

Healthy Living

Self-Regulation



Self-regulation is vital in contributing to children becoming positive learners and for their long-term mental health.

“Self- regulation involves children’s developing ability to regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviour to enable them to act in positive ways towards a goal. Self-regulation grows out of co-regulation, where adults and children work together toward a common purpose, including finding ways to resolve upsets from stress in any domain and return to balance”.

Birth to 5 Matters

Developing self-regulation is not something children can do by themselves. It is a process that develops out of attuned relationships where the caregiver/s and child are closely attentive to each other and engage in sensitive, responsive exchanges and interactions. It is, therefore, crucial for early years practitioners to nurture and support all children’s self-regulation skills and empower children to manage their own emotions and behaviours.

Task 1

Let's think about how you can promote and facilitate children's self-regulation in your setting.

Work as a team to unpick what current good practice you already do around self-regulation. Make a list. Build on this by asking yourselves the reflective questions below.

- Do you use routines to support self-regulation? – the structure of the routine helps children learn to become more independent.
- Do you incorporate choices for the children into your routines, so that they are asked to be active agents in their learning? Can the children eat, drink, sleep when they want to?
- Do you consider your own role in supporting self-regulation? – aim not to over-help the children – learn to step back and let them make their own mistakes, in a supported way.
- Do you think carefully about the language that you use with your children? – adults can get into vocal habits that limit self-regulation, for instance, repeatedly saying “be careful” every time a child does anything challenging.
- Do you consider all the ways in which you can put your trust in your children, because this will support them in becoming more responsible and independent?
- Do you support children to manage conflicts? How do you empower them to express their feelings constructively and in a positive way?

- Do you use visual supports, such as visual timetable, objects of reference and emotion charts? these will help children to understand and manage their own emotions.
- Do the children feel confident enough to express their needs and wants? Can they....
 - Go outside when they want to?
 - Have a cuddle when they want/need one?
 - Be loud when they feel the need to be?
 - Say no, and feel heard?
 - Find a safe, quiet place to sit or lie down when they need or want to?

Useful links & further reading:

[Self-regulation – Birth To 5 Matters](#)

[EYFS Best Practice: All about... Self-regulation | Nursery World](#)

[Do you support self-regulation in your early years setting? | A Unique Child | Teach Early Years](#)

[Emotions - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

[EEF | Self-Regulation and Executive Function \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

Q card – Self regulation and executive function (Teaching and Learning)