

Session 2:

Self-Regulation I

(Introduction to Self-Regulation & Emotion Regulation)

Parent Summary: Self-Regulation I

Session Overview

- ◆ Homework review
- ◆ Intro to self-regulation
- ◆ Emotion regulation
- ◆ Homework assignment

Key Information

- ◆ The term “self-regulation” refers to the mental functions required to regulate actions, emotions and drive (motivation)
- ◆ Self-regulation and self-control are **not** the same thing.
 - ◆ Self-control is essentially inhibiting and/or suppressing our emotions and urges in order to avoid “acting out” when we’re upset or stressed.
 - ◆ Self-regulation is about adapting or adjusting our emotions, behaviour, or level of motivation to respond to situations in a healthy way.
- ◆ When children are well-regulated, their prefrontal cortex is at its best. When they are dysregulated, their prefrontal cortex shuts down and their limbic system takes over, leading to automatic, and often intense reactions (e.g., fight, flight or freeze).
- ◆ Dysregulation is often the result of too much stress and/or skills deficits.
- ◆ Children with ADHD often get trapped in a stress cycle that involves an ongoing interaction of factors such as:
 - ◆ Ongoing stress meeting day-to-day demands due to their ADHD.
 - ◆ Negative outcomes directly related to their ADHD symptoms (e.g., breaking rules because they are unable to think before acting/speaking).
 - ◆ Negative outcomes related to people’s responses to their symptoms (e.g., getting punished for breaking the rules).
 - ◆ Negative personal judgements of them by others (e.g., being told that they “never learn,” or are bad, oppositional, spoiled, etc.).
 - ◆ Increased stress due to negative consequences and judgements, which then exacerbates ADHD symptoms.
 - ◆ Parents (and other adults, including teachers) can intervene to change this cycle by changing their input at different stages of the cycle. For instance, they can lower demands to the level the child needs to be able to be successful, respond in a supportive manner when children become dysregulated, etc.
- ◆ Factors that impact our children’s self-regulation, include:
 - ◆ **Internal factors**, such as genetics, biological needs, health conditions/disabilities, biological fluctuations, knowledge and skills deficits.
 - ◆ **External factors**, such as the physical environment, social context, demands, and safety.
- ◆ **Knowledge** is knowing *what* to do in a given situation, and *how* to do it.
- ◆ **Skill** is the ability to apply knowledge *when it is needed*.

- ✦ Skills come from a combination of knowledge, capacity (having the neurological functioning required to carry out the knowledge), and sufficient opportunities for practice.
- ✦ Children with ADHD often need a lot more practice to develop certain skills than neurotypical children to develop self-regulation skills.
- ◊ Knowing your child’s signs of stress, or “stress indicators” is critical for supporting self-regulation.
 - ✦ Stress indicators can be physical, cognitive, emotional, verbal, behavioural, or social.
- ◊ **Emotion Regulation** is the ability to influence the intensity of our emotions, so that we can respond appropriately to the situation we are in.
- ◊ The two primary ways to support emotion regulation are co-regulation (direct support to help them stay regulated or re-regulate) and teaching self-regulation skills.
- ◊ **Co-Regulation involves:**
 1. Predicting and preventing/reducing stressors to help ensure that your child’s emotion regulation is in peak condition.
 2. Recognizing your child’s “stress indicators.”
 3. Providing your child with the support they need to re-regulate their emotions, when you observe their stress indicators. This may include:
 - ◊ Adapting your verbal and non-verbal responses to help your child feel calmer.
 - ◊ Adapting the environment to soothe your child.
 - ◊ Adapting the environment to reduce or eliminate the stressors that may be impacting your child in that moment.
 - ◊ Attending to your child’s unmet needs.
- ◊ **Teaching skills** may involve teaching your child:
 - ✦ **Self-care** –skills that will help your child learn to maintain optimal emotion-regulation.
 - ✦ **Self-awareness** – how to recognize and notice their own bodily cues, strengths/needs, etc.
 - ✦ **Emotion literacy** – how to recognize, understand, and communicate about their emotions.
 - ✦ **Coping skills** – to prevent their limbic system from taking total control when they are upset.

Homework Checklist

- Complete your “Plan for Supporting Emotion Regulation” worksheet.
- Carry out your plan throughout the week.
- Complete the “Supporting Emotion Regulation – Reflection” worksheet near the end of the week.
- Use the information from your Reflection worksheet to complete the “My Child’s Self-Regulation Profile.”
 - This worksheet is really important, because it helps consolidate all of the information covered in session 2, as it applies to your child.

Worksheet: Identifying Stressors

Mark any stressors you think might be impacting your young person. Add any other stressors you feel are or might be impacting your child's self-regulation.

INTERNAL STRESSORS

Biological Needs

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunger | <input type="checkbox"/> Thirst |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> Too little or too much sunlight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor nutrition | <input type="checkbox"/> Too much or too little exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited sensory stimulation/movement | <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate free time/relaxation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Health Conditions, Disabilities, and Medical Treatments

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADHD | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety or mood disorder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problems/disorder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tourette's/Tic Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Autism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma, allergies, or eczema | <input type="checkbox"/> Medication side effects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Biological Fluctuations

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body temperature (e.g., too hot/cold) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hormones (e.g. puberty, menstruation) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental spurts (mental or physical) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cold/flu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Lack of Knowledge

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing how to ask for help | <input type="checkbox"/> How to identify specific emotions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding others' perspectives/emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategies for emotion regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of personal strengths/needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of personal disabilities/diagnoses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to solve problems | <input type="checkbox"/> How to make or keep friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Underdeveloped Skills

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking for help | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing and labelling their emotions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy and perspective-taking | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotion regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with symptoms associated with disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving | <input type="checkbox"/> Social skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

EXTERNAL STRESSORS

Physical Environment

- Irritating stimuli (e.g., itchy tags, stiff fabrics, annoying sounds, clutter, strong scents)
- Sensory stimuli that is too intense (e.g., loud or sudden noises, bright colours or light, strong smells)
- Inadequate sensory stimulation (e.g., low light, restricted vestibular or proprioceptive input)
- Unfamiliar foods or other food-related stressors
- Environmental distractions (e.g., people talking)
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Social Context

- Too many people
- Strained relationships
- Lack of friends
- Being teased or provoked
- Negative reactions from people
- Holiday gatherings
- Birthday celebrations
- Being judged poorly for symptoms of disability
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Demands

Cognitive

- EF demands
- Language processing
- Problem-solving
- Other: _____

Behavioural

- Compliance
- Transitioning
- Speaking politely
- Other: _____

Emotional

- Coping with frustration
- Coping with criticism or rejection
- Coping with excitement
- Other: _____

Social

- Empathy or perspective-taking
- Reciprocal play or turn-taking
- Speaking to strangers
- Other: _____

Physical

- Needing to sit in a specific position
- Respecting physical boundaries
- Fine motor skills
- Other: _____

Sexual

- Coping with sexual arousal
- Navigating romantic relationships
- Coping with early sexual encounters
- Other: _____

Safety

- Frequent punishment/consequences
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Neighbourhood violence
- Child abuse
- Exposure to domestic violence or conflict
- Divorce or bereavement
- Personal injuries or hospitalizations
- Car accidents
- Other: _____

Worksheet: Stress Indicators

Knowing the signs of stress is critical to supporting self-regulation. Check any indicators you know your child demonstrates when stressed. Keep an eye out for other indicators over the next week.

Physical Indicators

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in energy: __increase __decrease | <input type="checkbox"/> Speed of movement: __faster __slower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pain sensitivity: __increase __decrease | <input type="checkbox"/> Body awareness: __increase __decrease |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appetite: __increase __decrease | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep: __early __delayed __poor quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Cognitive Indicators

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased working memory | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty processing information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased logic | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused or dazed | <input type="checkbox"/> Obsessive thoughts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rigid thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative thoughts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Emotional Indicators

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intense emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Blunted or flat emotions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerable emotions (e.g., sadness, shame) | <input type="checkbox"/> Defensive/hostile emotions (e.g., anger, blame) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear/anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Duration of emotions: __erratic __persistent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Verbal Indicators

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced language skills or complexity | <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing or name-calling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sarcasm | <input type="checkbox"/> Whining or complaining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatening: __others __self __property | <input type="checkbox"/> Volume of voice: __louder __softer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pitch of voice: __higher __lower | <input type="checkbox"/> Tempo of speech: __faster __slower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Behavioural Indicators

- Aggression toward: __self __others __property
- Increased impulsivity
- Increased restlessness or hyperactivity
- Decreased compliance
- Avoidance
- Cannot walk away
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Social Indicators

- Isolates/avoids people
- Clingy/dependent
- Suspicious or paranoid
- Oversensitive to perceived social cues
- Emotions spill out onto others around them
- Increased social anxiety
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Worksheet: Co-Regulating Response Strategies

Review the following list of response strategies that can support co-regulation. Check off any that you know to be helpful to your child, and a question mark next to any that you would like to try.

Adapting Your Verbal Responses

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm and supportive tone of voice | <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal, simplified language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive and/or reassuring language | <input type="checkbox"/> Validation (emotions, thoughts, experience) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid threats and ultimatums | <input type="checkbox"/> Use humour, if helpful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Adapting Your Non-Verbal Responses

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive but empathetic facial expression | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed posture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-threatening stance | <input type="checkbox"/> Give child extra physical space, if helpful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical reassurance or affection, if helpful | <input type="checkbox"/> Reassuring gestures and/or acknowledgement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Adapting the Environment to Soothe Your Child

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proprioceptive (e.g., heavy work, weighted items, crunchy or chewy foods, drinking through straws) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vestibular (e.g., swinging, rocking) | <input type="checkbox"/> Scents (e.g., vanilla, lavender) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sound (e.g., nature sounds, music, silence) | <input type="checkbox"/> Taste (e.g., sweet, sour) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temperature (e.g., warm bath, cold cloth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory toys (e.g., visual, tactile) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adapt lighting (e.g., low lights, twinkle lights) | <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing aids |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Adapting the Environment to Decrease Stressors

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease or eliminate demands (cognitive, behavioural, social, physical) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate unpleasant sensory stressors | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove social stressors (e.g., unhelpful siblings) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Meet Unmet Needs

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biological (e.g., hunger, thirst, rest, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g., space, emotional, social, etc.) |
|--|---|

Worksheet: Teaching Emotion-Regulation Skills

When children struggle with emotion-regulation, they often need more support to learn and practice critical skills. Use the checklists below to identify skills your child needs to learn.

Self-Care

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating regularly | <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking enough fluids |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting adequate sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting adequate exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting sensory needs (e.g., sensory diet) | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking emotion-regulation breaks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Self-Awareness

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noticing body cues (e.g., hunger, frustration) | <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of impact of self-care on regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of personal stressors factors | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of personal stress indicators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of personal strengths | <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of personal challenges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Emotion Literacy

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to recognize emotion cues (e.g., physical) | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing emotion intensities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to label emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of impact of activities on emotions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to communicate emotions to others | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes impact of emotions on behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Coping Skills

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing (e.g., deep, paced, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle relaxation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cold water on the face (e.g., cold cloth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Intense exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grounding strategies | <input type="checkbox"/> Proprioceptive exercises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visualization | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindful awareness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory soothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Distraction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective communication (e.g., I-statements) | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-validation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coping statements | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective problem-solving strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Worksheet: Plan for Supporting Emotion Regulation

Use this worksheet to create a plan to help you support your child’s emotion regulation this week. Complete the “Supporting Emotion Regulation Self-Reflection” worksheet near the end of the week.

Predictable Stressors	Plan to Reduce or Prevent Them

Your Child’s Primary Stress Indicators	
Physical	
Cognitive	
Emotional	
Verbal	
Behavioural	
Social	

How You Will Adapt Your Verbal/Non-Verbal Responses to Lower Your Child’s Stress

Potential Unmet Needs	How You Will Be Prepared to Meet Them

How You Will Adapt the Environment to Reduce Stressors and/or Sooth Your Child

1-2 Skills You Will Teach Your Child	How You Will Teach Them (e.g., materials)

Worksheet: Supporting Self-Regulation - Reflection

Complete this worksheet just before the next session, to reflect on your experience working on co-regulation strategies. Use the information to fill in the "My Child's Self-Regulation Profile" worksheet.

PREDICTING AND PREVENTING OR REDUCING STRESSORS

1. Were you able to accurately predict some of your child's stressors? Of those, were you able to reduce or prevent them? If so, how? Did you notice any other stressors that often impacted your child's emotion regulation? If so, how you might reduce or prevent these stressors in the future?

2. Write your child's predictable stressors (both those you predicted and any new ones you noticed) on the "**My Child's Self-Regulation Profile**" worksheet.

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF STRESS

3. How easy or difficult was it to recognize when your young person was experiencing stress? Did you notice any stress indicators that you hadn't recognized as signs of stress before? Did recognizing them as stress indicators change your experience of them? Were you able to recognize early, more subtle signs of stress?

4. Write your child's primary stress indicators on the "**My Child's Self-Regulation Profile**" worksheet.

PROVIDING REGULATION SUPPORT

5. Did you adapt your responses in the way that you planned? If not, why not? Did you adapt your responses in any other ways? How did your child react to your responses? Which responses were most helpful? Least helpful?

6. Add your helpful and unhelpful responses to the "**My Child's Self-Regulation Profile**" Worksheet.

7. Did you address any unmet needs? If not, why? If so, how did it go? What was/wasn't helpful?

8. Add any unmet needs that are significant stressors for your child to the **"My Child's Self-Regulation Profile"** worksheet (under "Stressors Impacting My Child's Self-Regulation").

9. Did you adapt the environment to reduce stressors or help soothe your child? If not, why? If so, how did it go? What was/wasn't helpful? Which external stressors did your child experience most often? Does this fit with their EF profile?

10. Add any significant external stressors to the **"My Child's Self-Regulation Profile"** worksheet (in the appropriate stressors section), as well as any helpful adaptations you made to the environment (under "Helpful Ways to Adapt the Environment").

11. Did you teach your child any new emotion regulation skills this week? If so, how did it go? What was helpful? Not yet helpful, or unhelpful?

12. Add any helpful teaching strategies to the **"My Child's Self-Regulation Profile"** worksheet.

13. Did your experiences this week leave you with any questions about co-regulation? If so, what are they?

Worksheet: My Child's Self-Regulation Profile

Use the information you learned from the "Supporting Emotion Regulation Self-Reflection" worksheet to summarize the information you have learned about your child's stress cycle. This will help you have a positive impact on your child's stress and better support their development of self-regulation skills.

STRESSORS THAT IMPACT MY CHILD'S SELF-REGULATION

INTERNAL STRESSORS	
Biological Needs	
Health/Disability	
Biological/Health Fluctuations	
Knowledge	
Skills	

EXTERNAL STRESSORS	
Physical Environment	
Social Context	
Demands Cognitive Behavioural Emotional Social Physical Sexual	
Safety/Trauma	

MY CHILD'S STRESS INDICATORS

Physical	
Cognitive	
Emotional	
Verbal	
Behavioural	
Social	

HOW MY RESPONSES IMPACT MY CHILD'S STRESS

Helpful Co-Regulating Responses	Responses that Increase Child Stress

HELPFUL WAYS TO ADAPT THE ENVIRONMENT TO...

Soothe	
Decrease Stressors	

HELPFUL STRATEGIES TO TEACH MY CHILD SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

Self-Care Skills	
Self-Awareness	
Emotion Literacy Skills	
Coping Skills	