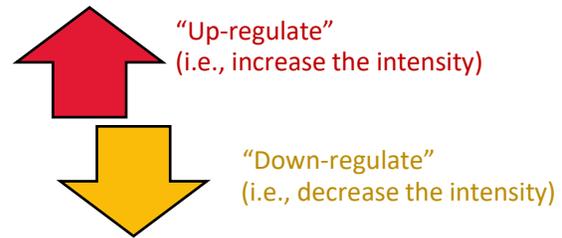
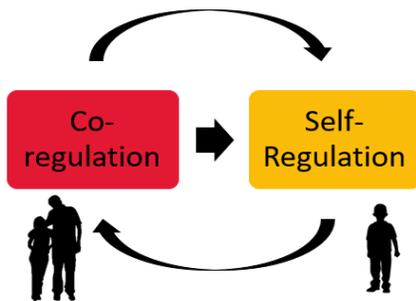


Emotions influence thinking and behaviour in important ways. They can provide meaning to experiences, communicate information to others, or lead us to action. However, unmanaged emotions can interfere with thinking and learning abilities and add to undesired behaviour.

Emotion regulation is the ability to manage and moderate our emotions effectively. It includes using strategies to increase and decrease the intensity of various emotions, such as anger, anxiety, sadness, or excitement, to function in daily life. It is not always an intuitive process; many children and teens struggle with regulating emotions and require teaching and support.



Before children and teens can independently regulate emotions, adults must first co-regulate emotions with them. **Co-regulation is the process of responsive adults modelling regulation strategies and guiding children and teens through emotions.** The focus is on understanding and connecting with emotions driving a situation and helping to moderate the intensity.



When co-regulation is practiced consistently, emotion regulation becomes more automatic over time – it is like a muscle becoming stronger with exercise. As such, children and teens can use strategies practiced during co-regulation with adults when they are independently managing emotions. Co-regulation is **not** age-dependent - it may be required at any age and emotion regulation can be developed across the life span.

Co-Regulation Strategies (Siegel & Bryson, 2011)

Tips for supporting dysregulated emotions in children and teens:

Model calming behaviour - children and teens look to adults to see how they should behave. Show the calming behaviours you hope to see.

Monitor your body language – stay nearby to ensure safety, but avoid crowding. Stay at or below the child or teen’s eye-level.

Monitor your language use – speak with a neutral, calm tone and avoid or reduce verbal language.

Validate emotions, not behaviour – accept emotions without judgement while helping the child or teen find other ways to manage them.

Name it to Tame It

- ❖ Notice and name the child or teen’s emotions. Providing a label or words to describe a situation helps the brain make sense of the feeling. *For example, “I would be mad too if my friend pushed me.”*

Connect, then Redirect

- ❖ Take time to connect with emotions by listening and echoing back what you hear with empathy. Afterwards, redirect with logical explanations and planning. *For example, “It’s ok to feel sad that iPad time is done. It sounds like you had a lot of fun playing. Since it’s time for reading, what book should we choose?”*

Move it or Lose It

- ❖ Emotions are often felt in the body, and changing our physical state through movement can help the child or teen regain control and balance. *For example, “I can see you are getting frustrated; let’s go for a 5-minute walk.”*