

Supporting Young People in Developing Emotional Regulation

- Emotional Regulation = mindfully responding to our feelings and emotions
- Importance of Emotional Regulation
 - Impacts our ability to communicate effectively
 - Helps us build new connections and maintain connections
 - Helps us work through life stressors & builds resilience over time
 - Helps us repair when conflict arises
 - Helps us access the things we want and need in life - social skills!
- All emotions are important! They have something to tell us
- Dr. Daniel J. Siegal's Hand Model of the Brain
 - Amygdala gets activated and brain goes into fight, flight, or freeze (flipped lid)
 - #1 priority: getting lids back on → connect before correct
 - What gets lids back on? Slow and low tone, validation, feeling heard and understood
- Neurodivergence considerations
 - Amygdala can have increased activation
 - Sensory considerations
 - Youth aren't born with the ability to regulate
 - Direct teaching, modeling, and co-regulation
 - Allow for more processing time
 - Just because it may take them longer doesn't mean they can't do it
- How to help individuals regulate
 - Validation
 - Encouragement
 - Reminders of what they're good at and that we know they're capable
 - Highlight strengths
 - Choice and agency
 - Recognize and praise any and all attempts
 - Importance of repair when we played a role
- Cultivating self-regulation as a family
 - Openly discuss & acknowledge when we have had a hard time regulating
 - Support individuals in attending to their sensory needs
 - Try strategies before giving up, shutting down, or avoiding
 - Family mindfulness practices
 - See Family Mindfulness Schedule from Therapist Aid
 - Slowing down communication

- Validate and normalize instead of problem solving
 - “Do you want me to listen and support or would you like me to do anything to help?”
- Naming and using coping skills openly
- Value and encourage emotional expression (challenge fear of big emotions)
 - Find emotional release opportunities
- Develop self-advocacy and practice “I” statements in the moment
 - Focus on own experience rather than pointing fingers
 - Ex: “That hurt my feelings when you said that because...”. “I felt angry when I tried explaining myself and I was interrupted”
- Age and Developmental Considerations
 - Littles
 - Need more guidance, support, prompting
 - Parent/guardian assisted regulation/Co-regulation → Self-regulation
 - Adolescents/Tweens
 - Provide opportunities for problem solving together once youth has regulated and after validation/connection
 - Highlight skills and strengths and provide agency and autonomy
 - Teenagers
 - Find more opportunities to provide agency and autonomy
 - Highlight that they’re capable and you’re there to support
 - Young Adults/Adults
 - Speak to as a capable adult and provide agency and autonomy
- Resources
 - For Caregivers:
 - The Power of Showing Up by Dr. Daniel J. Siegal and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson
 - Whole Brain Child by Dr. Daniel J. Siegal and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson
 - No-Drama Discipline by Dr. Daniel J. Siegal and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson
 - Parenting from the Inside Out by Dr. Daniel J. Siegal and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson
 - For Youth:
 - Big Feelings Come and Go by Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. and New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults & Families
 - Poppy and the Overactive Amygdala by Holly Provan
 - Armin the Amygdala: Tackles Anxiety by Alexandra Kurth
 - Why do We Lose Control of Our Emotions video on YouTube by Kids Want to Know
 - For Teens and Young Adults:
 - The Hand Model of the Brain examples from Dr. Daniel J. Siegal’s work
 - Fight Flight Freeze - Anxiety Explained for Teens video on YouTube by Anxiety Canada