

Montessori and Special Needs

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Self-Regulation Developmental Tasks

Toddlers-

- Learning to focus attention
- Learning to adjust behavior to reach a goal
- Learning to wait
- Learning to use words to communicate

Early Childhood-

- Increasing attention and focus
- Persisting on difficult tasks for a longer time
- Using strategies for self calming
- Recognizing emotions in self and others
- Developing empathy

Elementary-

- Attentional control and sustained focus
- Increase in ability to delay gratification
- Organize behavior to accomplish a goal
- Use self-talk to manage emotions
- Guided by empathy and concern for others
- Increasing ability to solve problems
- Increasing cognitive, abstract thinking

Adolescence-

- Able to complete longer tasks independently
- Able to plan, prioritize, and manage time to accomplish a goal
- Managing stress with self-monitoring and self calming tools
- Better able to think before acting to make positive decisions
- Able to solve complex problems

At all levels, children need co-regulation, a structured environment, and coaching to develop self-regulation and executive functioning skills.

Co-regulation-

The interactive process of regulation within a warm, responsive, sensitive relationship to give support and teach self-regulation.

- The importance of feel safe and secure
- Having a trusting, predictable relationship with an adult
- Mirror neurons- a self-regulated adult can support calm in a child
- The importance of voice tone, facial expression, and body language in supporting a child
- The self-regulated adult must be aware of their own emotions, and triggers
- Unconscious beliefs, biases, and expectations can impact our interactions with students
- The self-regulated adult must have and use self-calming tools to engage in a positive interaction with a child, especially one who is struggling
- STOP THINK CHOOSE- a strategy for intentionally creating a gap between reaction and intentional response
- The 5 R's in supporting a child's self-regulation
 1. Reframe- see behavior as communication of need
 2. Recognize the stressors- for the child and for ourselves
 3. Reduce the stress- engage in a self-regulation technique or tool
 4. Reflect on the best response to support the child
 5. Respond to the child with empathy and support

Tools for Self-Regulation

Motor Tools

- Isometrics
- Tactile input- joint compression and rubbing/brushing
- Acupressure- hand/wrist, palm massage, ear lobe massage
- Flex and Point game, Tense and Relax game
- Thumb game
- Yoga

Breathing Tools

- Belly Breathing- hands on abdomen. Inhale through mouth, exhale through nostrils. Expand belly on inhale, contract belly on exhale.
- 4 Square Breathing- inhale for a count of 4. Hold for a count of 4. Exhale for a count of 4. Rest for a count of 4. Repeat 4 times.
- Balanced Breathing- inhale to a count, exhale to that count. Repeat.
- Counting Breath- count on each inhale and exhale or focus only on exhale. Count to 10.
- Visualized Breath- on the inhale visualize a calm scene, or light. On exhale, visualize sending out calm from that scene or light.
- Muscle Breathing- while inhaling, focus on a specific muscle of the body. Breath into that part. Exhale and relax the muscle.
- Lion's Breath- inhale a big breath. Open mouth and exhale saying haaaaa, or hahahaha
- Finger Breathing, or Geo Breathing- put fingers of both hands touching one another. Start with palms in a closed position. As you inhale, expand palms to form a sphere. Exhale to close palms.

Other Self-Regulation Tools

- Brain Count- While looking out into space, slowly count to 10.
- Self-talk- Recognize your stressor, express the emotion, find a solution

- Centering Object- stare at an object that is calming for you- a shell, a photo, a sculpture, a sand timer.
- Mantras- choose a “mantra” that is a calming sound, or phrase, and repeat until you find calm.
- Smile- at someone, or into space.

Montessori Self-Regulation – for every level. To be done individually, or as a community activity

- Silence Game
- Walking on the Line

Self-Regulation Tools can be taught to the whole group, to a targeted group, or to an individual.

Teach Model Role Play Practice Embed throughout the day