

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Guide for Parents/Caregivers: Self-Regulation

Here is what we know about self-regulation:

- It is how we deal with stressors and recover from them.
- It is how we manage our feelings, thoughts, and actions so we can be in a calm, focused, alert state. This helps us to cope with everyday life so we are ready to learn.
- Some examples of stressors children can experience are:
 - Lack of sleep
 - Being hungry or not eating enough healthy foods
 - Feeling overwhelmed (e.g., adjusting to a new baby, transitions, family changes)
 - Feeling unwell or being sick
 - Restlessness or needing to move (e.g., not enough physical activity)
 - Using screens more than recommended ([Canadian Pediatric Society](#))
 - Being exposed to an environment that is not a good fit for them (e.g., noise, lighting, overstimulating or understimulating, crowded, no opportunities for movement)

As a parent or caregiver, think about a child's age and developmental abilities, how can you:

- Support your child's ability to cope in different environments?
For example, in a grocery store, at a party, and at a playground.
- Help children understand, identify and label their feelings and responses?
For example, "You must have felt frustrated when Omar took your toy. Let's go talk to Omar together."
- Support them while they release emotions using "[time ins](#)"?
For example, "I see that you are angry right now. It's okay to feel angry. I am going to stay with you until you feel calm."
- Model and practice social skills and problem solving abilities through the use of songs, stories and unstructured play?
Use songs and resources to teach you and your child new techniques such as deep breathing to help calm down. For example, a [Sesame Street video](#).
- Build a support system around you?
Parenting is not always easy. Having support can help you get through challenging moments. For example, reach out to supportive family, friends, community programs and resources.
- Know if your child's development is on track for their age?
It is important to have developmentally appropriate expectations of your child's ability and behaviour. For example, the [Looksee Checklist®](#) (formerly Nipissing District Developmental Screen®-NDDS) and the [Early Years Check-In](#) give activities and examples for each age and stage of development.

Where can you find more information?

- [Self-Reg with Stuart Shanker](#)
- [Stuart Shanker, Self-Regulation: The Early Years What You Need To Know](#)
- [City of Hamilton – Parenting with LOVE](#)
- [Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions?](#)
- [Ottawa Public Health: MindMasters2](#)
- [24-Hour Movement and Activity Guidelines](#)
- [Positive Discipline for Young Children \(Time-Ins\)](#)

Where can you find support?

- [Parenting in Ottawa](#)
- [Parent Resource Centre](#)
- [211 Ontario](#)
- [Mental Health and Substance Use Services and Resources](#)