

PAY ATTENTION

PAY ATTENTION TO THE EARLY SIGNS OF DYSREGULATION

Co-regulation and sensory strategies work best when we use them during the first signs of dysregulation. We must be **proactive, not reactive.**

Early signs of being in a low arousal state:

- Tired
- Slow to respond
- Sluggish
- Minimal energy
- More flat affect (than usual)

Early signs of being in a high arousal state:

- Silly
- Fast-talking
- High pitched volume
- Decreased talking
- Frustration
- Tense body

FOCUS ON CONNECTION

FOCUS ON CONNECTION AND BUILDING TRUST

Show kids you care by listening and joining in on the things they like to do or talk about with no other motive outside of being present and engaged.

Some examples

- Reading together
- Joining in on their play without changing it
- Laughing and being silly
- Crafting
- Going for a walk

BE AWARE OF SELF

BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN TRIGGERS

A dysregulated parent can not regulate a dysregulated child.

Dig deep to figure out your own triggers and know that the child is just trying to survive, not purposefully hurt, frustrate, or upset you.

BE PRESENT

BE PRESENT AND ENGAGED

Put away distractions such as electronics/phones while engaging with kids. Work can wait.

Focus on the child and their interests or play. Model language and coping strategies as you play.

MODEL

MODEL WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO

Kids learn by watching those around them. Co-regulation starts by showing them how you process and react to emotions, and what you do to help yourself. Modeling regulation strategies will help them begin to use them, eventually independently.

Some examples of ways you can model:

- Deep breathing instead of asking them to take a deep breath
- Ask for a hug when you are sad
- Say "I need some energy, let's have a dance party"
- Narrate your coping strategies and thought processes


OFFER SAFETY

HELP KIDS FEEL SAFE

When a child is dysregulated or is experiencing a meltdown, the best thing we can do is be a safe person for them. Be present to support them in any way possible. Offering strategies won't necessarily work at this point. We use our own sense of regulation to co-regulate.

Ways we can help them feel safe:

- Hold their hand
- Rub their back
- Sit outside their room
- Use minimal words
- Use a gentle, slow voice



VALIDATE

VALIDATE ALL FEELINGS THEY HAVE

Kids have lots of really big emotions and they just want to feel heard. Validating those emotions helps them feel connected and understood.

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

"I see you're feeling really sad that you have to put this toy away. It's so hard to clean up. Let's put it right here, so we can play with it first thing tomorrow."

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

"Thank you for telling me you're feeling scared. I get scared in the dark too. Do you need a big hug from me or would you like to squeeze your lovie?"

