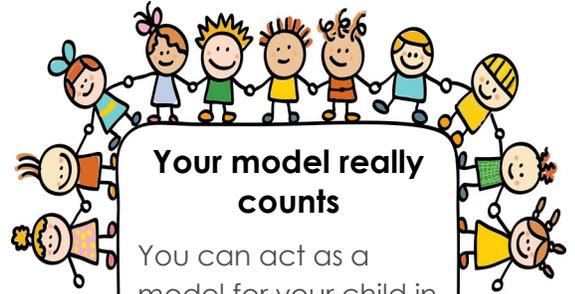


Self-regulation News from spark*



Your model really counts

You can act as a model for your child in using the strategies he's learning. This can be done in two main ways:

1. Positive model— you can say out loud to yourself that you need to remember where to start a task (on the left side and/ or at the top). You can also cover up distractions and comment out loud how that can help you. Using your 'finder finger' is also a good model for your child to see. Comment how it helps you look with your eyes and work systematically.
2. Negative model— forget to use a systematic approach and miss something. Ask your child to help you. Then work together to fix things up.

Our new focus is on Cognitive Self-Regulation. Your child will be learning how to use his thinking more effectively.

The first area we'll work on is taking in information. That is, we want your child to learn how to look really carefully before he starts something.

A key thing we'll work on right now is being "systematic" - don't be afraid of using that word with him, we are! Your child will learn that, when we work left to right and top to bottom, we won't miss anything.

This may sound a bit tedious but we want to make sure he's careful and doesn't skip around when looking at things. By being systematic, he'll be able to understand things more easily and figure out what's most important. We find that lots of children on the autism spectrum 'jump to conclusions' about activities before they've really had a chance to check them out. By making sure he's systematic and looks at everything, he'll be in a better position to decide what he wants to do. Also, if he's systematic, he won't miss anything and won't have to go back and do it later.

Some strategies to help your child be systematic

Some of the strategies we'll use are:

- Putting a green 'go' dot at the top left corner of a task or activity to remind your child where to start. You can use this same strategy at home if your child finds it helpful—ask him.
- Covering up things that may distract him from working systematically. We use sticky notes to cover other pictures or words on a page if they're distracting. This is really helpful for many children because sometimes their eyes seem to 'dance' around an activity because there's so much going on. Give your child the choice of covering up things that "aren't important right now so it's easier for your brain".
- Using his 'finder finger'. This is his index finger on his right hand. We use it to look at things in an organized way. By

pointing with his 'finder finger', he can help himself look at only one thing at a time. It helps him keep from getting distracted. Try this at home too.

- Looking with your eyes. This is something we emphasize when he uses his 'finder finger'. It helps him coordinate his eyes and pointing and thinking. Remind him every so often when doing an activity: "Be sure to look with your eyes". Also, be sure to tell him when he looks carefully: "Wow, you really know how to look carefully!"

Using the strategies in other places

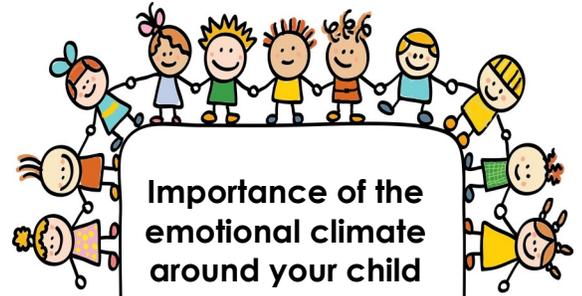
Encourage your child to use the four strategies outlined above. Remember, don't tell him what to do. Ask him, "What could you do to help yourself?" If he can't figure out what to do, you can show him.

Just like before, we are also going to work on extending these strategies to other times and places. Think about situations **at home**. When should your child be systematic? For example, being systematic in putting his toys away will make it easier to find them next time. Write some ideas in the attached form under the *At home* column.

Think about when your child is **at school**. You might ask his teacher to see if there are some areas that need special attention. For example, being systematic when finishing tasks, reading, printing or writing.

Think about when your child is out **in the community**. For example, he might help you be systematic in finding everything on the grocery list at the store. Write some ideas in the *In the community* column.

Once you have written in at least a few ideas in each column, please send it back to us so we can start working on these things.



Importance of the emotional climate around your child

Children learn better when they are with people they can trust. When we accept him and help him feel safe, he can relax.

When he senses a positive mood and optimism, he's likely to be more curious and interested.

When we show and tell him we have confidence in his abilities, he'll try harder and be more resilient. It's better to praise him more often than remind or correct him. That way he'll be less likely to become discouraged.

When children feel that they are respected and can count on our support, they'll strive for more challenges.

When they feel they belong and are treated fairly, they'll be more likely to respect other people and try to help them.

How I want my child to be systematic and use strategies to help himself look carefully in these places (carefully describe the situation and what you would like to see your child do)

At home	At school	In the community