stretch and just breathe.



# Up-Regulation vs. Down-Regulation: Differentiating for Kids (The Alert Program)

How is your engine running?



It is important to know how the child/teenager is dysregulated before assisting them in regulating.  
**How is their engine running?**



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# Up Regulation

If the engine is running at high speed, your body is in an up regulation state

- Kids with high engine levels have difficulty focusing on their work

Avoid:

- Fast, uncontrolled movements like jumping and spinning
- High stimulation environments: bright, loud, busy

Improving Attention  
Deep Pressure Activities  
Heavy Work



Encourage:

- Heavy work and deep pressure activities
- Slow movements
- Quiet and soothing environments

- Strategies:

‘Seat’ push-ups on chair  
Doing errands or tasks  
Sit in rocking chair  
Lower lights, soft music



# Down Regulation

If the engine is running at low speed, your body is in a down regulation state

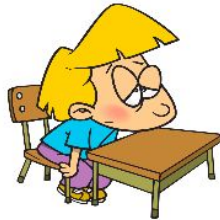
Kids with low engine levels need extra stimulation to bring their engines to a level where they can attend effectively

Avoid

- Low lighting
- Warm temperature
- Speaking quietly

Improving Attention

Heavy work



Encourage:

Heavy work to regulate the sensory system

Quick, intense movement

Bright, active, engaging stimulating environment

Strategies:

- Running errands
- Jumping or bouncing
- Heavy work movement breaks
- Listening to music with fast pace
- Drink cold water





# Resources

- [5 Point Emotional Scale](#)
- [AHS - Universal Strategies for the Classroom](#)
- [ATA Professional Development Webinars](#)
- [Calming together: The pathway to self-control](#)
- [Dealing with Big Feelings - Teaching Kids How to Self-Regulate](#)
- [Duke Center for Child and Family Policy for the Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#)
- [Edutopia - The Role of Emotion Co-Regulation in Discipline](#)



# Resources

- [How Does Your Engine Run](#)
- [In The ZONE: A Framework for SEL & Self-Regulation Strategies for Students with Autism](#)
- [The Mehrit Centre](#)
- [Emotional Dysregulation Video](#)
- [Five Domain Strategies by Stuart Shanker](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [UC Davis Children's Hospital](#)
- [Zones of Regulation Distance Learning Resources](#)

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