



10 Ways to promote self-regulation every day

1. Let your child know what you expect before you start. Explain in simple, positive words what you want him to do. The clearer and simpler the rules and guidelines are, the better for both of you. Once your child understands, he's more able to use his self-regulation skills.
2. Make sure your child understands the usefulness and/or importance what you're asking him to do. For example, you can explain why it's important to listen when people talk to him (that way he won't miss anything) or to use gentle hands with the puppy (the puppy will want to be with him). If he understands why it's important, he'll be able to see its value and do it.
3. Help your child look for and understand signals, clues and models for what's expected. Point them out to him (e.g. "Oh look, that man is pointing over there, I guess that's where we're supposed to go.", "Let's look at what everyone else is doing so we know what to do").
4. Make sure he CAN exercise self-regulation. That means he's Calm, Alert and Nourished. If he's calm, he'll be more able to keep himself regulated. If he's alert and able to pay attention, he'll be more likely to self-regulate than if he's tired or not feeling well. Children typically need to eat every 2 to 2 ½ hours so, if he hasn't had a snack recently, don't expect him to be able to control his behavior, thinking or emotions.
5. Don't TELL him what to do. Once you've explained expectations clearly, calmly and simply to your child, prompt him rather than tell him what to do. We want him to think for himself as much as possible. For example, you could say "What could you do to help yourself?", "What do you need to do?" or "Remember what we are supposed to do here?" Offer hints if he seems to be stuck.
6. Give your child honest feedback. Always be as positive and calm as possible but also be honest when giving him feedback on how he did. Let him know when he's improving and how he can do it better (e.g. "You did a really good job at writing your name – maybe next time, you can start way over on the left side because it got a little scrunched this time"). This will help him understand the amount of effort it takes to learn and do something well.
7. Give the child chances to try things on his own. Let him make **small** mistakes. Remember, making mistakes is part of learning. It's difficult to watch a child if you know it's going to end up incorrect or imperfect, but sit back and see what he does. If he runs into difficulty, ask him what he can do to change things (see item #5 above). Remind him that making mistakes means that he's learning and that's a good thing.

8. Offer your child choices about what to do, how to do it and/or when to do it. These can be fairly minor choices, for example, "Do you want to do this one right now or do it later?", "Do you want to have orange juice or apple juice?" Even these small choices can give your child a sense of control.
9. Allow your child times and places where he can let loose. Don't expect him to self-regulate all the time. He needs chances to feel free to do whatever he wants (so long as it's safe) – just help him find appropriate times and settings.
10. Be patient. Learning self-regulation takes time and progress comes in small steps. Rejoice in the small gains and stay positive. Be sure to point out to your child when you notice that he used self-regulation (e.g. "I noticed that you stopped and looked before doing that – nice thinking!").