



Co-regulation
before
Self-regulation



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'Co-Regulation is the coming together of two nervous systems to calm one mind in a storm'

This booklet is purely for guidance, strategies are effective on an individualised basis. Not all strategies are effective for everyone. Being a parent comes with very happy times but can also come with some hurdles too. In this booklet we take a look at ways to help improve dysregulation therapeutically and ways of providing children with the tools to self-regulate in the future.

When your child gives you a tough time, it usually means they are having a tough time



What is Co-regulation?

You know them moments where you feel completely lost and unsafe in your own body? Where all you want is for someone to come and help you take it all away and make it better? When you need someone else to take the reins to guide you and lessen the level of anxiety and worry you're feeling? That's where the need for co-regulation steps in.

Co-regulation is the modelling of your own **self-regulation** strategies to another, providing a foundation for your child's own self-regulation. Coaching, supporting and providing safety for your child enables them to gain the knowledge and skills to deal with stressful or trauma provoking experiences efficiently.

By providing a calm and supportive approach to stressful situations and guiding with your own healthy ways of dealing with stressors such as, calming techniques, grounding skills and healthy tools for optimal self-regulation, a child will be provided with the tools to self-regulate as the need for co-regulation declines through aging, just like a child needs encouragement, safety and support to learn to walk or talk.



Why is Co-regulation so important?

Calm breeds calm, just like anxiety breeds anxiety. By keeping calm, actively listening and ensuring there is a safe environment a child is given then foundation for their own regulation.

Without co-regulation a child cannot receive the tools and skills needed to deal with dysregulation, which could lead to emotional dysregulation and the lack of being able to keep self calm in moments of feeling unsafe or where trauma provoking emotions are present.

The lack of self-regulation, which is gained through co-regulation, can lead to a higher likelihood of misunderstood feelings and thoughts which can cause issues such as anxiety, heightened anger and depression, as well as the potential to cause the child to place barriers and limitations on gaining healthy relationships with others and the attention needed throughout life in education and work.

Own your self-regulation, you've got this!

So, here's the part where you, the caregiver comes in. Own self-regulation is not always easy, the thought alone can cause anxiety, like how? How can I possibly self-regulate to help another co-regulate when I'm faced with something that makes me feel unsafe? It's totally understandable to feel this way, after all we are all human and things just take hold, however with a few steps, a bit of work and some self-affirming you can do this and become a pro at self-regulation for co-regulation!

Take it one step at a time....

Understanding your own thoughts and feelings can be tough, but taking time to sit with how you're feeling and why you're feeling that way could provide an opening to knowing what your body's reactions are to feeling unsafe. Identify to rectify, identify the feeling, why am I feeling this way? What is going on in my mind and body right now and how can I bring myself back to calm? It's normal to sometimes feel unsafe, it's ok to be out of your depth but knowing what works for you to bring calm is the key to success.

Take note when you're calm and regulated....

When you're feeling calm and in a place of relax, what are you doing at the moment in time? What are you feeling internally? By recognising these you are providing yourself with tools that have the potential to bring you calm in dysregulation.

Tips and tools for self-regulation success

- Affirm to self that you are in control of how you feel not your anxiety - I am safe, I am in control of me, I can do this!
- Breathe - breathing techniques slow your heart rate and bring some regulation to your heightened fight or flight response.
- Plan ahead, with time you'll begin to recognise what the signals are to dysregulation and what works for you to become self-regulated. Find space or objects that bring you calm and have them readily available in all situations.
- Understand personal triggers for dysregulation and try to rationalise them.
- If possible, remove yourself from what is provoking your dysregulation, gather your thoughts and feelings and then try again.
- Take time for you, de-stress your mind with self and centred care

Co-regulation activities

Well, we've touched on how important co-regulation is but what types of activities provide opportunities for its existence? Here's a few to get you started! By establishing an activity that you both can enjoy, problem solve together and share ideas provides a guiding and learning experience for you both. It's what works best for you, so get adapting these ideas so they work for you and your child's individual interests and hobbies!

COOKING TOGETHER



You don't have to be the world's best cook to have fun in the kitchen. This provides structure through following a recipe and solving problems together, along with showing how you cope with the heat in the kitchen!

EXERCISE TOGETHER



Exercise provides us with happy hormones and stress busting skills, by exercising together you can provide support, guidance and safety in an enjoyable way.

VISION BOARDS

ONE - ONE TIME



There is no doubt about it, life can be busy! Try to find some one-one time to catch up and just be together, maybe you'll learn something new about each other!



Create a vision board together, share ideas and take turns in adding to it. This can be used to link interests and what makes them happy for use in co-regulation. You share yours and they'll share theirs!

Self-regulation strategies for children

So, with the skills co-regulation has begun to teach the child (GO YOU!!) there can be the use of strategies that children can take part in to regulate their self.

FINDING WHAT MAKES THEM HAPPY



What is helpful for ones self-regulation may not be for another, it is all so individual. Find things that make them happy and try to incorporate this into their self-regulation tool kits. Could be a certain toy, certain smell or their favourite music.

2 IN 1 WALL PUSH



Flat palms on the wall and feet firmly on the ground stabilising the body, pushing towards the wall for a count of 10 then release, continue until necessary.

This provides a two element calming technique, using attention and focus.

SELF HUGGING



Everyone needs a hug! Self hugging provides a weighted comfort needed to self stabilise and bring calmness.

BUBBLE BREATHING



Blowing bubbles is a real fun activity for many. The art of using bubble blowing provides a rhythmic pattern and low level concentration which has the potential to slow down breathing and regulate heart rate which can lower the effects of the stress response and provide a deflection.

Helpful Hints

It's so easy to get wrapped up in the moment and lose own self-regulation but with a few pointers on how to be mindful of the negative impacts of some of our impulsive behaviours and actions we can learn to do the best when faced with a daunting situation for optimal co-regulation.

AWARE OF YOUR TONE

Sometimes, we react without thinking it's only human nature - no one is perfect! By recognising the tone of voice you are using and correcting it if it is confrontational, demanding or unapproachable we can promote a calmer, safer and more approachable way of communicating.

NEGATIVITY BREEDS NEGATIVITY

You're upset, they won't listen they repeatedly go against what you're asking them to do, they don't seem to ever listen and their behaviour is tough to take. Naturally, we feel wronged and want to be heard, so seek out to let the person know how their negative behaviour has upset us or remind them of them of how they've done this before. If however we deal with the situation then and there and move on without dwelling on it or keep bringing it up, we have the opportunity to leave the negative where it was and progress into a more positive pattern. By staying in a state of negative there will not be the opportunity for the positive outcomes we want and need.

BEING CLOSED OFF = A CLOSED OFF CHILD

Body language is everything, especially to a child who is learning through body language tremendously. If your body language is guarded and shut off there isn't much of a welcoming environment for a dysregulated child and can be perceived as confrontational or you just don't care. Try to create an open body language where you're allowing them to feel safe and heard.

NO NAGGING HERE

Oh if only it was so easy I hear you say! They don't listen to me so what choice do I have? Totally get it but you do have a choice, by using clear direction and praise when they have achieved what was asked you have the opportunity to encourage this non nag approach to achieve what you're asking them to do.

DON'T GET LOST ELSEWHERE

Life is hectic, demands for your attention are everywhere, but full attention is everything, be mindful of the natural unawareness of becoming focused elsewhere when you're needed by your child in that moment. Let's put down the phone, turn off the TV and just give all of your attention to that moment of need with your child,

Dysregulation: signs to watch out for

Dysregulation is the imbalance in the nervous system, leading to the inability to feel safe and calm internally and externally which causes many symptoms, behaviours and the causes of dysregulation varies.

ANGER AND LASHING OUT



UPSET AND IRRITABLE



MEMORY PROBLEMS



SEEMING SHUT DOWN



SLEEP DISTURBANCE



OVER/UNDER REACTION



**HEADACHES, MUSCLE
ACHES AND TUMMY
PROBLEMS**



Thank You...



Thank you for taking the time to read this guidance, I hope within the guidance you've found something that is helpful to you and your child.

**Just remember, you've totally got
the strength calm that storm.**

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Find out more:

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