Childhood Readiness: Teaching Self-Regulation to Preschool-Age Children

KDEC Conference 2017

Lena M. Kisner, Ed.S., NCSP
Director of Special Education
Reno County Education Cooperative #610
2500 E 30th Ave
Hutchinson, KS. 67502
(620) 663-7178
lkisner@rcec610.com

Session Outcomes:

- Participants will understand what self-regulation is and the importance of teaching self-regulation.
- Participants will understand and learn ways to teach self-regulation using physical, emotional, and cognitive strategies.
- Participants will be able to identify resources for teaching self-regulation.
- Participants will be able to identify strategies for use in the classroom to teach self-regulation as well as calming strategies.
- Participants will be able to identify strategies for partnering with families to teach self-regulation.

What we know about the brain:

“These developmental years are not just a chance to educate, but they are actually your obligation to form a brain. If you miss these opportunities, you have missed them-forever.”
Dr. Michael Phelps, UCLA
Co-inventor of the PET scan

- 700 new neural connections formed every second in the first few years
- A young brain is easier to influence as it is more flexible. It is more efficient and effective to influence a developing brain than to try and rewire parts of an adult brain.


“Seventy percent of what is given to us genetically is brought to fruition by our environmental experiences.” (Goleman, 2006)

Windows of Opportunity: Fertile times when the brain can wire specific skills at an optimum level (Schiller, 2010 from Families and Work Institute, 1996)
Self-regulation defined:

- Universal set of skills related to success in every major area of functioning.
- Other terms used to describe self-regulation:
  - Self-control
  - Coping
  - Emotional regulation (Macklem, 2008)

Research regarding self-regulation:

- Higher expulsion rate in preschool than K-12 schools (Strain et al., 2009)
- Predicts academic success better than IQ (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005)
- Correlates highly with longevity and well-being (Grossarth-Maticek & Eysenck, 1995; Moffitt et al., 2011)
- Helps children get along better with teachers and peers (McKown, Gumbiner, Russo & Lipton, 2009)
- Young children who engage in self-regulation learn more and go further in their education (Blair & Diamond, 2008)
**Social/emotional programs:**

- Second Step Early Learning
- Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms
- Incredible Years Classroom Dinosaur Curriculum
- PATHS Preschool/Kindergarten Classroom Module


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of Curriculum</th>
<th>Evidence-Based</th>
<th>Effect on Child Outcomes</th>
<th>Comprehensive across Domains</th>
<th>Depth for Each Covered Domain</th>
<th>Domains Clipped by Each Domain</th>
<th>Specific Learning Goals</th>
<th>Multi-Dimensional Activities</th>
<th>Supporting for Individual Learning</th>
<th>Culturally and Linguistically Responsive</th>
<th>Digital Assessments for All</th>
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<th>Family Involvement</th>
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Problem Identification:

**Early Education Center – Hutchinson, Kansas**

- 50/50 Program
- 3 hour-long sessions
- Taught by early childhood special education teachers

Choosing a social/emotional curriculum – Not as easy as it seems!

- Too time intensive
- Cost prohibitive
- Limited in scope
Solution:

- Social skills training program combined with self-regulation training
- We wrote our own lessons and piloted them at the Early Education Center.
- Pre- and post-ratings indicated a significant improvement in self-regulation skills.

Self-Regulation Training System:

Helping Preschool-Age Children Learn Self-Regulation by Brad Chapin, M.S., LCP, LMLP; Lena Kisner, Ed.S., NCSP; & Brooke Stover, BA, 2016.

- Based on cognitive-behavioral psychology
- Designed to specifically target self-regulation
- Based on 8 assumptions

http://www.childhoodreadiness.com/home.html
http://www.selfregulationstation.com/

3 Regulation Skill Domains:

Physical Regulation: Recognition of physical signs signaling the engagement of fight/flight/shutdown system

Skills:
- Warning signs
- Safe and calm

Emotional Regulation: Recognition and development of healthy ways to express emotions

Skills:
- Identifying and labeling emotions
- Healthy ways to express emotions
- Owning our own emotions

Cognitive Regulation: Development of the ability to modify thoughts and plan responses

Skills:
- Unhealthy and extreme thinking
- Healthy beliefs
- Meeting psychological needs in healthy ways
- Planning, organization, and problem solving
- Identifying strengths
- Self-monitoring, reinforcement, and goal setting
Teaching self-regulation:

Core Lessons

1. Controlling our body
2. Body parts (Part One)
3. Body parts (Part Two)
4. Threat
5. Warning signs (Part One)
6. Warning signs (Part Two)
7. Calming strategies (Part 1)
8. Calming strategies (Part 2)
9. Safe place
10. Tying it all together

Supplemental Activities

- My warning signs
- Warning signs gingerbread kids
- Don’t scratch it
- Horsefly Sigh
- Pufferfish breathing
- Safe and calm bottle

Quick Practice

- Animal matching
- Deep breath song
- Matching game
- Safe Sam says
- Safe place
- Physical play dough mat
- Calming skills block game
Involving families:

- Description of curriculum in parent handbook
- Parent training nights, free food and childcare
- Discussion of curriculum at open houses and parent/teacher conferences
- Sending letters home
Sample Parent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that your child has been given the opportunity to participate in an Interactive Self-regulation Training Program. This program utilizes interactive, engaging activities to increase your child’s ability to:

✓ Recognize early signs of upset
✓ Physically calm down when he/she is upset
✓ Identify and express his/her emotions in healthy ways
✓ Implement problem-solving skills/gain understanding of healthy & unhealthy thoughts

Research indicates that those with well-developed Self-regulation skills:

✓ Are more prepared to enter elementary school
✓ Have better academic performance
✓ Do better socially
✓ Have fewer mental health issues
✓ Live longer, happier lives

As with all things involving children, parental involvement is a significant part of their success. Included with this letter is a Quick Reference Guide that is a great resource to use at home. We would like to thank you for taking part in this important step toward preparing your child with the tools to cope with the challenges that he/she will face in life.

Sincerely,

__________________________________
Physical Regulation Activities:

_Horsefly Sigh Rhyme_

When your eyes start to water like you're gonna cry,
Give the horsefly sigh a try.
Give the horsefly sigh a try.
This is how we do the horsefly sigh.
Deep breath in, lift your arms up high,
Hold it for a second, lick your lips if they're dry,
As you bring your arms down, like you're 'bout to fly,
Blow the air through your lips... don't be shy.

This is how we do the horsefly sigh.
When your tummy feels funny and you wanna run and hide,
Give the horsefly sigh a try.
Give the horsefly sigh a try.
This is how we do the horsefly sigh.
Deep breath in, lift your arms up high,
Hold it for a second, lick your lips if they're dry,
As you bring your arms down, like you're 'bout to fly,
Blow the air through your lips... don't be shy.
This is how we do the horsefly sigh.

When your face gets red or your fists feel tight,
Give the horsefly sigh a try.
Give the horsefly sigh a try.
This is how we do the horsefly sigh.
Deep breath in, lift your arms up high,
Hold it for a second, lick your lips if they're dry,
As you bring your arms down, like you're 'bout to fly,
Blow the air through your lips... don't be shy.
This is how we do the horsefly sigh.
Animal Matching

DIRECTIONS: Draw lines between the pictures that match then practice each animal stretch.
Deep Breathing

DIRECTIONS: Draw your face when it's safe and calm.

I CAN SHOW YOU
SAFE AND CALM

THIS IS WHAT I KNOW

I TAKE A DEEP BREATH
NICE AND SLOW

AND LET MY FEELINGS GO

WITH A DEEP BREATH IN

AND A DEEP BREATH OUT

NOW I'M CALM

NOW I'M SAFE

NOW I CAN PARTICIPATE

I CAN SHOW YOU
SAFE AND CALM

THIS IS WHAT I KNOW
Matching Cards

Directions: Copy/print and cut out the matching cards.

Draw a Picture  Draw a Picture  Eagle Stretch  Eagle Stretch

Mad  Mad  Penguin Stretch  Penguin Stretch

Monkey Stretch  Monkey Stretch  Octopus Stretch  Octopus Stretch

Sad  Sad  Talk to an Adult  Talk to an Adult

Happy  Happy  Butterfly Stretch  Butterfly Stretch
Safe Place

DIRECTIONS: Take Penny Penguin to her safe place.
Emotional Regulation Activities:

**Express Your Emotions Guide**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read and process these short scenarios/questions. Use the structured statements that follow to practice common personal situations.

1. When Jill couldn't find her favorite toy, she felt sad and talked to her mom about it. This helped her feel better.
   “Have you ever lost a toy? How did you feel? Did you talk to someone about it?”

2. When Sam had to stop playing his favorite game because it was time for dinner, he felt angry. He talked to his older brother about it and he felt better.
   “Sometimes it’s hard to stop doing something when we are having fun. Has that ever happened to you?”

3. Amy felt sad when her mom said that she had to move. She drew a picture of what her new house looked like with all of her family there. She felt better.
   “Have you ever felt sad? Who can you talk to when you feel sad?”

4. Russ heard thunder outside. He felt scared. He told his Dad and that really helped.
   “Have you ever felt scared? Who can you talk to when you feel scared?”

**Practice Structure for Emotional Expression**

When I feel ________, I can talk to ____________________.

When I feel ________, I can draw a ____________________.

When I am at home and I feel ____________, I can talk to ____________.

When I am at school and I feel ____________, I can tell ____________.
Label Happy

DIRECTIONS: Cut and paste the pieces to make a HAPPY face.
Label Mad

DIRECTIONS: Cut and paste the pieces to make a MAD face.
Label Sad

DIRECTIONS: Cut and paste the pieces to make a SAD face.
Label Scared

DIRECTIONS: Cut and paste the pieces to make a SCARED face.
Safe and Calm Song

You put your mad foot in
You put your mad foot out
You put your mad foot in and you shake the mad out
You do it calm and safely and you turn your day around
That’s how we work it out! (clap at each word)

You put your sad face in
You put your sad face out
You put your sad face in and you shake the sad out
You do it calm and safely and you turn your day around
That’s how we work it out! (clap at each word)

You put your scared hand in
You put your scared hand out
You put your scared hand in and you shake it all about
You do it calm and safely and you turn your day around
That’s how we work it out! (clap at each word)

You put your calm self in
You put your calm self out
You put your calm self in and you breathe in and out
You did it calm and safely and you turned your day around
That’s how we work it out!
Cognitive Regulation Activities:

Healthy Thought

DIRECTIONS: Draw yourself doing something that you are good at.

This is me doing something I’m good at!
Healthy Thought

DIRECTIONS: Draw someone who cares about you.

This person cares about me!
References:


