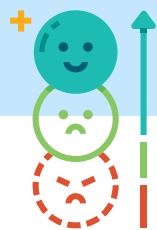


EMOTIONAL REGULATION IDEAS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN: A RESOURCE FOR EDUCATION STAFF



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REGULATE?



Regulation is the process of soothing ourselves and our body. When we regulate we calm the emotional regions of our brain so that we can begin to think rationally again and be able to use our 'thinking brain'.

Working to regulate and calm both yourself and your child is a really important step when managing difficult situations and supporting your child with tricky emotions like anxiety, upset and anger. Some children find this skill difficult so may need to experience it through co-regulation (regulation with an adult) before they learn how to self-regulate.

Most of the time we are in a calm state that allows us to be able to socially engaged and alert, we call this our 'window of tolerance' (see diagram below). However, there are times we slip out of our 'window of tolerance' and become either hyper-aroused or hypo-aroused. The diagram below shows what behaviours your child may show when they slip out of their window of tolerance.

We all need a balance of up and down regulating activity in our day. This 'up and down' happens unconsciously most of the time, but sometimes we need to help our children to first recognise they are becoming dysregulated and then know what will help them to become regulated again. The activities below can be used when your child (and yourself) may have slipped outside the window of tolerance (i.e. into crisis behaviours), or they can be used to help stay within the window across a day to minimise under- or overstimulation.

The more you and your child practice these skills and notice how your body feels when you are doing them, the easier it will be for your child to know what helps them to self-regulate. Consider asking questions such as 'do you notice what your heart is doing? Is it beating fast or slow?' 'Does this make you feel fizzy or sleepy, or something else?'. The ideal is that they begin to recognise when they are reaching the edge of their window so that they can choose an activity that will regulate them back toward the middle of their window.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

IDENTIFY YOUR STATE

HYPERAROUSAL



REACTIVE
HYPER-AWARE
TEARS
FAST SPEECH
CHAOTIC RACING THOUGHTS
HEIGHTENED PHYSICAL
SENSATIONS

**DOWN-
REGULATE**

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

CALM
ALERT
FEEL PRESENT
FEEL SAFE
CONTROLLED
CAN PAY ATTENTION
SOCIALLY ENGAGED

REGULATED

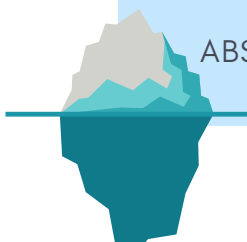


**BECOME
DYSREGULATED
(PUSHED OUT)**

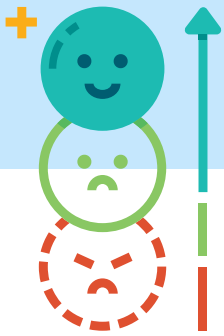
HYPOAROUSAL

LOW
SHUT DOWN
NUMB
UNMOTIVATED
LETHARGIC
ABSENCE OF PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

UP-REGULATE



EMOTIONAL REGULATION IDEAS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN: A RESOURCE FOR EDUCATION STAFF



INTRODUCTION

This resource has been designed for staff to support children and young people to regulate. By doing these activities with the young people it can build their self-regulation skills as well as promotes engagement and helps you to build relationships with your students. All of these activities can be done with the whole class, small groups or 1-2-1. Most of these activities can also be done on the spot in order to prevent moving around which will help you follow the current Covid-restrictions.

Below are activities to help your class de-regulate which should be used when they are particularly hyper and struggling to concentrate. This may happen after break or lunch. There are also activities to up-regulate when your class appear to have low energy which may occur first thing in the morning or near the end of the day.

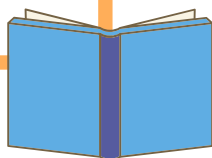


DOWN-REGULATING ACTIVITIES

**IF SOMEONE IS FEELING HYPER OR HAS A LOT
OF ENERGY THEY CAN TRY:**

GROUNDING

- Take a minute to look around the room and count everything that is blue
- You can do this with colours or items e.g.all pencils, ceiling tiles etc.
- This is an exercise that can be done with individuals or the whole class

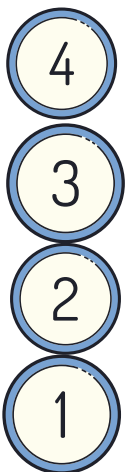


Scribble or rip up paper.

Do squats against the wall.

Count backwards from 10

OR

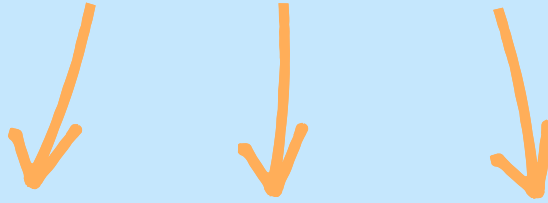


Take a moment to notice:

- 4 things you can see
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can touch
- 1 thing you can smell.
- Say the name of each thing you have noticed



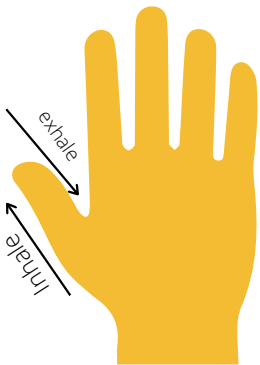
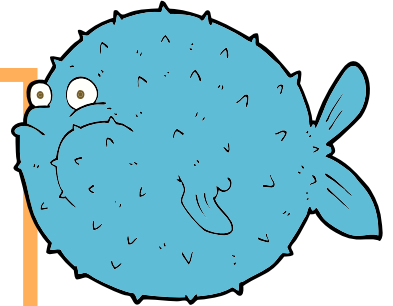
DOWN-REGULATING ACTIVITIES



BREATHING STRATEGIES

PUFFER FISH

- Make puffer fish cheeks, cuddle yourselves like a clam and stick your tongue out like a turtle for 5 seconds each
- Then blow on your hands, sit on your hands or clasp them tightly. This will help you receive physical feedback and help ground you.

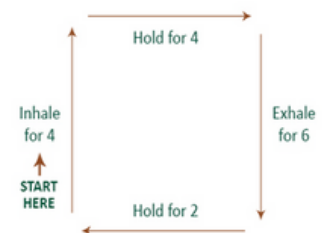


HAND BREATHING

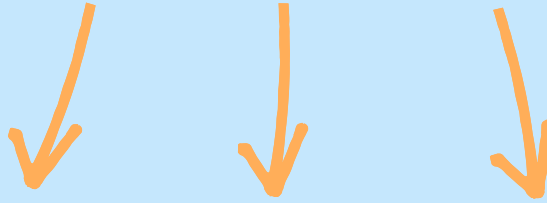
- Carry out a breathing exercise e.g. finger breathing.
- Use your finger to trace around the fingers of your other hand.
- Breathe in tracing up your finger and slowly breathe out tracing down.
- Trace all 5 fingers.

SQUARE BREATHING

- Find something square to trace your fingers around (like a book). If not picture a square in your mind and trace your fingers in the air as if the square was in front of you.
- Start at the bottom left of the square and breathe in for four counts as you trace the first side of the square
- Hold your breath for four counts as you trace the second side of the square
- Breathe out for six counts as you trace the third side of the square
- Hold your breath for two counts as you trace the final side of the square
- You just completed one deep breath!



DOWN-REGULATING ACTIVITIES



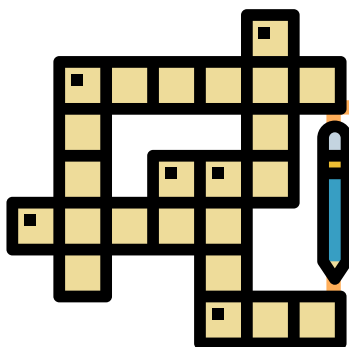
STRATEGIES YOU MAY LIKE TO DOWN-REGULATE

TIGHTROPE

Have a rope or tape across the floor. Pretend to walk on the "tightrope" without falling. Once you are comfortable, walk sideways, tiptoeing, or backwards for more of a challenge.

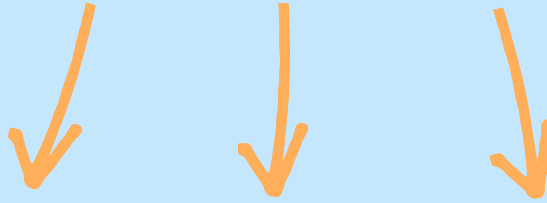


Colour, draw or writing - This can be linked to how you are feeling. For example you can draw your emotions as the weather e.g. happy=sun or an animal e.g. angry=tiger. Or if you prefer you can draw what makes you happy or colour in a design already printed. If you prefer writing you may want to write poetry, a story or write in a journal.



Complete activities such as a puzzle, word-search or crossword. You are looking to do activities that require concentration but are still fun. You could also look for games such as dot to dot.

DOWN-REGULATING ACTIVITIES



STRATEGIES YOU MAY LIKE TO DOWN-REGULATE

MUSCLE RELAXATION

When we are anxious and in fight, flight or freeze mode we tend to tense our muscles, often without even noticing. In order to return to calm we might need to purposefully relax our muscles.

One very effective way of doing this is to work through each muscle group in your body clenching those muscles as much as you can for 10-20 seconds and then completely releasing them for 10-20 seconds. Work your way through the numbers 1 to 8 below, following the instructions for each number.

- 1- Forehead - Scrunch up your forehead. Squeeze it tighter and tighter then relax.
- 2- Eyes - Squeeze your eyes closed tight, then open them as slowly as you can.
- 3 -Cheeks - Puff out your cheeks like a puffer fish, then relax.
- 4 - Mouth - Chew as if you are chewing gum.
- 5 - Arms - Tense your arms either by holding them out straight or curling your biceps.
- 6- Shoulders - Try and squeeze your shoulder blades together or raise your shoulders to your ears.
- 7 - Legs - Tense your legs by standing very straight or sit in your chair and put them out straight in front of you.
- 8 - Toes - Scrunch your toes really tight.



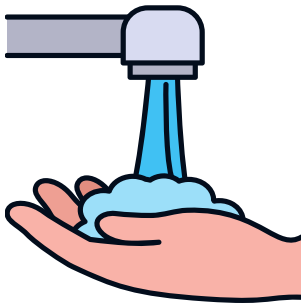
UP-REGULATING ACTIVITIES



STRATEGIES YOU MAY LIKE TO UP-REGULATE

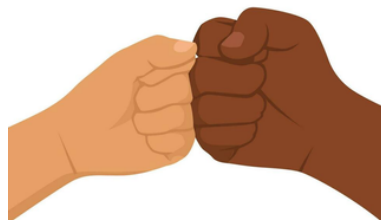
**IF SOMEONE IS FEELING LOW OR HAS LOW ENERGY
THEY CAN TRY:**

Bounce a ball as fast as you can. Try and beat your highest score!



Run hands under cold water.

Run on the spot!



Create a secret handshake!

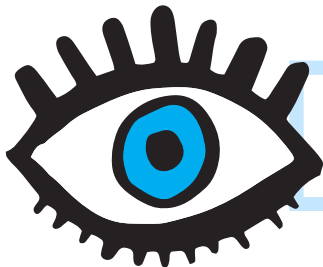
UP-REGULATING ACTIVITIES



STRATEGIES YOU MAY LIKE TO UP-REGULATE

**IF SOMEONE IS FEELING LOW OR HAS LOW ENERGY
THEY CAN TRY:**

Dance or shake it out!



Play I spy with my little eye.

Listen to music or watch a funny
video!



Create a Scavenger Hunt. If you
are able to go outside or have
space inside you could create a
scavenger hunt where everyone
has to find objects you list or
follow clues.



Play Simon Says e.g. Simon says
raise your hands to the sky, Simon
says do jazz hands etc. You can
also do other games that entail
moving on the spot.

Visit www.cavyoungwellbeing.wales for more more resources, training, and
videos for education staff, parents/carers, and children and young people.

Originally created by the Resilience Project team (2021) and adapted by School In-Reach Service (2024).
This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg