

Self-Regulation

What Is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation includes the following:

- showing feelings, such as excitement, worry, anger, frustration, and joy
- being able to cope with feelings in ways that do not hurt others

For example, when a friend won't share, a preschooler might pick another toy to play with instead of crying for a long time. Young children build these skills by playing and learning with friends. They also learn from the support they get from adults. For example, adults may help a child learn the words for feelings. *"Kaylee, you are talking loudly because you are excited about our field trip to the pet shop!"* Adults can also provide simple choices. *"Antonio, do you want to play with the red truck or the yellow one?"*



Why Is Self-Regulation Important?

When children can name and show feelings without hurting people or things, they can learn to:

- pay attention
- take turns
- make choices
- show patience
- calm down when upset

All of these skills are important to getting along with others and learning all kinds of skills. For example, if a child can stay calm when frustrated, take turns, and cooperate, other children will include her in their play.



Later, teenagers with self-regulation will be more able to:

- pay attention in class
- complete homework on time
- talk about how they feel
- handle daily hassles such as a disagreement with a friend



Sample pages from ~ Promoting Resilience For Now and Forever: A Family Guide

Adults use self-regulation skills every day. For example, an adult may need to pay attention at a staff meeting or calmly talk to a boss about a problem. These skills help throughout life. Here are some behaviors that show a preschooler is gaining self-regulation skills. Have you seen your child do any of the following:

- handle frustration well?
- control his anger?
- show patience?
- accept another choice when her first choice was not available?
- cooperate with others?
- share with other children?
- listen to or respect others?
- calm himself down?
- play well with others?



Strategies to Support Self-Regulation

- **Help your child learn to calm down when frustrated.** For example, count to 10 and take a few deep breaths. Help your child learn to say, “This is really hard. I need help.” Use these tips to show how they help you stay calm.
- **Talk about it later.** If your child acts out by having a tantrum, crying loudly, kicking, or throwing toys, wait until he is calm and then talk. Together, come up with ways your child can cope the next time he is upset. *“Ashton, you kicked your sister when she took your cars. It’s not okay to hurt her. Next time, you could give her some cars to use. Or maybe you have another idea.”*