



Co-Regulation: An Evidence-Based Approach to Building Self-Regulation in Early Childhood

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AGENDA

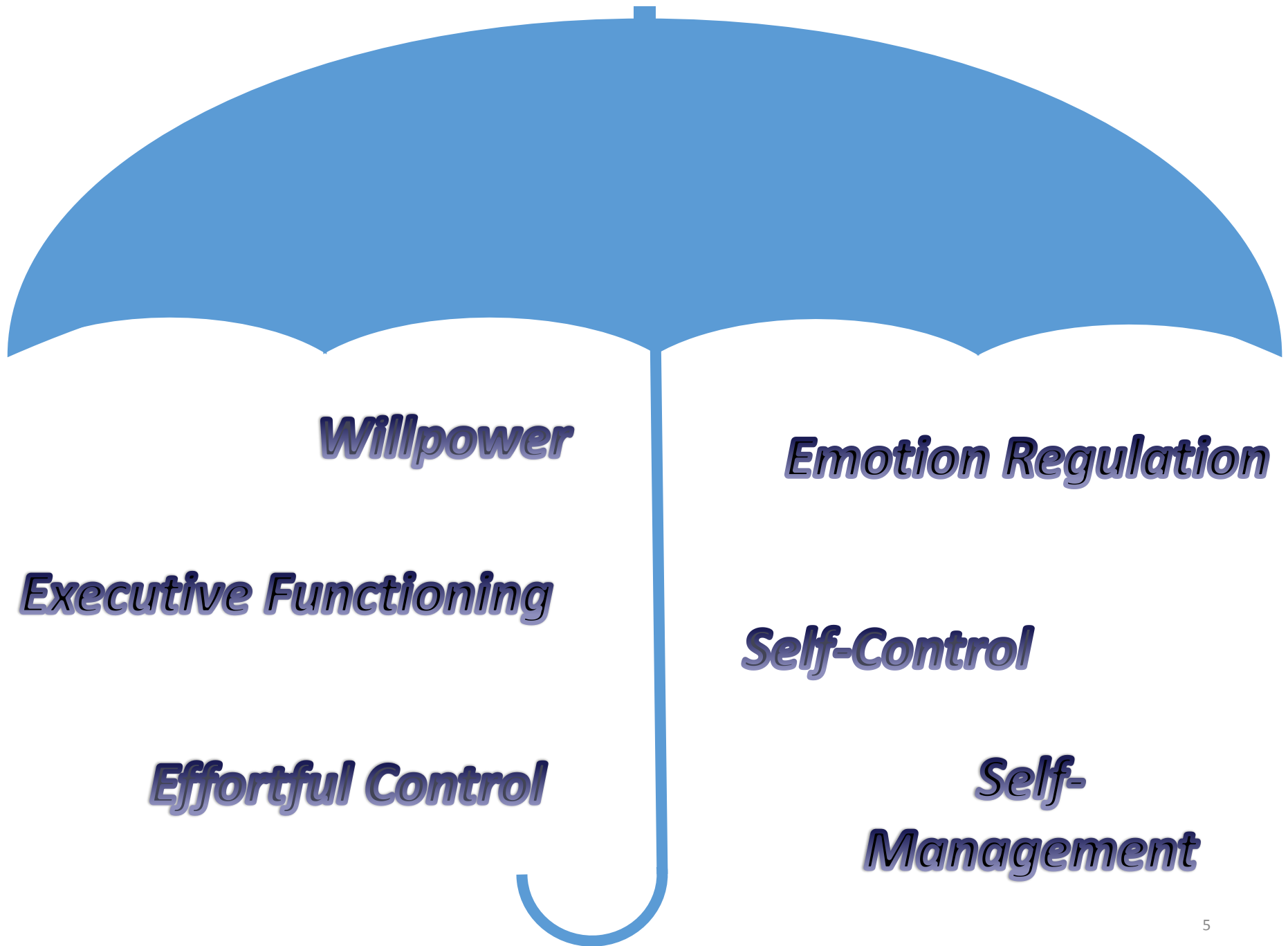
- Overview of Self-Regulation
- Influences on Self-Regulation Development
- Understanding “Co-Regulation”
- Coaching Self-Regulation

What is Self-Regulation?

Self-Regulation IS...

The act of managing *cognition* and *emotion* to enable *goal-directed actions* such as:

- **organizing behavior**
- **controlling impulses**
- **solving problems constructively**



Willpower

Emotion Regulation

Executive Functioning

Self-Control

Effortful Control

***Self-
Management***

Self-Regulation in Young Children



Turn and Talk

- What does self-regulation look like during infancy, toddler-hood, preschool?
- What are some common situations where children have difficulty self-regulating?



What Skills do Young Children Need to Develop so they can Self-Regulate?



Self-Regulation in Children with Disabilities

Turn and Talk

- What can make self-regulation more challenging?
- What contributes to these challenges?



Why is Self-Regulation Important?

- Foundational for success in school
- Predicts wellbeing and positive long-term development
- Problems with behavior regulation → Suspension and expulsion from child care centers
 - 8,000 preschoolers suspended every year
 - Disproportionately boys and Black children
 - About 20% are children with disabilities
 - Rates of expulsion 3x as high as for school-aged children
 - More than 10% of state-funded NC preschool teachers reported having expelled a child



Connections to the DEC Recommended Practices

Interaction

- INT1. Practitioners promote the child's social-emotional development by **observing, interpreting, and responding contingently** to the range of the child's emotional expressions.
- INT2. Practitioners promote the child's social development **by encouraging the child to initiate or sustain positive interactions** with other children and adults during routines and activities through **modeling, teaching, feedback**, or other types of guided support.
- INT5. Practitioners promote the **child's problem-solving behavior** by observing interpreting, and scaffolding in response to the child's growing level of autonomy and self-regulation.

Instruction

- INS4. Practitioners **plan for and provide the level of support, accommodations, and adaptations** needed for the child to **access, participate, and learn** within and across activities and routines.
- INS9. Practitioners use **functional assessment and related prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies** across environments to prevent and address challenging behavior.
- INS13. Practitioners use **coaching or consultation strategies** with primary caregivers or other adults to facilitate positive adult-child interactions and instruction

What Influences Self-Regulation?

How Families Influence Self-Regulation (100+ studies)

- Parental warmth and sensitivity
- Harsh discipline and maltreatment
- Parents' mental health
- Buffers the effect of stressors



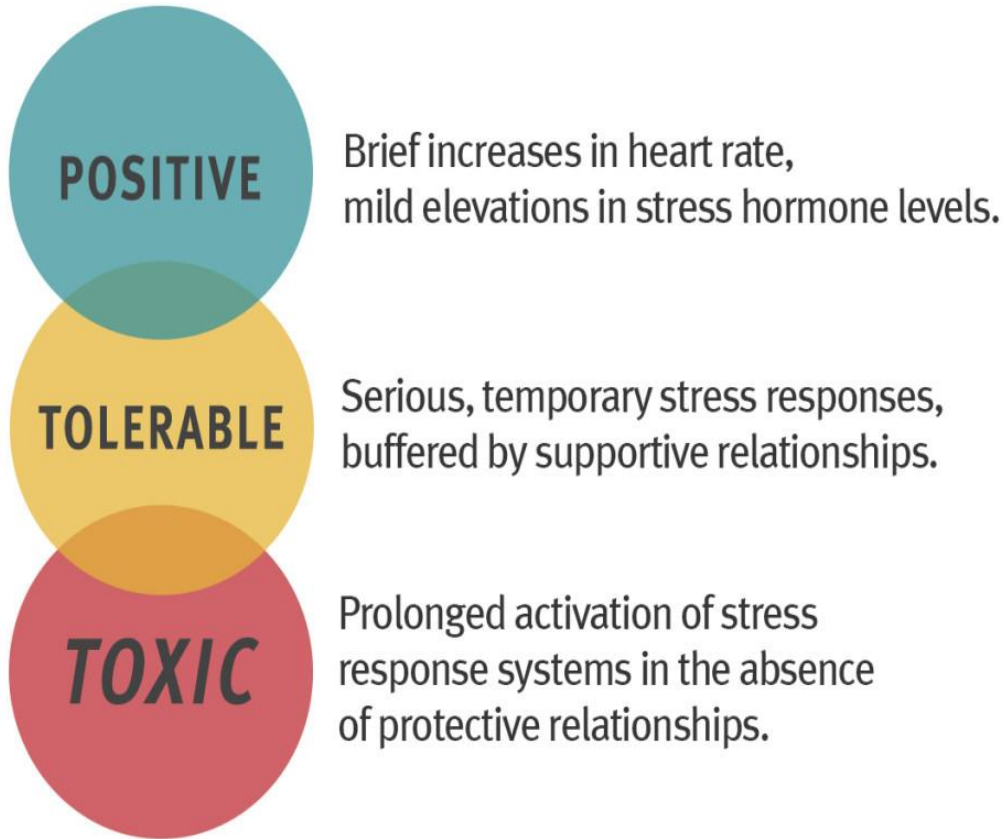
How ECE Programs Influence Self-Regulation

- Positive Teacher-Child Relationship:
 - “Protects” from risks of poverty
 - Promotes academic achievement and social adjustment
- Classrooms with effective behavior management:
 - Less disruptive, aggressive, and inappropriate behavior
 - Children more focused on learning
- Classroom management programs work!
 - Increase teachers’ effectiveness and reduce stress



Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta et al., 1995; Silver et al., 2005; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2007, 2009

How Stress Influences Self-Regulation



Traumatic Stress:

- ACEs and/or the accumulated burdens of poverty
- Increases vulnerability to future stress

Survival Mode in the Context of Stress

- Leads to a constant state of high alert:
 - Fight
 - Flight
 - Freeze
- Harder to:
 - Pay attention/stay on task
 - Regulate emotions
 - Follow rules
 - Interact with others



How Do Young Children Self-Regulate?



Turn and Talk

What are some ways you have observed that young children remain calm when stressed or calm down after being distressed?



What Helps to Strengthen Self-Regulation and Reduce Stress?



Co-Regulation

Warm, responsive caregiving and behavior coaching or scaffolding

Skills Instruction

In cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains of self-regulation

Murray, Rosanbalm, Christopoulos, 2016. Report 2016-34. Office of Planning, Research, & Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families.

Understanding Co-Regulation

“Co-Regulation”

Caregivers, educators, and professionals interact with young children to provide:

- Warmth, nurturing, and a secure, safe *relationship*
- *Support, coaching, and modeling* to facilitate a child’s ability to understand, express, and modulate their feelings, thoughts, and behavior



Capacity for Co-Regulation: It Helps to Be Mindful

Interactions

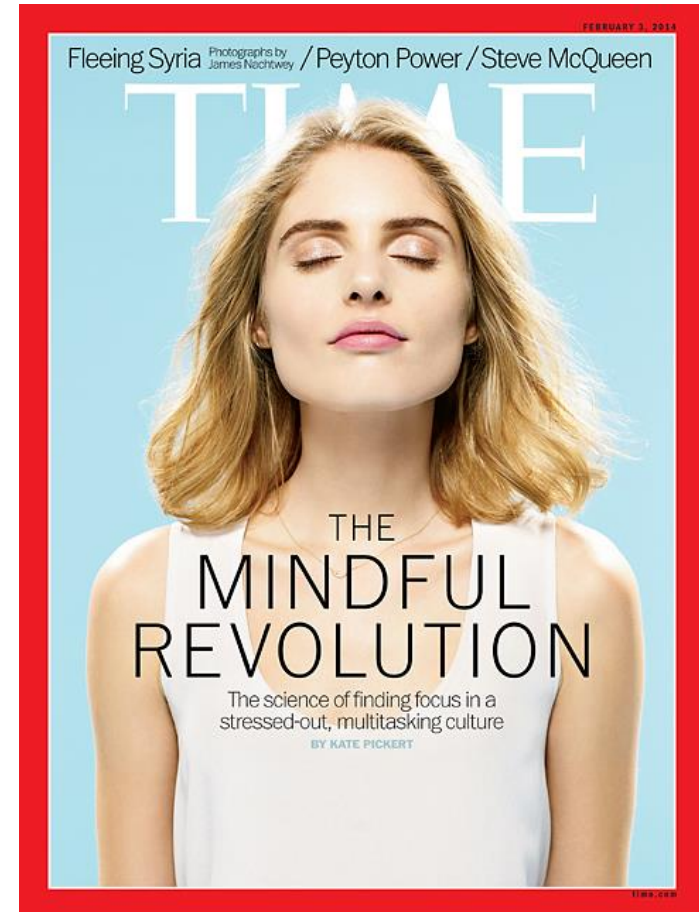


Instruction



Mindfulness

Awareness resulting from non-judgmental attention to our sensations, thoughts, and feelings in the present moment



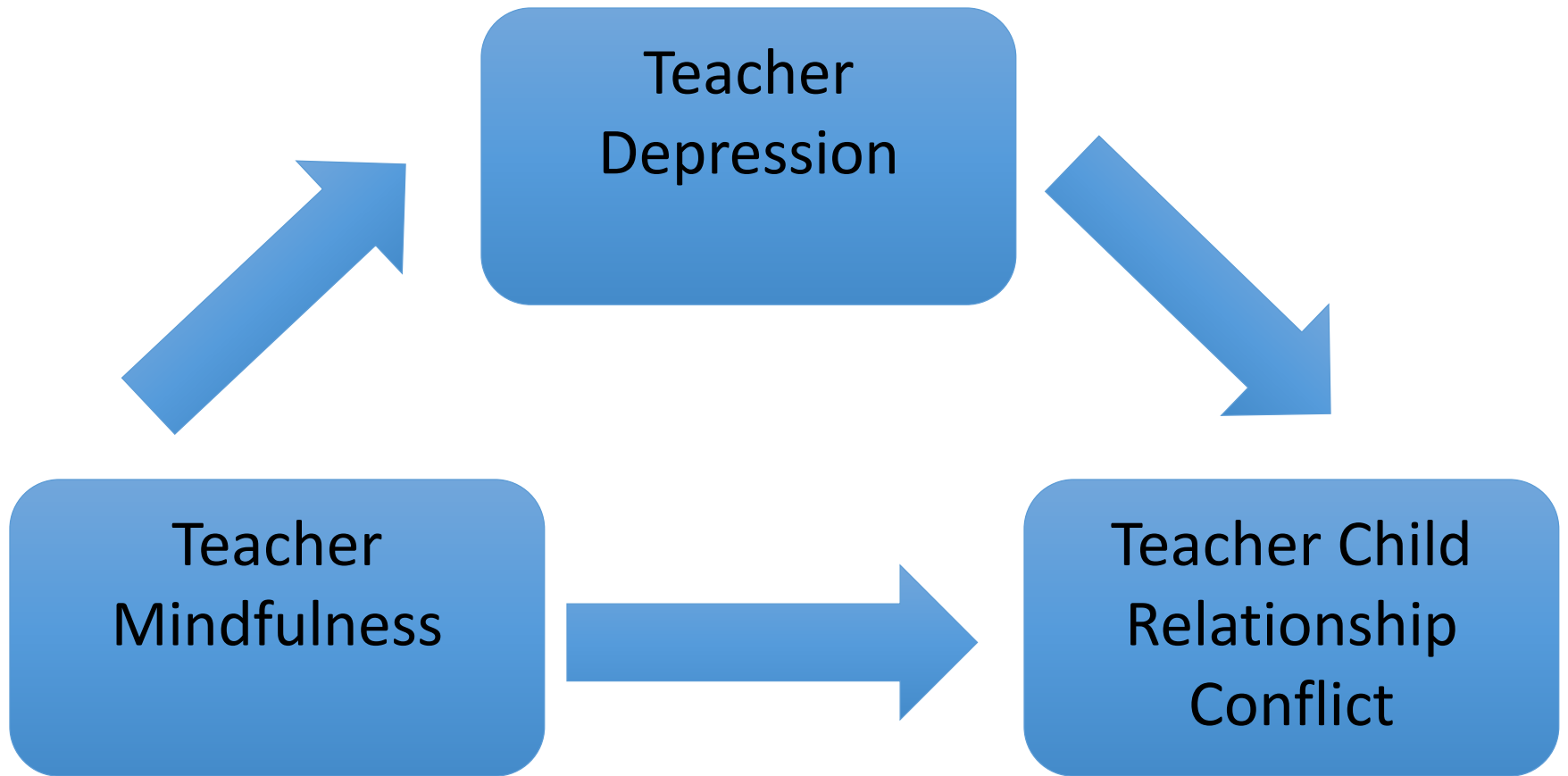
More mindful HS Professionals:

Home visitors reported
better relationships
with parents



Teachers have less
conflict in their
relationships with
children.

Mindfulness, Depression and Teacher-Child Interactions



MINDFUL MOMENT



Comments or Questions?



Co-Regulation Strategies and Supports

Co-Regulation in Action



- A co-regulating teacher/practitioner will
 - **Buffer children from stress and adversity in the environment**
 - **Provide a warm, responsive presence in times of distress**
 - **Provide consistent structure and positive discipline**
 - **Teach and model self-regulation skills**
 - **Monitor, prompt, and coach the use of skills**

Co-Regulation for Infants



Infants

- Interact in warm and responsive ways
- Anticipate and respond quickly to child's needs
- Provide physical and emotional comfort when child is stressed
- Modify environment to decrease demands and stress

Co-Regulation for Toddlers



- What can the parent do to help this child manage separation?
- What can the teacher do?

Co-Regulation for Toddlers

Toddlers

- Reassure and calm child when upset by removing child from situations or speaking calmly and giving affection
- Model self-calming strategies
- Teach rules and redirecting to regulate behavior



Co-Regulation for Preschool-Aged Children

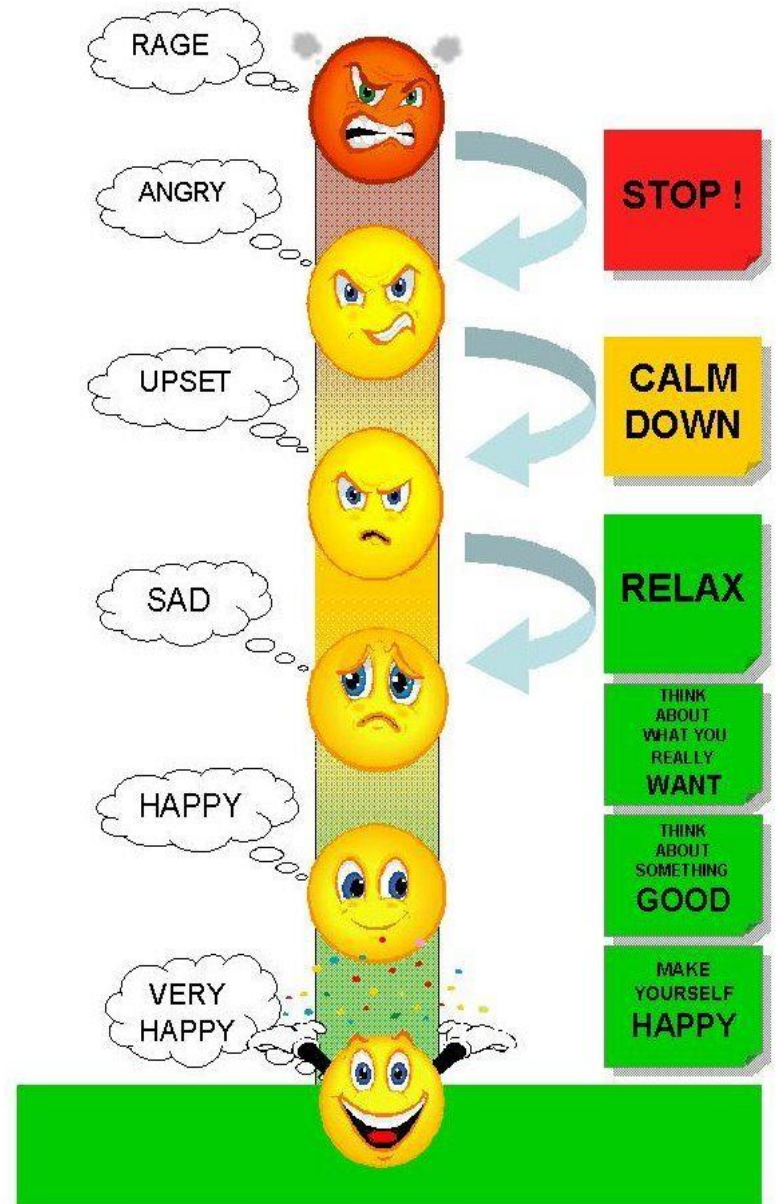
- Instruct and coach use of words to express emotion and identify solutions to simple problems
- Coach rule-following and task completion
- Model, prompt, and reinforce (or “coach”) self-calming strategies when child is upset
- Provide external structure and consequences



Coaching Self-Regulation

What to Coach with Preschoolers

- Using words (emotional literacy)
- Staying calm (emotion regulation)
- Using ignoring muscles (ignoring)
- Trying a friend's idea (social flexibility)



What Else to Coach with Preschoolers

- Waiting (patience)/ using patience muscles
- Staying focused and thinking hard (attention)
- Doing it all by yourself (independence while working)
- Sticking with something when it is hard (persistence)
- Trying different ways to solve a problem (flexibility/problem-solving)



What do I actually do and say if I want to coach self-regulation?

- Describe examples of self-regulation that you see, using descriptive commenting:
 - “You are....”
 - “I see....”
 - “It looks like....”
- Praise self-regulation behaviors
- If a child is having trouble regulating:
 - Give coping statement
 - Make a positive prediction

I bet you will...



Self-Regulation Coaching in Action

(Vignette)

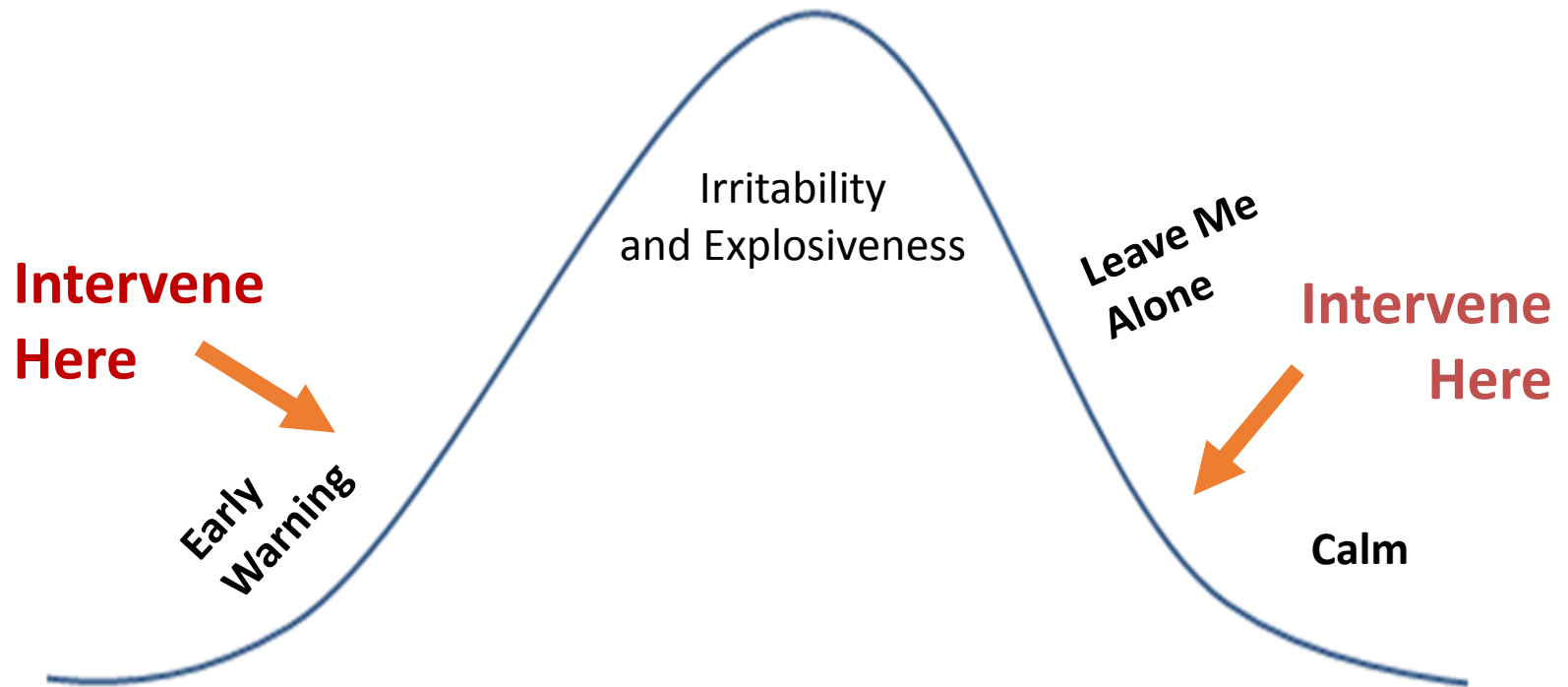
Turn and Talk

- How is this teacher coaching?
- How are you using coaching currently?
- Is there anything new you might want to try with coaching?

What do you do to help children learn self-regulation skills?

Turn and Talk

When are good times to help children calm down?



Teaching Calm-Down Strategies

- Talk about and model coping with frustration or anger
- Practice calm-down skills like:
 - Deep Breathing
 - Smell the flower, blow out the candle
 - Imagery
 - Imagine you are relaxing in a soft cloud
 - Think of happy place
 - Positive self-talk
 - “I can do it”
 - “Everyone makes mistakes”

Calm Down



take a deep breath

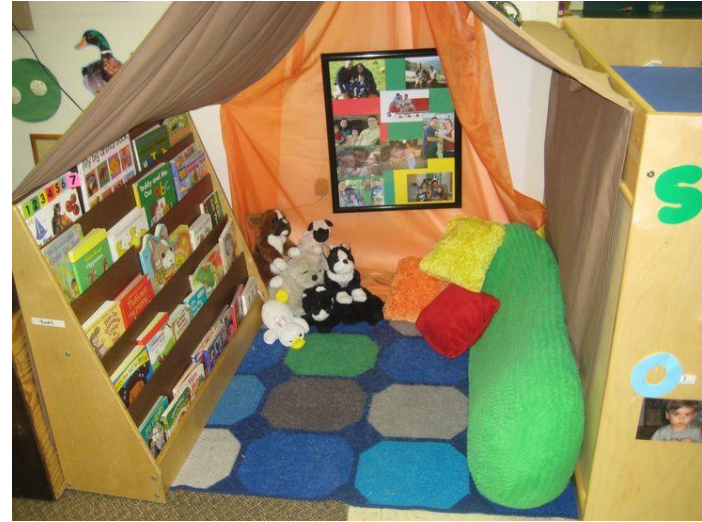


count to 5



rest in my chair

Space and Materials to Support Calming Down



Turn and Talk

- How might you use a calm-down spot in your classroom?
- What materials might you include in a calm-down spot?
- What rules might you set for your calm-down spot?

Take Homes



- Self-regulation:
 - Contributes to functioning throughout life
 - Can be taught like literacy
 - Is harder for those with significant stress
 - Is strengthened by structured classrooms with warm, supportive teachers
- Co-regulation:
 - Supports self-regulation in moment
 - Builds skills developmentally
 - Depends in part on teachers' own self-regulation skills
 - *Produces significant improvement in child skills and behavior!*