

Self-Regulation Skills for Children



How Can You Tell if Your Child is Struggling with Self-Regulation?

Kids who are having difficulty with self-regulation may:

- Act overly silly or “out of control”
- Have tantrums or meltdowns
- Struggle with transitions between activities
- Have difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Struggle with being in close proximity to others (e.g. circle time)
- Demonstrate problems during social interactions (e.g. talking too loud, standing too close, touching others)
- Have difficulty walking or waiting in line
- Move too quickly or with too much force
- Grab or touch objects impulsively

How to Help Kids Develop Self-Regulation

Even though self-regulation can be a challenging skill for many children, research has shown that games and fun activities can be effective in promoting the ability to self-regulate for children who are struggling.

Games that support planning and problem solving, memory, attention, motor control, and sequencing can help kids develop the ability to self-regulate despite challenging situations and circumstances. Calming techniques, self-awareness exercises, and mindfulness activities can also be effective in supporting the development of self-regulation.

Games and Activities for Self-Regulation

The following games and activities can be great ways to introduce self-regulation strategies with kids!

1. Red Light, Green Light
2. Simon says
3. Duck Duck Goose
4. Freeze tag
5. Hide and seek
6. Freeze dance
7. Musical Chairs
8. "Counting down" or anticipation activities (e.g. setting out a beanbag chair and helping the child wait by counting down – "3...2...1...JUMP!" and then jumping onto the bean bag chair. And then repeating the activity so the child knows to wait before jumping)
9. Dancing – practice dancing fast and slow to different types of music
10. Balloon volleyball
11. Sequencing motor tasks (e.g. do 3 jumps, then 2 hops, then stand on one foot for 3 seconds)
12. Breathing techniques
13. Guided meditation for kids
14. Yoga

Adapted from an article at theinspiredtreehouse.com