

# Self-regulation



# Self regulation



“Being able to regulate our own behaviour, so that we can deliberately act in a way that is consistent with school (or society’s) rules and the needs of others”

-Mark Ylvisaker & Tim Feeney.

- Behaviour vividly describes feelings and gives insight into how a child has learnt to cope.
- Every behavior is a communication and the only behavior we can guarantee to change is our own.
- We expect different behaviours from children at different times-what’s ok in one situation is not in another
- Self-regulation is a skill that children have to develop before they can learn anything. It is a pre-requisite for efficient cognitive development and for good communication and socialization.
- Self-regulation ability is connected to how we regulate emotion, stress and our physical states. It is based on our ability to gauge social situations and to carry out social interactions.



The bit of our brains that does our emotional regulation develops in the orbito-frontal cortex, which is an area of the brain which develops AFTER birth and develops through social interaction-it is experience dependent. (Why love matters, Sue Gerhardt)

- When children struggle with this, we can help them both inside, with internal monologues and scripts, and outside with external mediators which help them to regulate their behavior.

Q: What do **we** need to settle to learn or work?

A:



Q: What stops **us** working well?

A:



# External mediators



Mediators are tools which help us to understand the world. Sometimes these are people, so teachers are mediators who explain the world. Sometimes they are physical tools which help us to make sense of what we are being asked or behave in the appropriate way. Some of the ideas below might help children to do this

**Personal space and boundaries:** to know where things end and begin, children might need help, e.g. masking tape on the floor to separate spaces



To line up they might need to hold on to a ribbon, this can then be moved to the floor when they have got it, then a line drawn on the floor, then nothing-giving them a high level of support and then slowly withdrawing it as they get the idea.



Playing the 'freeze' game, helps with self regulation too. Knowing when to stop and being able to respond in time. Drawing a stick figure of the position you want kids to freeze in



**Make believe play** can improve self regulation: creates an ability for children to act a 'head taller' that they can in everyday life. Eg. Jack can't sit still in class, on a mat or on a chair, but Jack CAN stand still as a guard outside the fortress in the playground.



**Focusing**-some children have difficulty focusing on the relevant information. Instead they try and process all the information at once, and don't manage it very well as it is highly inefficient. One thing to try is turning the lights off and using a torch to teach kids what focusing means-then use the torch analogy when you want them to focus.

## Writing and reading:

We all do it-the ruler or old Christmas card under the line, this is an external mediator.

- Lines on the page so that children can separate their words.
- Special 'editors' glasses-no lenses- that help you read well and improve concentration.
- Writing rings that you wear so you know which finger needs to be on the pencil
- 'Gregory' on your wrist, or a magic bracelet , that allows you to do neat writing
- Rabbits ears on your head that help you listen.
- A story tellers chair, when you sit in it, you can tell a story...
- Drawing a basic stick figure to help children draw the imaginative bits -this might be easier than being faced with a blank piece of paper.
- Clear endings and beginnings to different bits of the day, so that they know what the situation requires. Eg. Calming down music after break, quiet reading when they arrive, etc.

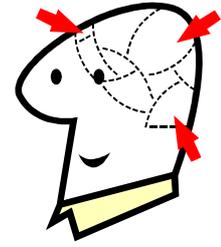
..there are lots more that you probably do all the time, but making these things explicit helps us to do them MORE. You can be as creative as you want!

They may not be physical objects, there are lots of 'virtual' ones too which we use all the time. Eg. 'indoor voices', songs to begin the day or end the day, bells to announce things, symbols that mark time and spaces out, drawing the curtain round the library so it's quiet time, etc.

See [www.keytolearning.com](http://www.keytolearning.com) for more info.



# Internal scripts



## Problem Solving Script:

### Identify/label the issue

e.g. "This seems to be a problem" "This is a bit scary/tricky"

### State the reason

e.g. "It's a problem because ....." "It's scary/tricky because ....."

### Offer a strategy

e.g. "We can do ....." "That should help ....."

### General reassurance

e.g. "Great, there's always something that works, isn't there?"

"There's always something we can do"

## Big Deal/Little Deal Script:

### Identify/label the issue

e.g. "This is not a big deal – this is just a little deal – this is not important"

### State the reason

e.g., "This is just a little deal because we can ....."

### Offer a strategy

e.g.. "Maybe we can just wipe this milk up with a paper towel"

### General reassurance

e.g., "There we go. You see, that was not a big deal. That was just a little deal. There's always something that works, isn't there?" "There's always a way"

## Ready/Not ready Script:

### Identify/label the issue

e.g. "I'm not sure that you're ready"

### State the reason

e.g., "You're not ready because you don't have....."

### Offer a strategy

e.g.. "I'll know you're ready when you....."

### General reassurance

e.g.. "Great, you look ready. Now you're ready to go!" (Fife EPS, 2009)

## Remember

- Main idea is to use words that you would like the child-at some point in the future – to use on exactly those occasions as 'self-talk'. You are planting self regulation in the child's head with these scripts.
- Modify the language to meet individual needs
- Pick the routines/scripts that are particularly important for a specific child
- Use a pleasant interactive style
- Use initially under positive and non-stressful circumstances to create positive associations
- Use frequently
- Pull-back as the child acquires and gradually internalises the script

