

## Your 2-minute guide to... *Emotional Self-regulation*



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**When young children find it difficult to manage their emotions, it can impact their well-being and relationships.**

**It is important to provide intentional support to help them manage their emotions.**

### **What is self-regulation?**

Self-regulation is when a person can manage their emotions and impulses.

In the early years we might think of it as the next step after co-regulation: children begin to soothe and calm themselves with less input from the caregiver.

The role of the caregiver is to help the child understand and moderate their emotional life.

### **Practices that promote self-regulation:**

- **A safe environment** helps children feel supported and that they belong.

How to do this: provide consistent routines to help the children anticipate what will happen next. This helps them feel safe. Some children benefit from a visual timetable showing what they will be doing all day, so they know what will be coming next.

- **Naming emotions** helps children give words to how they are feeling.

How to do this: discuss emotional responses: How does this make you feel? Identify the feelings of characters in books: How do you think they felt when they hurt their friend? What could they do differently next time?



- **Modelling techniques** encourage children to take some control of their emotions.

How to do this: use breathing exercises, counting to ten, physical releases such as stretching, jumping or squeezing something. It can also help to have a designated toy, resource, or space to turn to at times of intense emotion.

- **Problem solving** enables children to navigate challenging situations.

How to do this: look at various scenarios in your setting / in books and reflect on the possible responses. Explore what the children think about these scenarios. Which would be most and least beneficial?

- **Collaboration with the family** is important in developing a consistent approach to self-regulation.

How to do this: share techniques, insights, and observations. This will help create a partnership that is supportive to the child's development.

- **Engaging with the child's interests:** all children need to discover things that absorb and captivate them. This curiosity helps them begin to find contentment and a sense of who they are.

How to do this: expose the children to a broad range of activities, indoors and out. Observe what they like to do and encourage their interest. Some children may need quite a lot of adult input to find out what they like doing. Working with the family can be invaluable here.

***Given a favourable environment, children will learn how to manage their emotions in ways that suit them. And at their own pace.***

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### Longer reads:

Education Endowment Fund (2023): [Self-regulation strategies](#)

Famly (2020): [What is Self-Regulation?](#) Katrina McEvoy

The Sutton Trust (2019): Developing Essential Skills Supporting Self-regulation - [Early Years handbook](#).

Prof. Sara Baker (2022) [What do nursery songs and self regulation have in common?](#)  
[East London Research School](#)