

## Self-Regulation / Emotion Control

**Description:** Self-regulation is the ability to constructively manage intense emotions such as excitement, anger, fear, or frustration. It is the capacity to choose one’s behaviors in the face of such feelings, rather than act on impulse or “lash out.” Self-regulation allows individuals to constrain undesirable urges and present behaviors that are congruent to a set of social standards or personal goals.

Youth who struggle with self-regulation often:	Youth who strongly self-regulate often:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get distracted easily</li> <li>• Have a heightened response to stimuli</li> <li>• Struggle with transitions or change</li> <li>• Have issues with anger management</li> <li>• Underperform in school</li> <li>• Have conduct problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are able to maintain or regain focus in the face of distractions</li> <li>• Remain in physical control of their bodies even when angry</li> <li>• Utilize techniques to manage sadness, anger, frustration, or fear</li> <li>• Easily follow behavioral expectations</li> <li>• Persist at difficult tasks</li> </ul>

### Best Practices and Evidence

**Use Behavioral Standards:** Review behavioral expectations and groups norms and values often to give youth clear guidelines of what is expected of them.

*Evidence of a program with clear Behavioral Standards include:*

- Values and/or expectations are visually posted in the program space.
- Staff reviews behavioral expectations at the start of activities and at transition points, especially when those expectations change (e.g., transitioning to lunch).
- Values and norms are created by youth and they are able to discuss the importance of each standard.
- The program does not take a “one-size-fits-all” approach – accommodations are made, and are clear to those to whom they apply (e.g., youth who need extra space to calm themselves are allowed to take that space, with explicit guidelines).

**Rituals:** Rituals are important for youth who struggle with self-regulation. Consistent patterns help youth know what to expect and get into a rhythm of behavior, and reduces the stress on youth who struggle to “read” the expectations of new situations.

*Evidence of a program with strong Rituals include:*

- Opening and closing rituals begin and end each class or activity.
- Call-and-response is used to gain youth attention.
- Routines are consistent and instructions are repeated daily.
- Expectations remain largely consistent from one class or activity to another.

- Non-verbal reminders are used commonly and consistently (i.e., a hand gesture to cue youth into monitoring their excitement level).

**De-Escalation:** Youth who struggle with self-regulation will often have difficulty stopping their behavior from escalating when they are upset. Staff strategies can interrupt escalation before it reaches disruptive or dangerous levels, and youth can be taught techniques for calming themselves and their bodies.

*Evidence of De-Escalation includes:*

- Staff give physical space to youth who are escalating; they do not get in the personal space of youth who are upset, and allow escalating youth to take extra physical space as needed by retreating or isolating themselves, as long as they remain safe.
- Staff assist youth in identifying and using calming techniques, such as deep breathing or mindful movement.
- Mindfulness breaks, meditative breathing, or yoga are part of program routines.
- Youth have space to retreat for self-calming or sensory breaks, with manipulatives, writing materials, and calming visuals (a “chill zone”).

**Staff Modeling:** Staff can model ideal behaviors for new expectations to help visual learners understand the expectations. Staff can also model self-reflection and self-calming behaviors.

*Evidence of Staff Modeling includes:*

- Intentional modeling of new rituals, for instance, staff “acting out” what is expected when youth transition from circle time to their desks.
- Staff maintain calm and even tone when angry.
- Staff provide space and time for youth to reflect on their behaviors after self-regulation fails, and support them in making a plan for next time.

1	2	3	4
There is <b>no evidence</b> of strategies to support youth who struggle with self-regulation.	There is <b>some evidence</b> of strategies to support youth self-regulation.	There is <b>moderate evidence</b> of strategies to support youth self-regulation.	There is <b>extensive evidence</b> of strategies to support youth self-regulation.
Youth lose control of their behaviors and staff use no strategies or only punitive measures to regain control.	Youth lose control of their behaviors and staff attempt to support their development of self-regulation with one or two strategies, but quickly return to punitive measures.	If youth lose control of their behaviors, staff are able to help them regain self-regulation by employing one or more strategies, but with some struggle.	If youth lose control of their behaviors, staff easily help them to regain self-regulation by employing one or more strategies.

1	2	3	4
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<p>There are no program wide structures in place to support self-regulation.</p>	<p>There are minimal, if any, program wide structures in place to support self-regulation.</p>	<p>There are some program wide structures in place to support self-regulation.</p>	<p>There are many program wide structures in place to support self-regulation.</p>

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