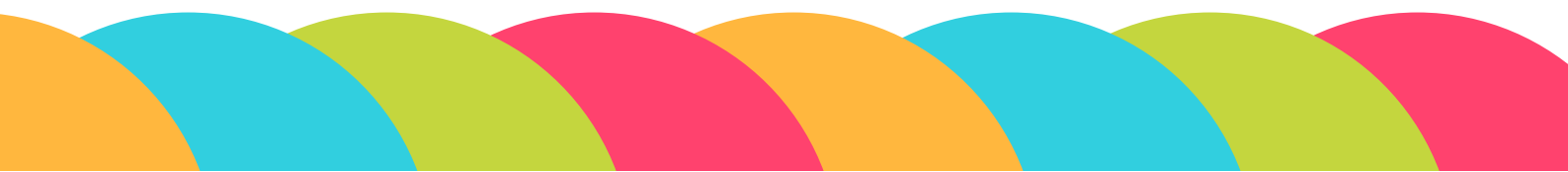


The
SELF-
REGULATION
Resource Pack

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Self-Regulation BUILDING BLOCKS

Studies have shown that there are several key factors and experiences (both internal and external) that have a significant impact on a child's ability to self-regulate.

Structure, Routine & Stability

A predictable, structured routine is one significant environmental factor that can support self-regulation. This can take the form of a visual schedule for kids who need more support or simply a predictable set of activities that occurs throughout the day. But setting up a routine or schedule isn't quite enough because anyone who lives or works with kids knows that things don't always go as planned.

As caregivers and service providers, we also need to help kids explore what it feels like and learn appropriate ways to respond when things get interrupted or when our schedule gets off track. This involves providing support, modeling, and reassurance for kids who are depend on the predictability of their day to self-regulate.

Additionally, within the daily routine, it's important to provide kids with choices and ownership of certain elements of the day to promote a sense of control and autonomy. For example, if it's time to practice writing their names, offer the option of writing with crayons, markers, or colored pencils. The child is still required to participate in the requested activity, but they see that they have an impact on their environment and they see the effects of their behavior and actions.

Caregiver Responsiveness

Another key factor in supporting self-regulation skills is ensuring that there is a sense of security and trust in the relationships between a child and his caregivers (6). This can often be a challenging aspect of working with kids who struggle with self-regulation, as it can be difficult to maintain composure and patience during challenging interactions.

But it can be extremely effective when the familiar adults in a child's life can respond to self-regulation challenges by:

- Asking questions and guiding the child to build their own internal self-regulation and problem-solving script (e.g. What should we do? What words could we use? Let's try it again a different way.)
- Helping kids process situations (e.g. What worked and what didn't work? Discussing cause and effect of actions and behavior.)
- Modeling appropriate responses to conflict and frustration.
- Preparing a child for challenges before they occur by discussing potential emotions and responses (e.g. social stories).

Social Skills

Another key aspect of self-regulation is being able to respond appropriately to social challenges. Group activities where kids have opportunities to imitate one another or to work together to achieve a goal are perfect for this, as kids must adjust their behavior to work with the group.



Goal-Oriented Activities

Working toward achieving a goal or solving a problem with guidance from a supportive adult or caregiver is another way to work toward the development of self-regulation. Activities that involve trial and error, finding new and creative approaches, and problem solving are great opportunities to challenge self-regulation skills within a structured, controlled setting. Setting up the environment with interesting materials that allow for problem solving, exploration, and cause/effect play is key.

Cognitive Activities & Executive Functioning

Activities that require problem solving, memory, attention, flexible thinking, impulse control, and sequencing can help kids develop the ability to self-regulate despite challenging circumstances. This could mean incorporating activities where kids have to recall information or rules while they play or playing games that involve direction-following, paying attention to information, multi-tasking, or sequencing. Strengthening these skills during games and activities can mean that kids are better able to use these skills during less-structured everyday activities, contributing to confidence and success in the classroom and beyond.

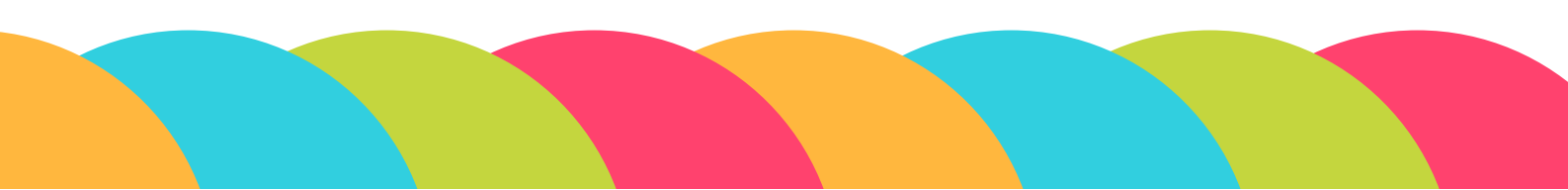
Sensory Processing & Motor Control

In addition to modulating their behavior and their emotional states, kids must also demonstrate regulation of their sensory and movement responses in order to functionally and independently participate in school, home, and community settings.

Kids need to be able to grade the force, direction, and speed of their movements, which requires healthy functioning of the proprioceptive and vestibular systems. They also need to be able to regulate their responses to other types of sensory experiences, as over or under-responsiveness to tactile, auditory, olfactory, visual, interoceptive and oral sensory input correlate directly with behavioral responses.

Language and Communication

Language is a key factor in kids' ability to self-regulate. As language development unfolds, a child first begins to speak to others and then gradually begins to internalize their own voice, using language to process things in their mind (8). Kids need to develop expressive and receptive language in order to be able to use these skills to talk themselves through challenging tasks and situations.



Social Emotional Developmental Milestones

*Please note that these milestones are intended as basic guidelines and will not apply to many neurodivergent children.

Birth to 6 Months

- Calms down when spoken to or picked up
- Looks and smiles when talked to or smiled at
- Self soothes via sensory experiences like sucking thumb or fingers
- Attends to and tries to imitate adults' facial expressions

9 to 12 Months

- Recognizes familiar faces
- May be nervous around unfamiliar individuals and in new situations
- Cries when separated from familiar caregivers
- Imitates playful actions

12 to 18 months

- Enjoys reciprocal games (e.g. peekaboo)
- Shows affection with hugs or kisses
- Looks to caregivers for cues about how to react in a new situation

18 months to 2 years

- Demonstrates temper tantrums to express frustration
- Prefers to have familiar adult nearby in unfamiliar situations
- Notices when someone is sad (e.g. hurt or crying)
- Has limited control over emotions and needs adult support to manage strong emotions

3 to 4 Years

- Follows simple routines
- Takes turns with peers
- Separates from caregiver more easily
- Needs help to slow down and problem-solve conflicts
- Comforts others when they are sad
- Is aware of danger

5 to 6 years

- Changes behavior to fit the context and situation
- Follows rules in games
- Pays attention to structured activities for 5 to 10 minutes
- Plays cooperatively with peers

6 to 10 Years

- Navigates more complex social interactions but may need adult support to do so
- Uses internalized self-talk for self control
- Demonstrates more flexibility, inhibition, and better management of emotions

11 to 14 years

- May have extreme reactions to stress or emotional situations
- Impulse control can be decreased and emotions can impact executive functioning
- Needs guidance from adults to explore coping skills and to manage emotions

15 to 17 Years

- Can set longer-term goals with organized plans to achieve them
- Needs guidance to monitor potential risky behavior and support decision-making
- Desires independence and exploration
- Values deeper connections with peers

Self-Regulation Observation Tool

It's great to have a whole new toolbox full of strategies, interventions, and activities to support kids with self-regulation. But having all of these tools at your fingertips can also be overwhelming. It's hard to know where to start and which intervention to try first.

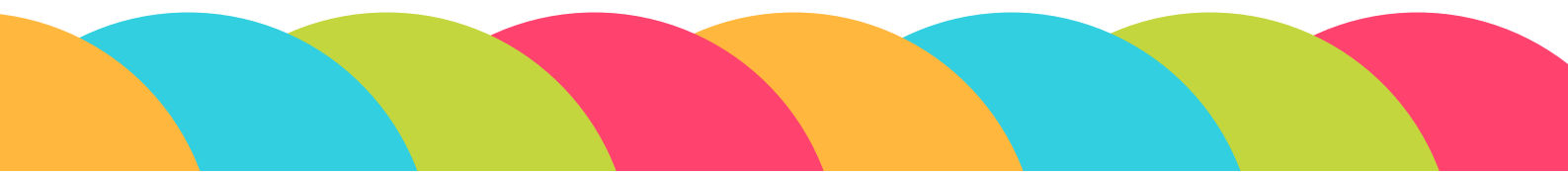
A great first step is to start identifying the kids who need help and honing in on the specific skill areas that might need support and development.

Self-regulation is a complex skill, which means that it can be difficult to document and track kids' progress in a quick, easy-to-refer-back-to manner.

The self-regulation observation tool on the following page can help teachers, therapists, and other professionals get a handle on how a child is performing with different areas of self-regulation.

There are several uses for the observation tool:

- Use as a screening tool to identify kids who need support with self-regulation
- Use during evaluations to identify specific areas of need related to self-regulation
- Use the observations noted on this page to guide intervention planning. For example, if a child is identified as having difficulty with taking turns and sharing, a social story could be created around this topic. If a child is observed to struggle with waiting times, the movement-based waiting games in this book might be a helpful intervention strategy.
- Use as a tool to help define goals and objectives related to self-regulation
- Complete the observation page as a pre-intervention screening and then again as a post-intervention screening to measure the child's progress and to gauge the effectiveness of interventions



STUDENT NAME:

DATE:

BEHAVIOR	MOTOR SKILLS	SOCIAL SKILLS	COGNITIVE & EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS
<input type="radio"/> Acts overly silly or "out of control" <input type="radio"/> Has frequent tantrums/meltdowns <input type="radio"/> Struggles with transitions between activities <input type="radio"/> Has difficulty with waiting <input type="radio"/> Grabs or touches objects impulsively <input type="radio"/> Gives up or gets frustrated easily when a task is challenging <input type="radio"/> Demonstrates physical behaviors (hitting, throwing, etc.) when upset	<input type="radio"/> Has difficulty walking in line with peers <input type="radio"/> Has difficulty maintaining body space <input type="radio"/> Often moves too quickly <input type="radio"/> Has difficulty regulating the speed of movements <input type="radio"/> Has difficulty regulating the force of movements <input type="radio"/> Frequently falls or runs into objects or others	<input type="radio"/> Has difficulty taking turns and sharing <input type="radio"/> Talks too loud, stands too close, or touches others <input type="radio"/> Notices the impact of behaviors on others <input type="radio"/> Notices and identifies emotions in self <input type="radio"/> Notices and identifies emotions in others <input type="radio"/> Struggles with activities that have rules/winning/losing <input type="radio"/> Struggles with teamwork/working together to solving a problem	<input type="radio"/> Struggles with time management, planning, and goal-directed activities <input type="radio"/> Has difficulty with making choices <input type="radio"/> Seems inflexible or rigid with plans, routines, and behaviors <input type="radio"/> Has difficulty with problem-solving <input type="radio"/> Doesn't ask for help during challenging activities or asks for help before attempting tasks independently <input type="radio"/> Struggles with following multistep instructions

SELF-REGULATION OBSERVATION TOOL