

Self Regulation

What is self regulation?

Self regulation is the ability to tolerate sensations, situations and distress and form appropriate responses. Simply stated, it is the ability to control emotions, thinking, behavior and motor actions in different situations.

In children, self regulation matures just like other developmental processes. Children get older and learn to think before they act.

Why is it important?

Research indicates that self regulation in children is a predictor of academic abilities. Children with higher levels of self regulation have achieved higher scores in reading, vocabulary and math. In addition, some research has shown that the ability for young children to self regulate is associated with higher, future education levels.

How can you help a child develop self regulation?

Here are some suggested activities to help develop self regulation skills:

- teach self regulation at a young age - children develop the foundation skills for self regulation from birth to 5 years old
- demonstrate and model proper behaviors - this allows children to observe how to choose an appropriate response in different situations. Partner children who lack self regulation with children who exhibit better self control to act as role models
- help children to regulate their attention by providing hints and cues by verbally and/or physically pointing out important aspects of a academic or physical activity
- provide verbal or physical cues to help children to self regulate their emotions such as "let's stay calm" or allowing a child to go to a quiet area to relax
- Continually monitor children to determine when adult support can be withdrawn so that the children can learn to be independent in their responses
- play games that require start and stop skills such as: Red Light - Green Light, Freeze Dance, Simon Says, etc.
- participate in dance activities where the child needs to move to the rhythm
- play any games that require turn taking

Ask an occupational or physical therapist if you have questions about the most appropriate activities for a specific child.



References: Flora, I. Developing Young Children's Self-Regulation through Everyday Experiences. *Young Children* July 2011 pp 46-51.
Ponitz, C. et al. A structured observation of behavioral self-regulation and its contribution to kindergarten outcomes. *Developmental Psychology*. Vol 45(3), May 2009, 605-619.

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