

Self-regulation News from spark*

Over the next while, we're going to work on self-regulation skills. Your child will learn to control his body and manage his thinking and emotions.

We're using spark* which stands for *Self-Regulation Program of Awareness and Resilience in Kids*. This program uses a systematic approach to teaching your child how to be more aware of his behavior, thinking, and feelings and to control them on his own.

We'll work on small but essential steps. This makes sure your child builds a solid foundation before moving to new skills. It's really important that we don't jump ahead or expect your child to self-regulate before he's learned all the necessary basic skills.

The goal for every child is to learn to take more responsibility for his behavior. That means he'll learn things like using gentle hands, a quiet voice and walking feet, as well as learning how to keep from getting distracted. He'll also learn to understand social signals, like gestures and facial expressions.

We'll work together to help each child learn:

1. He can control his body, thinking, and feelings. He doesn't have to let his hand grab or his brain get distracted.
2. When and where he needs to control himself and when and where he can let loose a little more.
3. How to cope with excitement, distractions, and changes. He'll learn to resist these things so they don't interfere.
4. Things he can do to make life easier for himself in everyday settings. These might include things like going to a quiet place so he can concentrate better and not be bothered by noises or other people.



Self-regulation is an important skill for every child. It means that he can learn how to control his body, thinking and emotions in ways that are appropriate to different times and places.

Each child will learn to be aware of how he can:

- Plan his actions and reactions and not just act impulsively
- Change his usual ways of doing things when needed
- Control his actions and reactions in healthy and appropriate ways.

We're NOT trying to make the child stop being himself. Our goal is to help him calm himself where he should and be active and outgoing when he can. He'll learn to relax and enjoy life and not get overly upset at small changes and distractions. He'll also learn when it's okay to be excited and full of energy.



The spark* Model

The first area we'll work on is Behavioral Self-regulation. Your child will learn to control his movements. He'll learn to resist impulses, like running in the house, and learn when and where different actions are appropriate. For example, you can run and yell in the playground but not at the library or at the mall.

The next area we'll focus on is Cognitive Self-regulation. Your child will learn to look at and think about only the most important information when doing a task or activity. He'll find out how to ignore things that aren't important. He'll learn to check that he understands things he hears and sees and what to do if he's not sure. We'll also work on how to explain things so other people will understand.

The third area is Emotional Self-regulation. Your child will be helped to identify basic gestures, emotions in himself and other people. He'll then learn how to figure out what some gestures and emotions mean. Finally, he'll learn how he needs to change how he acts with different people, like children versus adults or teachers versus parents.

In the weeks ahead

Each newsletter will explain what your child's working on and how you can help by practicing at home. We'll include activities and materials you can use in your daily activities.

We'll also ask you for suggestions about places and times where your child needs help with self-regulation. This will make sure we focus on the most important things in your lives.

Research has shown that children who learn self-regulation are more likely to:

- Be happier
- Have more successful relationships with other people
- Be self-motivated
- Feel more self-confident
- Be calmer and less stressed by everyday events
- Be more interested in learning
- Enjoy learning more
- Persist with tasks and activities
- Manage their time better
- Work harder at school
- Be more creative

