

INCLUSION  
STRATEGIES  
& TOOLS

# TEACHING SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

*“Helping children develop effective self-regulation in the early years sets the underlying foundation for successful Social Emotional Learning over their whole lives.”*

— Dr. Stuart Shanker



## What is self-regulation?

It is the ability to recognize and respond to overwhelming emotions — like sadness, excitement, frustration, or anger — in ways that help us feel balanced and able to handle the situation. Related skills include: self awareness, impulse control (the ability to think before acting), and the ability to adjust to change. These abilities vary greatly based on children’s age, development and opportunities for practice.

## Why teach it?

Supporting children to develop these abilities allows them to begin to learn coping skills that they will use throughout their lives.

**Children do not learn self-regulation on their own.**

## How do educators support this?

It is through connections with a caring adult who models and practices these skills alongside them that children develop their own abilities (see Co-Regulation tip sheet).

Begin by deciding what set of skills to target for your group. Gather materials to explore and practice the identified skills together through group discussions, games, and stories.

<b>Example of Self-Regulation Skills</b>	<b>Activity Ideas</b>
Adapting to change	Make a visual schedule and include a surprise activity once a week.
Ability to identify and express emotions	Try emotions bingo or mirror games where children guess one another’s feelings and imitate.
Participation in group activities and turn taking	Engage in parachute games, pass the rhythm or action games, guess the missing person or mystery object.
Ability to understand and follow rules	Ask children to be part of creating group rules. Play games with rules and encourage children to try making their own games.
Ability to wait and to tolerate frustration	Try using a visual timer. Practice “stop” and “wait” in freeze dance games. Try a bin of activities to teach playing while you wait.
Physical and sensory regulation	Practice a breathing activity at circle time. Make calm down bottles as a group. Include a yoga break in your day.