

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Guide for Professionals: Self-regulation

Here's what we know about self-regulation:

- It is the ability to deal with stressors and recover from them.
 - Challenging behavior can be reframed as: The child is not coping due to stressors, skill deficits or unmet needs.
- It is closely linked to brain maturation and develops over time with support from nurturing and responsive parents and caregivers.
- Is the ability to adjust our bodies, emotions, thinking, attention and behaviour so we can be in a calm, focused, alert state for learning and responding to our environment.

Within your professional role and considering the social determinants of health, how do you:

- Explore with the parent or caregiver how to:
 - provide environments that reduce stressors while supporting the child's effort to learn how to self-regulate.
 - Help children understand, identify and label their feelings and responses to stressors. Support them while they release emotions using "[time ins](#)".
 - Model and practice learning social skills and problem solving abilities through the use of songs, stories and unstructured play.
- Discuss how the parent or caregiver is coping and their support system.
- Explore opportunities for connecting to informal and formal supports (community, neighbourhood, resources, groups).
- Support the parent or caregiver to have realistic, age appropriate expectations for their child.
- Administer an appropriate screening tool to ensure that the child is meeting their expected developmental milestones and refer if applicable.

Where can you find more information:

- Parenting in Ottawa
- Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development: Executive Function
- Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child: Executive Function & Self-Regulation
- Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative
- The Mehrit Centre
- KidsMatter, Explaining Self-Regulation
- Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs
- Public Health Agency of Canada: Social Determinants of Health
- Parent Resource Centre
- 211 Ontario

References

- Ontario Ministry of Education: Childcare, Calm, Alert and Happy by Dr. Stuart Shanker
- How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years
- Best Start, Frequently Asked Questions about Time-outs