

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Guide for Professionals: Self-Regulation

Here is what we know about self-regulation:

- It is the ability to deal with stressors and recover from them.
 - Challenging behaviours should be thought of as the child not coping due to stressors, skill deficits or unmet needs.
- Closely linked to brain maturation, self-regulation develops over time with support from nurturing and responsive caregivers.
- Is the ability to adjust our bodies, emotions, thinking, attention and behaviour so we can be in a [calm, focused, alert state](#) for learning and responding to our environment.

Within your professional role and considering the [social determinants of health](#), how do you:

- Explore with the caregiver how to:
 - provide environments that reduce stressors while supporting the child's effort to learn how to self-regulate?
 - Help children understand, identify and label their feelings and responses to stressors? Support them while they release emotions using "[time ins](#)"?
 - Model and practice social skills and problem solving through the use of songs, stories and unstructured play?
- Discuss coping and support mechanisms with caregivers?
- Explore connection opportunities to informal and formal supports (e.g., professional and peer community-based supports and services)?
- Support caregivers in having developmentally appropriate expectations for their child?
- Administer appropriate screening tools that advise on if a child is within the typical developmental milestone range? How do you manage referrals?

Where can you find more information?

- [Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Executive Function](#)
- [Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child: Executive Function & Self-Regulation](#)
- [The Mehrit Centre](#)
- [Beyond Blue: Self-regulation](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Social Determinants of Health](#)

Where can you find services that support families?

- [Parenting in Ottawa](#)
- [Parent Resource Centre](#)
- [211 Ontario](#)
- [Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario](#)
- [Mental Health and Substance Use Services and Resources](#)
- [Families Canada](#)

References:

- [Calm, Alert and Happy by Dr. Stuart Shanker](#)
- [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)
- [Best Start, Frequently Asked Questions about Time-outs](#)