“I CAN DO IT BY MYSELF!”
HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN
LEARN SELF REGULATION SKILLS

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NEED FOR POSITIVE INTERACTION

According to Marsha Tate, author of “Preparing Children to Succeed in School and In Life”

Children need:

12 + positive daily interactions to thrive
8 + positive daily interactions to maintain
4 + positive daily interactions just to survive
QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel in your school every day?
2. How do you want to feel every day?
3. How do you want your children to feel in their classrooms?
4. What behaviors would help achieve these feelings?
WHAT IS SELF REGULATION?

Self-Regulation is the ability to regulate (manage) our thoughts, emotions, and actions in order to meet our goals.
Self-regulation is complex. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) define self-regulation as a child’s ability to gain control bodily functions, manage powerful emotions, and maintain focus and attention. Ideally, the adults in a child’s life act as scaffolds or extensions of the child’s internal ability to regulate.
TODAY’S NEEDS IN TEXAS

Children under 17 in Texas:

• Nearly 1 in 4 (24.6%) were poor
• More than 101,000 were homeless (2012-2013)
• More than 888,000 were uninsured (2013)
• More than 27% lacked access to adequate food
• 64,603 were abused or neglected (2013)
• 29,589 were in foster care (2013)
• 313,499 were being raised by their grandparents
• 34% have no parents of the children present in the home
• 71% under age of 60
• 23% live in poverty

Children whose basic needs are not being met often lack self-regulation skills when they report to school. Why??
YALE CENTER FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE RULER ACRONYM

- Recognizing emotions in self and others
- Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions
- Labeling emotions accurately
- Expressing emotions appropriately
- Regulating emotions effectively
WHY IS SELF REGULATION IMPORTANT?

Children who are able to self-regulate have:

- Improved self-esteem
- Increased learning
- Improved self-control
- Increased positive relationships
- Improved self-directedness
- Increased engagement
A good example of the beginnings of self-regulation is feeding behavior in an infant. This requires that a child regulate:

1. Sucking, swallowing, and breathing
2. Signaling an adult that she is hungry
3. Maintaining attention to task long enough to get full
SELF REGULATION

Self regulation has two sides—the ability to stop doing something if needed, and the capacity to start doing something when needed.

Self regulated children can usually delay gratification for an age appropriate length of time, and suppress their immediate impulses long enough to consider consequences or plan alternative actions.

Research shows that children’s self-regulatory behaviors in the early years are a better predictor of academic achievement than their IQ scores. (Blair 2002, Blair and Razza, 2007)
LEARNING SELF-REGULATION

Over time, an infant learns that his needs will be met by an adult within a reasonable amount of time, and learns to trust that an adult will come, help him to calm himself, and provide for his needs. A responsive adult helps a child build the capacity to wait, knowing that his needs will be met.

(Perry 2005)

Research shows that experiences with manageable challenges help promote healthy emotional regulation.

(Shonkhoff and Phillips, 2000)

Sometimes, parents are unable to adequately support a child’s development of self-regulation either because of their own deficits or because of the child’s temperament.
TEMPERAMENT AND SR

According to A. Thomas and S. Chess, there are 8 facets of temperament that exist on a continuum from low to high.

1. Activity Level
2. Biological Rhythms
3. Approach/Withdrawal
4. Mood
5. Intensity of Reaction
6. Adaptability
7. Distractibility
8. Persistence

Children can learn SR more effectively if a parent or teacher can recognize and respond or adapt to a child’s temperament.
DISCUSSION

Think of 3 children you have known who are at an extreme (either high or low) of one or more of the temperament traits. Discuss how their particular situation was handled and how it might have been handled better.
THE CYCLE OF SELF REGULATION

In her book, “Managing Emotional Mayhem”, Dr. Becky Bailey describes a “success” cycle of self regulation. She names the following sequence:

1. **I AM** triggered by an event
2. **I CALM** myself
3. **I FEEL** my feelings
4. **I CHOOSE** to reframe the problem positively
5. **I SOLVE** with a win-win solution
HELPING TO LEARN SR

1. Observe closely-Like poker players and liars, children have “tells” that let teachers know what their needs are.

2. Respond-be alert for individual differences in the need for routine, movement, novelty, and interaction. Sometimes having an observer in the classroom can help to hone this skill.

3. Provide structure-children are most comfortable when they can predict what will be happening at any given time. Prepare in advance for changes.

4. Be sure the environment is age appropriate and allows for interaction with little intervention.

5. Provide age-appropriate limits

6. Show empathy and caring with both actions and words
EMOTIONS (FEELINGS) ARE ESSENTIAL

Emotions help us see things from other’s perspectives, solve problems, initiate and maintain relationships, solve problems, set and achieve goals, communicate with others, and keep us safe. They are necessary for us to develop as human beings.
Emotions are triggered by events, but it is not the event that produces the emotion. The emotion is produced by our thoughts about the event. Young children may have difficulty with this concept, but, through our words and through support, they can begin to learn to recognize this cycle.

Event-She laughed

I Think She’s making fun of me

I Feel Sad
LABELING EMOTIONS

Anger - usually at something external

Frustration - response to shortcomings in ourselves

Scared - response to a real or imagined threat

Anxiety - response to a threat that is unknown

Sadness - response to a real loss

Disappointment - response to our expectations not being met

Happy - deep feeling of wellbeing and love

Calm - peaceful
Unhealthy responses to emotions expressed by children will prevent children from developing the ability to fully express and regulate emotions. These include:

- Ignoring
- Dismissing
- Punishing
- Fixing/Saving
REFLECTION

1. How did your parents handle emotions when you were growing up?
2. How do you handle your own emotions?
3. How do you handle emotions with your own children?

THINK OF THE TEACHERS AT YOUR SCHOOL

1. What are their styles of allowing students to express emotions?
COACHING THROUGH EMOTIONS

Children can learn to label emotions through coaching. First, get down on the child’s level and make eye contact. **Describe** and mirror the physical and emotional signals the child is sending. (For example, “Your shoulders are scrunched, your face is like this (mirror), and your hands are clenched like this (mirror). Then, **Name** the feeling (You seem angry.) Make your best guess about the feeling—children will usually let you know if you are wrong. Finally, **Acknowledge** the validity of the feeling. (You really wanted that toy and Johnny got it first. It is really hard to share.”)
Emotional coaching can take place in the moment anywhere, or it can take place in a calm-down spot. Coaching is not limited to just negative emotions. It can and should be used for a variety of emotions. The four primary emotions are Happy, Angry, Sad, and Afraid. Helping children to recognize these begins their emotional vocabulary.
COACHING THROUGH EMOTIONS

ANGER- Message is calm down and change

FRUSTRATION-Message is calm down and see or do things differently

FEAR- Message is you are safe and protected

ANXIETY- Message is calm down, focus on the present, and gather information

SADNESS/DISAPPOINTMENT-Message is seek comfort from those you love

HAPPINESS/CALM-Message is all is right with my world
ACTIVITY

Break into pairs.

Choose to act out a child between 3 and 8 years old. Channel a child you know well.

Practice coaching your partner through the following emotions as she pretends to be this child. Then, switch.

- Anger
- Sadness
- Fear
- Happiness

Remember-describe the appearance, name the feeling, then acknowledge by noticing the child’s positive intent and desire or by actively comforting/helping the child.
HELPING MANAGE EMOTIONS

In order to manage strong emotions, children must learn how to calm themselves enough to move from “I am mad” or “You made me mad” to “I feel mad.” This requires that the child calm down enough to escape the “Fight, Flight, or Freeze” Cycle and become calm enough to both defer inappropriate action and to label the emotion. One way to do this is to utilize a Calm Down Corner or a Safe Place in the room to help children use calming strategies.
Older children can be guided through an activity to help them visualize a spot in the classroom where they feel calm. This might be at their desk, in a corner, under a desk or table, etc. It might involve a blanket, a pillow, or a favored toy.

Younger children need a delineated calm down spot within the classroom. It needs to be comfortable, visible from the classroom, and fitted with items that will help the child calm. This might include blankets or towels for self-swaddling, fidgets, squeeze balls, art materials, posters or visual cues for calming techniques and for labeling emotions.

At first, children will need to be cued to go to the spot. Practice going before strong emotions hit, so that children will be familiar with how to respond when you cue them to go. Later, they can self-initiate.
CALM DOWN SPOT
CUEING POSTER

Calming Choices

- close my eyes
- watch the timer
- take deep breaths
- count to 10
Research shows that deep breathing is relaxing, and that it stimulates a parasympathetic nerve response that calms us down. There are many methods of teaching children to breathe to calm:

Becky Bailey uses a technique called S.T.A.R.

S-stop, T-take a breath, A-and R-relax
BREATHING TO CALM

For older children and adults, S.T.O.P. is useful-

S-stop
T-take a breath
O-observe – describe the feelings, thoughts, images, sensations, triggers
P-pull back and get some perspective-What’s the big picture? Is there another way of looking at this? How might someone else see this?
P-practice what works-what is the best thing for me to do right now-for myself, for others, for the situation.

Or-STOPP- the last P is proceed-do something that will support you in the moment.
META MOMENT

TAKE A
META-MOMENT

1. Something happens
2. Sense
3. Stop
4. See your best self
5. Strategize
6. Succeed!
CALMING TECHNIQUES

Yoga
Breathing Exercises (6 breaths per minute, belly breathe)
Stretching
Exercising
Brain Gym Activities
Stress Balls
Fidgets
Wall Push-Ups
Desk Push-Pulls
Progressive Muscle Relaxation
Practice Regularly With Whole Class!
The mood meter is a way to plot feelings. Children can use magnets or sticky notes to indicate where they are.
# LABELING EMOTIONS

## MOOD METER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enraged</th>
<th>Furious</th>
<th>Frustrated</th>
<th>Shocked</th>
<th>Hyper</th>
<th>Lively</th>
<th>Motivated</th>
<th>Ecstatic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livid</td>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Restless</td>
<td>Energized</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Inspired</td>
<td>Excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuming</td>
<td>Apprehensive</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Annoyed</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Thrilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repulsed</td>
<td>Troubled</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>Peeved</td>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Joyful</td>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Blissful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>Glum</td>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>At Ease</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>Fulfilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>Mopey</td>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Chill</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>Discouraged</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>Carefree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td>Miserable</td>
<td>Exhausted</td>
<td>Relieved</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Tranquil</td>
<td>Serene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LABELING EMOTIONS

What Zone are you in?

Blue Zone:
- Running Slow:
  - sad
  - sick
  - tired
  - bored
  - moving slowly

Green Zone:
- Good to Go:
  - happy
  - calm
  - feeling okay
  - focused
  - ready to learn

Yellow Zone:
- Caution:
  - frustrated
  - worried
  - silly/wiggly
  - unfocused
  - loss of some control

Red Zone:
- STOP:
  - mad/angry
  - hands on
  - yelling
  - refusing to work
  - out of control
MOOD METER APP

Available from the App Store for .99

Developed by Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

Provides adults and older kids a way to plot emotions throughout the day and to learn to label emotions.

Helps you to determine triggers and ways to modulate or shift emotions to a more pleasant state.
FEELING FEELINGS

Where do you feel your feelings?

A picture of me feeling ___________. Students draw or dictate where and how they feel their emotions.
ACTIVITY

Using the materials provided, draw how your body feels when you are:

Angry
Nervous
Sad
Calm
SCALING EMOTIONS

I can't stand this and ready to explode.
I want to hit someone, something, or throw something. I need an adult to help me go to a safe place so I can calm down.

I am getting too angry.
My brain isn't working clearly. I might say or do something I will be sorry for later. I need to go to my safe place to calm down.

I am getting really irritated.
I need to walk away from a bad situation. I will tell my teacher that I need a break.

I am doing OK.
I'm not pleased, but I'm not upset. I can stay where I am and keep working. I can control my anger by myself.

I am doing great.
I feel good about myself and about what is going on around me.

5

4

3

2

1

Angry
I've lost control. I'm not listening anymore. I could hit, kick or bite. I need a quiet place to calm down.

Overwhelmed
Everything is too hard. I'm losing control and need to leave the environment I'm in. Give me space.

Frustrated
I'm not getting it. I'm showing signs of stress. I should take a break now.

Anxious
Trying to stay focused, but having a hard time staying on task. Use calming strategies now.

Happy
Ready and willing to work.
Self-Regulation Boards are tools to help students manage emotions and make good choices. They can be commercial or home-made. Most involve a way for students to label where they feel the feeling in their body, a way to label the feeling, and options for managing the feeling.
SELF REGULATION APP

There is an SR board training App by Brad Chapin that allows an automated version of an SR board for I-Pads.
REATIONS TO EMOTIONS

To self-regulate, students might have to do many things:

1. Calm down
2. Get rid of some energy
3. Energize
4. Distract themselves
5. Re-focus attention

Providing students with strategies in each of these areas and practicing with both the whole class and with individuals will help students to develop skills.
ACTIVITIES TO RE-ENERGIZE

1. Rabbit Breathing-Breath in and out through your nose very quickly and shallowly. You will be “sniffing” like a bunny. Do this for about 15 seconds to start-then increase as you get better.

2. Hands Brain Break-Begin by moving your right hand from side to side, as though you are waving. Now, stop that hand, and move your left hand up and down. Now, put the two motions together. Switch.

3. Snap-Wink-Wink one eye and snap the fingers on the other hand. Switch. Go back and forth as quickly as you can.

4. Ear and Nose switch-hold your ear with one hand (closest to your body)-and touch your nose with the other. Switch as rapidly as you can.
ACTIVITIES TO USE ENERGY

1. Pool noodle foot fidget

2. Balance balls or discs

3. In chair leg raises, circles

4. Walk breaks (teach kids to ask for them-provide for whole class)

5. Wall push ups
HELPING KIDS FOCUS

Understanding just how long students can focus at various ages helps teachers and parents create realistic expectations. Average children can concentrate for 2-5 minutes per year of age. Many of today’s electronically stimulated children are at the lower end of the scale.

1. Simon Says-build to multi-step requests
2. Play concentration type matching games
3. The coin game-make a pattern with coins and have the child reproduce the pattern with the original covered
4. Repeat after me-have the children repeat a sequence of words, etc.
5. Play “When I go to the Moon”
ACTIVITIES TO DISTRACT

1. Break Boxes or “I’m Stuck kits-these are boxes that contain materials to help kids take a break and calm down and distract themselves before returning to an activity. Provide a variety of these. You can tailor them for specific students. They can include-

   1. Straws-fiddle, bend, build
   2. Liquid motion toys
   3. Feeling strips-velvet, sandpaper, etc.
   4. Bubbles
   5. Play-Doh
   6. Kinetic Sand
   7. Activity sheets
   8. Small puzzles
Children must learn how to express emotions and needs in words in order to adequately regulate themselves and to manage relationships. We have to help them to do this by teaching and modeling.
Assertive communication allows us to share feeling appropriately. Teachers should model:

I feel ____________ when you ________________. I need for you to ________________.

I feel frustrated when papers are left all over the floor in the art station. I need for you to pick them up before you go to the next station.

I feel squished when everyone crowds around me at the door after recess, and I could fall down. Stop at the crack in the sidewalk and wait for me to open the door.

Our class time is important to me. When we are all together, we are all learning. Please come in from recess when I call you so we can get started.
PRACTICE

Pair with another participant. One of you will be red and one will be green. Practice using appropriate communication for each of the following.

You ask a child to help clean up and she punches you in the arm.

A child is interrupting you as you are trying to speak to the class.

A child is running down the hall between classes.

A child is on the playground throwing gravel at others.

A child is sitting in the corner of the class, looking guilty.

A child comes in from the bus obviously mad.

A colleague is ranting to you about how bad her students are.

Your principal abruptly asks you to take on a duty because another colleague is doing a poor job.
All children who are verbal can be taught assertive communication, but it must be leveled developmentally.

Toddlers can learn to tell others *Stop! Or No!*

Pre-K students can add, *Stop. I don’t like it.*

Kinder and first graders can elaborate:

*I don’t like it when you take my crayons.*

Second and Third graders can add a request:

*I don’t like it when you take my paper. Get your own paper.*

Fourth through 7th graders can add reasons:

*I feel frustrated when you talk while I am working. I can’t finish my work.*

Older children and adults can put it all together:

*I feel frustrated when you talk while I am working. I can’t finish my work. Be quiet!*
SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills are those skills that allow us to interact appropriately with those around us. Some children learn social skills through observation, but most learn by being taught explicitly. There are many programs for the teaching of social skills, with Boys Town and Skillstreaming being two of the easiest and most used.
SKILLS ACQUISITION

STAGE 1 – Skill Acquisition: Skill is introduced

STAGE 2 – Fluency: Child has learned the skill and can use it easily

STAGE 2 – Maintenance: Child can use the skill over time and in new situations.
STAGE 1

Stage 1: Skill Acquisition

1. Explain new skill in concrete terms

2. Identify the skill.
   
   – “Ask to take a turn.”

   – Demonstrate or identify when it’s used. “Watch Erica ask to play with the puppet.”

   – Link the idea or concept to the other skills the child has.

   “When you see your friends playing with a toy you want, you can watch them play, you can wait for a turn, or you can ask them for a turn.”

• Demonstrate the skill: Provide an example and non-example

• Give positive feedback.

• Give multiple opportunities for practice.
STAGE 2

Stage 2: Build Fluency
Practice makes better.
Nobody’s perfect!
Stage 3: Maintenance & Generalization

- Learning to a point that it becomes part of the child’s social skill repertoire and uses it in familiar and new situations.
- Use a systematic approach.
- Offer repeated opportunities to practice skill, encourage student to remember to use the skills, give feedback when they use skill successfully.
PROBLEM SOLVING

The Problem Solving Loop

1. Identify the problem.
2. Explore information and create ideas.
3. Select the best idea.
4. Build and test the idea.
5. Evaluate the results.
PROBLEM SOLVING

We help children learn to problem solve when we:

1. Talk through our own problems in the classroom and demonstrate the process.

“I need to get all of these hoops out to the playground for us to use at recess. I can carry them, but then I cannot open the door. When I set them down, they go everywhere. I know—I will ask someone to open the door for me.”

2. Ask them to problem-solve.

“Josh, I can see you are having trouble getting started on your assignment. What do you need to help you get started?”
3. Allow them to help their friends and classmates.

“Sally, you are really good at addition. Do you think that you could show Suzy some of the things you do that help you with your addition?”

4. Help them through their own problem solving.

“Johnny took my toy and he won’t give it back.”

“Did you tell him to give it back?” “No.”

Let’s practice, “Johnny, that is my toy and I want it back.”

I will walk with you to tell him to give back your toy.
RESOURCES

Preparing Children for Success in School and in Life
Marsha Tate

Super Hero Social Skills Kit- Pacific Northwest Publishing

Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child-McGinnis

Teaching Social Skills to Youth-Boys Town Press

Stop and Think Social Skills-Project Achieve

Creating the School Family-Beckey Bailey

Books by Julia Cook
RESOURCES

www.eiyale.edu Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

www.csefel.vanderbilt.edu/ Center for Social and Emotional Effects on Early Learning


www.edutopia.org Good information on social emotional learning

https://www.symbaloo.com/mix/teachingsocial-emotional

Symabaloop presented by Carolina Valtierra from ESC 11-shared with encouragement