

Self-Regulation Toolbox

Children need to learn about their emotions and self-regulation in safe and supportive ways. Giving them a bank of strategies for their toolbox will help them learn the best ways for them to self-regulate their emotions as different sensory environments affect them.

Occupational therapists often use self-regulation activities to support children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) to help them learn about their emotions and how to manage them.

Enabling a child to recognise and manage their emotions helps them to deal with different environments and social situations and succeed in their learning, self-care and play.

This toolbox is a fun way for children to think about their level of alertness and how they are feeling. They can use these ideas to self-regulate themselves and keep these strategies in their toolbox to use again and again.

You can put them on the wall and add your own strategies to the bottom of each toolbox.

What Is Self-Regulation?

- Self-regulation is the ability of the brain and body to function optimally so that we can complete our tasks. In order to do this, we need to be able to attain, maintain or change our levels of alertness so they are appropriate for the current task or situation.
- Our nervous system is always in a state of 'alertness' and this can affect the way we feel and how much we can concentrate. Different activities and environments require different levels of alertness.
- We need to be at our optimal state of alertness to attend, concentrate and perform tasks.

Different Levels of Alertness

- When we need to sleep, we want our level of alertness to be low to allow us to sleep.
- At school, we want our level of alertness to be just right so we can focus on learning.
- When we're doing something exciting, our level of alertness will be high as there is more stimulation to engage us.

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Why Is This Important for Children?

- If a child can maintain the right level of alertness, it enables them to complete their day-to-day activities, including self-care, learning and play.
- The green self-regulation area means the child can process sensory information and respond appropriately by focusing and engaging.
- When they are able to do this, they should feel more confident and more in control of what they are doing and what they need to do next.
- Some children with SEND may have difficulty with self-regulation.

There are no right or wrong feelings – we all experience all of these feelings, depending on our mood and what's going on around us. We cannot support children to manage their feelings by using the strategies in the toolbox for each area.

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