

7 Ways to Teach Your Child Self-Regulation

Help your child recognize the higher goal

- Higher goals **EX:** empathy, social relationships and learning
- Managing an impulse **EX:** Why don't we grab a toy away from our friend? Because we want to **get along** with our friends

Use naturally occurring situations to teach self-regulation strategies

- Before the event or situation, explain the expectations and the higher goal. Then, in the moment, help them to be able to meet that goal. Give them the strategies to regulate their impulses.
- It is not about the child having the sheer willpower to control impulses, but instead having lots of strategies to help them regulate those impulses.

Acknowledge the challenge of regulation

- Regulating is hard for kids. If they struggle, acknowledge the struggle. If they get frustrated, acknowledge the frustration.
- If you help them “name it”, then you can develop strategies to “tame it”
- Offer a strategy (e.g., breathing, redirect, distract, counting to 10) to help regulate

Have your child make a choice and a plan

- Providing your child with opportunities to make choices gives them the practice they need to develop decision making skills and gives them a sense of mastery over their own life
- Give your child the opportunity to make a plan **EX:** This morning we are staying at home and we can do any of these things—what would you like to do first or second

Play games that focus on self-regulation skills

- Self-Regulation is not something you can tell your child how to do. It is something that has to be learned by doing and practicing.
- When you are not in one of those naturally occurring situations, the best thing to do to help your child practice self-regulation skills is to play games
- Best definition of a game is to manage impulses to meet a higher goal (winning) and it doesn't feel like you are practicing self-regulation (e.g., turn taking, waiting, losing)

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Remember self-regulation skills develop over a lifetime

- Helping your child develop these skills will stay with them their whole life
- Development in self-regulation of the brain is thought to be complete sometime in their 30s.
- It is important to teach your child that it takes time for a brain to grow and they will have to try and try again to master things they want to learn, games to play, etc.

Realize it is just as important to let go of control

- Ultimately, we want our children to have the ability to manage impulses when needed and to be able to let loose when they can
- Teaching your child when to let go of control is equally important as teaching them to be in control