

CO-REGULATION

In times of stress or high anxiety the body and the brain may feel overwhelmed or scattered. Helping children regulate begins with our own intentional regulation followed closely by COREGULATING with children.

Regulating ourselves through awareness of our emotions and our surroundings, deep breathing, and rhythmic movements increases our ability to effectively help children and teenagers regulate WITH us and move from chaos to control.



Infants and Toddlers: 0-2 years

- **Rhythmic movement:** Holding and rocking your baby back and forth or using a baby swing or bouncer to create a consistent motion helps to regulate the heartbeat, body temperature and movement.
- **Songs:** Singing a lullaby or playful song to your baby can help calm them when upset or just have some fun when under stress. Singing with your baby also supports the connection between baby and loved one.
- **Gentle stroking and massage:** Infants have a sense of the emotional state of their caregivers and will benefit from slow rhythmic touch; stroking across a baby's forehead, gently stroking of hands and feet helps to regulate a baby's heartbeat, body temperature and movement.
- **Change of Scenery:** Put your baby in a stroller or your toddler in a wagon and move around. You don't have to go far or anywhere at all. The change in position, placement, room or environment is often enough for you and your baby or toddler to reset and regulate.



Early Childhood: 3-6 years

- **Breathe:** Encourage your young child to practice deep breaths. You can do this using pinwheels, party blowers, or bubbles. Breathing helps your child calm down and regulate their own body.
- **Empathic Responses:** Name your child's feelings. This will help to develop the language they need to name their feelings, giving them the tools to regulate their own emotions.
- **Ride the Emotional Wave:** When big feelings occur, you may need to hold, love, and support your child as they cry or tantrum it out of their body. Try to resist the urge to tell your child it will be okay. Being quiet or gently humming, your child will feel supported while gaining control of their own body and feelings.



Middle Childhood: 7-12 years

- **Create a Safe Space:** Create a safe space where children can go to express emotions freely. Provide pillows for punching or yelling into, art and writing materials for drawing or writing about feelings, as well as space for music and movement.
- **Validate children's feelings don't try to change them:** By validating children's feelings you are acknowledging their experience. Let children be upset before moving towards "fixing" the problem. This will help you child learn to regulate their own emotions.
- **State your Availability to them:** Recognize they may move back and forth from a need to have you close to a need to have alone-time. Let them know you are available and respectful of either need.



Adolescence: 13+ years

- **Guidance:** Say encouraging, short phrases to them when they are feeling dysregulation. Example: "breathe with me", "you are safe right now", "I am here with you", "we will get through this together". Gently guiding your teen out of a dysregulated loop and begin to manage negative and stress inducing emotions.
- **Grounding:** When upset grounding helps the body/brain regulate itself back to baseline, by focusing on the sensations of leaning against a wall, reciting a poem, or taking a short walk.
- **Music and Movement:** Getting the body up and moving helps to release tension anxiety and stress we might be holding or storing. Listening to music uses a different part of the brain and can help override negative thoughts and feelings.