



CO-REGULATION STRATEGIES

WHAT IS CO-REGULATION?

Co-regulation is the process of having an adult/caregiver provide a safe nurturing space for children to regulate their own emotions. It does not involve simply “distracting” the child. Sometimes we just want the intense emotions to “stop”, but it is really more about guiding the child through the emotions/behaviors and helping them to regulate their nervous system.

WHY IS CO-REGULATION IMPORTANT?

Children are not born with the ability to regulate their own emotions. It is a big task given to the adults in a child’s life to help them grow and foster these skills from early childhood into early adulthood. Many of us have experienced situations in which our own emotions have intensified a child’s emotional response (i.e., our kid is losing it, so then we lose it, which makes our kid lose it all the more). Co-regulation helps us to go from escalating intense emotions to bringing calm

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MYSELF?

On the next page, we discuss many techniques and activities to practice co-regulation, but it’s important to note that in order to co-regulate your child, you must be regulated yourself. There are times even with your best efforts and intentions that additional support is needed. This can look differently for every family. Children can benefit from formal support such as through individual counseling. If you feel as a parent/caregiver that you are feeling very overwhelmed and stressed with managing your own emotions you may benefit from seeking supportive services for yourself. This could be done through individual counseling, family counseling, support groups, and increasing your overall support system. The greatest gift we can give children is the gift of taking care of ourselves so that we can continue to show up and take an active role in their development.

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LABEL FEELINGS

Label your child's feelings in a calm and neutral tone. "I can see that ____made you mad, is that correct?" "It seems you are frustrated."

BACK STORIES

Ask if you can draw on your child's back with your finger while you share a story. Examples include, drawing a sun and the sun rays, or drawing mountains and taking your fingers to walk up the mountain. If your child is interested, switch and have them tell a story on your back.

TEACHING TO PAUSE

Pausing with your child, models the importance of slowing down and tuning in, before you take the next step. "I would like to help you pause and notice your body right now, let's take some deep breaths together?" "Let's pause right now, I am going to play some music." "May I give you a hug?"

SELF-REGULATE & BE AVAILABLE

Use your calm presence to help reset your child by first regulating yourself. Take a moment to take some slow breaths so that you are able to offer warm affection (with permission), listen, show empathy and be present with your child.

BREATHE TOGETHER

Take deep breaths with your child, slowing breathing in and out to the count of three, five or ten. Ask if they will breathe slowly with you. Some children may be open to letting you hold them or sit close to them so they can feel the rhythm of your breathing.

USE MUSIC

Sing and/or play calming music with your child can help calm the body.

CREATE A CALMING SPACE

Make a space at home that is inviting and calming for your child. This space may include sensory tools (fidget toys, stress balls), a weighted blanket, lowlights, art supplies, journals, and other items that your child identifies as soothing and comforting.

SAY LESS

Although the intention of the message may be good, in the moment it is best to say less. When we are upset, it can be hard to process what others are saying, For your child, this can likely lead them to feeling more overwhelmed.

Huddle up