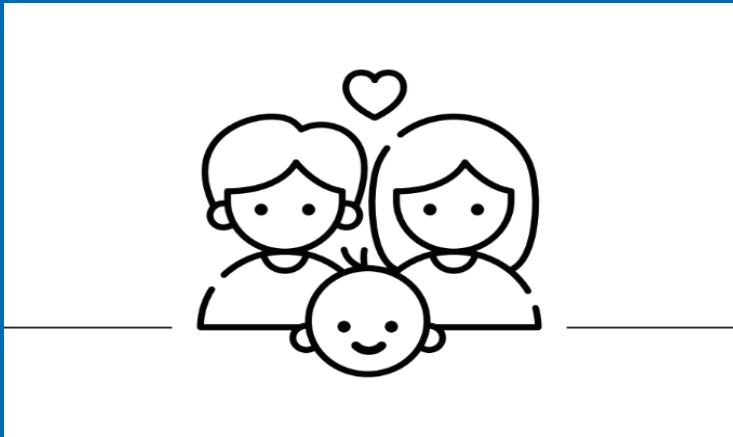


Supporting Children's Emotional Regulation



Brent Mental Health Support Team

What helps you to manage your own emotions?



What is emotional regulation?

Emotional regulation or self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage your behaviour and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you.

It includes being able to:

- regulate reactions to strong emotions like frustration, excitement, anger and embarrassment
- calm down after something exciting or upsetting
- focus on a task
- refocus attention on a new task
- control impulses
- behave in ways that help you get along with other people.

Why is it important?

It is Important for children to learn to manage their emotions and develop effective skills in recognising and regulating emotions.

Being able to recognise and connect with other's emotions is also paramount for building relationships.

Not having the right skills or tools to manage difficult emotions can result in children taking out their aggression on others, trying to suppress their emotions, or engaging in unsafe behaviour to try to make strong emotions stop instantly (such as running away or harming themselves).

Being able to identify our emotions and understand them brings greater understanding of ourselves and our world.

Children will learn much of their emotion regulation from what they observe. Therefore, how emotions are modelled and reinforced within the home is very important.



Some Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- 1. Labelling emotions as 'good' or 'bad'.** All emotions have their purpose and are appropriate at different times. While there may be certain behaviours that are not appropriate or safe, such as violence, the emotion behind the behaviour is valid and there will be a safe way to manage this emotion.
- 2. Encouraging emotional suppression.** Telling a child 'don't feel sad, it's not a big deal', or 'you need to stop being angry right now'. **Emotions cannot be turned on and off** like a tap and it can be invalidating to a child to be told to stop feeling an emotion, effectively communicating to them that their emotion is wrong or inappropriate.
- 3. Modelling.** If you shout loudly frequently a child will learn that this is an acceptable way to express their anger. It is of course normal to shout from time to time but this can lead to a home environment with negative heightened emotion.
- 4. Avoid asking why:** for children who already have poor emotion regulation trying to reason with them at the height of their emotion will often be unsuccessful as they are already too upset. It will also be difficult for them to identify why they are upset or behaved in a certain way and may lead to them feeling more pressurised, risking triggering more difficult behaviour.

1). Naming Feelings

Naming children's emotions helps children learn to identify and understand their emotional experiences, providing the first step for effective emotional regulation. This can be direct and explicit, naming emotions as you observe them in the child.

Parents can also make guesses about how a child may be feeling based on the situation. For example:

“That sounds really disappointing for you”

“It sounds like you're feeling really frustrated that your teacher told you off”

“Wow! You are so excited about going to that party”

“I know it's scary to stay away from home”

“My, you seem angry!”

This helps children to understand their emotions and is a validating experience for the child that can enhance the parent-child relationship, with the child feeling more seen and understood by the parent.



2). *Reflective Listening*



In order to effectively help children to understand and regulate their emotions, we need to maintain a curious approach.

We are not telling children what we think they should be feeling in a given situation, we are attempting to recognise their experience and reflect this back to them.



Being a good listener is therefore very important.

The goal is to be alongside your child, not to rescue them from their feelings. It is important for parents to be able to show that they can bear their child's feelings.



Tips for reflective listening

- Give your child your full attention (schedule a time if you can't speak at the time they wish to speak): consider the times when your child is most likely to initiate or be more open to discussions involving emotions, achievements, or challenges.
- Use a warm tone of voice
- Repeat back what your young person has said or feels
- Leave space for them to speak – don't ask lots of questions or try to control the pace of what they are telling you
- When you do ask questions, try to use open questions - be curious
- Listen to the feelings, not just the problem
- Try not to judge or problem-solve
- Walk or drive and talk (if face to face feels too intense)



Top Tips



What Parents may say...

“Well why did she think you said that? Are you sure you didn’t say anything? She wouldn’t just make it up.”

“You need to let a teacher know when your friends are being mean. I’m call them first thing tomorrow to put a stop to it. You can’t let people treat you like that.”

“What an awful thing to say about your friend. Don’t talk about people like that.”

“I had a big fight with my best friend. She said I talked about her behind her back, but I didn’t. I hate her and hope she dies.”



If we choose to focus on her word choice or try to weigh in with our opinions or fixes, we can miss the opportunity to show our children that what they share with us matters.

Instead, why not try:

“I’m really sorry to hear that. I know how important your friend is to you. That sounds like it was very upsetting/ I would be upset about that too. What do you think could help now? Is there anything I can do to help?”

“She said you talked about her behind her back?”

“Oh no, sounds like a really tough day”

“I had a big fight with my best friend. She said I talked about her behind her back, but I didn’t. I hate her and hope she dies.”



Listening without offering judgment or solutions can help children to calm and reach solutions on their own. And most of all, shows them that you’re a team – bolstering your relationship.

3). *Playing and Talking about Emotions*

Play is a wonderful way for children to explore, learn about the world and express themselves, it also provides a safe environment in which to make mistakes.

You can use descriptive commenting to notice their child:

- Working hard, concentrating
- Sticking with a tricky activity: *'Wow, it looks really fiddly trying to put that together, I love how you keep trying'*
- Staying calm when something goes wrong: *'it's tough when it falls over but you stayed really calm'*
- Expressing their thoughts, feelings and ideas; *'so you're annoyed that the model isn't working out the way you would like'*
- Solving a difficulty independently

Emotional Regulation Strategies

GROUNDING WITH YOUR FIVE SENSES

What are → **5** THINGS YOU CAN SEE

How → **SUN**
PICTURE ON THE WALL
PEOPLE WALKING

4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL

WIND BLOWING
FEET ON THE FLOOR
PENCIL IN HAND

3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

BIRDS CHIRPING
CLOCK TICKING
CAR HORNS

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

FOOD FROM THE CAFETERIA
LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES
FRESH CUT GRASS

1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

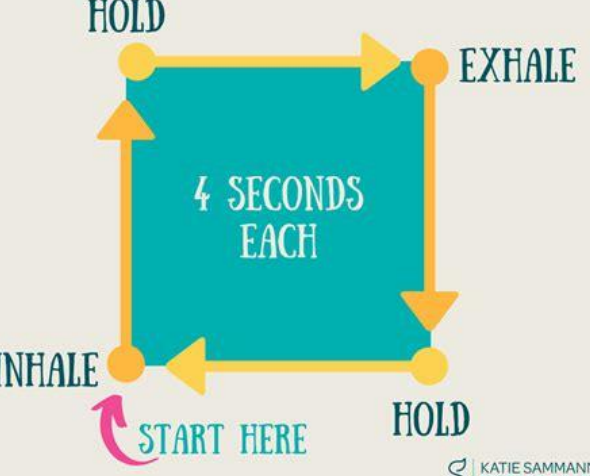
MINT
Breakfast
TOOTHPASTE

I AM BRAVE 	I STAY CALM 
I AM KIND 	I MAKE GOOD DECISIONS 
I AM HELPFUL 	I AM CREATIVE 
I HAVE A STRONG BODY 	I AM SMART 
I CAN DO IT! 	I AM A GOOD LISTENER 
I AM FUNNY 	I WORK HARD 
I TRY MY HARDEST 	I HAVE GOOD IDEAS 
I AM A GOOD FRIEND 	I AM POSITIVE 

How I Calm Down

- I take 5 deep breaths 
- I count down from 10 
- I squeeze play dough 
- I hug my teddy 
- I take a 5 minute break 

BOX BREATHING



HOLD **EXHALE**

4 SECONDS EACH

INHALE **HOLD**

START HERE

KATIE SAMMANN PSYCHOTHERAPY

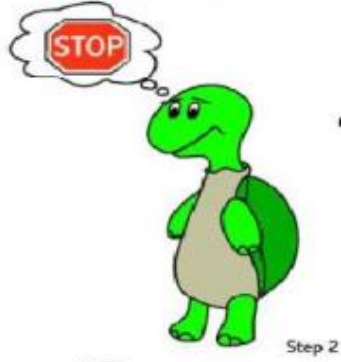


Turtle Technique

Recognize that you feel angry.



“Think” Stop.



Go into shell. Take 3 deep breathes. And think calm, coping thoughts.



Come out of shell when calm and thinking of a solution.



Chair push ups – sit in a chair with your palms on the seat of the chair at either side of you. Push on your arms and lift your bottom and legs off the seat of the chair for a few seconds.

Belly Breathing

Belly breathing is a great way to calm down when you are upset.

Imagine that there is a balloon in your belly.

As you take a big breath in through your nose, try to fill up the balloon so that your belly puffs up.

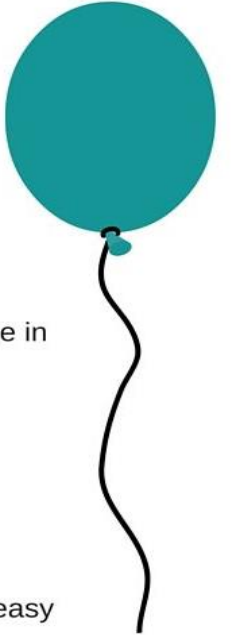
Now breathe out through your mouth (like blowing bubble) and let all of the air out of the balloon.

Take slow breaths. Try to count to 4 as you breathe in and count to 4 as you breathe out.

Inhale...2...3...4
Exhale...2...3...4

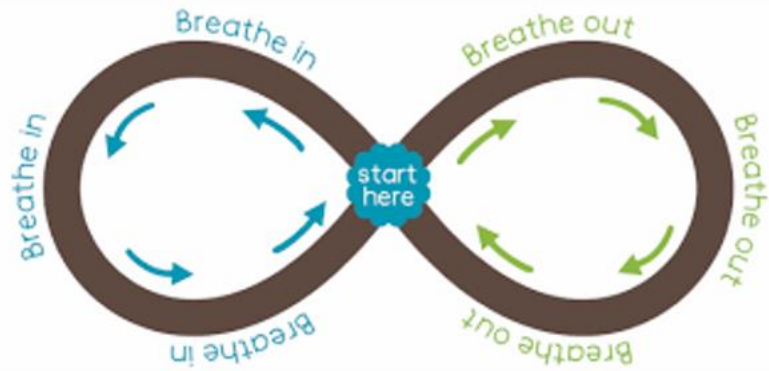
Repeat until you are calm.

Remember to practice every day until it becomes easy to use when you need it.



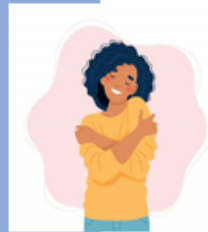
Carolyn Mehlomakulu, LMFT, ATR
www.therapywithcarolyn.com

Lazy "8" Infinity Breathing



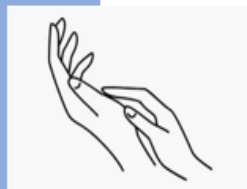
Give yourself a hug and arm and hand massage

Hug Yourself – reach far enough that your palms almost touch your sides, squeeze firmly and hold for 10.



Arm Massage:

- Starting at the wrist or shoulder, Squeeze firmly enough you can feel it strongly but not enough to hurt yourself.
- Do this motion, going up and down the arm five times

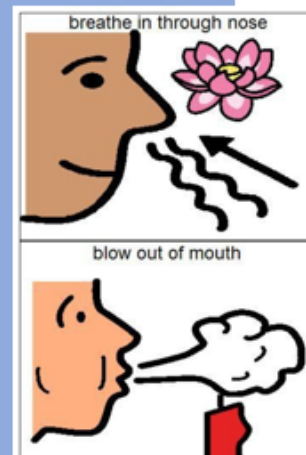


Deep breathing

BOX BREATHING

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFdZXwE6fRE>

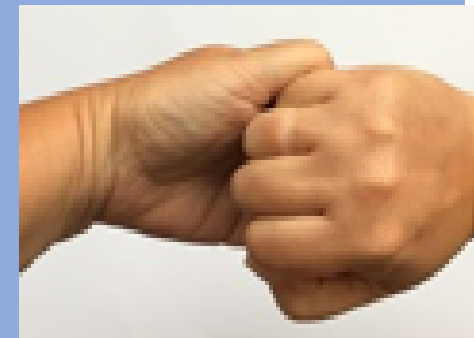
- Take a deep breath and pretend you are smelling fragrant flowers.
- Then breath out through your mouth and pretend you are blowing out candles.



Finger Pull

How to do this:

- Put one hand palm up and one hand palm down, facing each other
- Touch finger tips together, except thumbs, and pull them apart as hard as you can
- Hold for at least 10 seconds or little longer if it feels good



Any Questions or Feedback?

