

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who can use spark\*?

spark\* can be implemented by teachers, therapists, assistants, and parents. spark\* is appropriate for any child where self-regulation is a concern, for example, children with autism, fetal alcohol spectrum, Fragile X, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

### What should I expect from a child as they learn self-regulation?

We work slowly and carefully to build a solid foundation of skills. Changes in behavior or self-regulation, just like any learning, take time and practice. After a few weeks, most children show positive changes when they've had chances to practice at home and in the community.

### Can spark\* be used with other programs?

Children participating in spark\* can be involved with other types of therapy. We emphasize positive language, making sure each child participates actively and understands the reasons for each skill. Because of this, children receiving more directive forms of therapy (such as Applied Behavior Analysis) at the same time may find the contrast striking.

### Are there other places I can learn more about spark\*?

You can go to the spark\* website to learn more about spark\* and its features. Parents, teachers and therapists will find the 18 newsletters that accompany spark\* helpful as well. You can also sign up for our spark\* Self-Regulation News on the website.

## About spark\*

The spark\* stands for the *Self-Regulation Program for Awareness and Resilience in Kids*. It was developed by Dr. Heather MacKenzie, a Canadian speech-language pathologist and educator. over decades of clinical practice.

spark\* is an evidence-based program founded on current neuroscience research and developed from extensive clinical experience. It helps children with special needs to make better decisions and become increasingly independent. As with all of Dr. MacKenzie's work, she focuses on nurturing strengths and talents in children to help them learn and thrive.

Visit spark\* at: [www.selfregcentral.com](http://www.selfregcentral.com)

## CONTACT



Dr. Heather MacKenzie



[selfregcentral@gmail.com](mailto:selfregcentral@gmail.com)



[www.selfregcentral.com](http://www.selfregcentral.com)



[facebook.com/selfregcentral/](https://facebook.com/selfregcentral/)



[twitter.com/alertkids](https://twitter.com/alertkids)

**spark\*** 

# Self-Regulation Program for Awareness & Resilience in Kids

For children 2 to 8 years of age



## What is spark\*?

spark\* is an evidence-based program that teaches children how to manage and regulate their behavior, thinking, and emotions more effectively. They learn how and when to control their bodies, thinking, and reactions to things that happen around them. They also learn when and where they can 'let loose' and not worry about self-regulation.

With spark\*, children learn to:

- use breathing to calm and center themselves.
- think ahead and plan what to do and not just 'dive in' or become overwhelmed.
- reconsider impulses or previous ways of doing things.
- remember important ideas and information.
- look at what they're doing and fix any mistakes and then use these ideas to help themselves in the future.
- think and behave more flexibly, adapting to different situations without melting down.



### BEHAVIORAL SELF-REGULATION

- Control hands, breathing, feet, voice, whole body
- Use slow breathing to keep calm

## What is spark\* about?

spark\* contains three different units (shown in the diagram below):

**Behavioral Self-Regulation.** This unit teaches children to modulate the use of their hands, breathing, feet, voice, and whole bodies. Emphasis is placed on learning that body parts can be used in many different ways—slowly, softly, quickly, loudly. Slow breathing is introduced to help children calm and center themselves.

**Cognitive Self-Regulation.** This unit helps children learn to use information more accurately, ignoring unimportant things. The focus is on learning to make sense of and remember what they hear and see. The children also learn ways to explain their ideas to others.

**Emotional Self-Regulation.** This unit helps children learn to notice and understand gestures (such as waving or nodding your head 'yes') and emotions shown on people's faces. They learn appropriate responses to these cues and to different people and settings; for example, someone in the family or strangers in a store.



### COGNITIVE SELF-REGULATION

- Control attention, listen, make sure you understand
- Talk about ideas so others understand

## How does spark\* teach skills?

Each part of spark\* is presented and practiced in a progression of four important steps:

- 1. Awareness of ability.** The focus is on helping children learn that they can control their bodies, thinking, and feelings. This promotes self-awareness.
- 2. Awareness of need.** Children are then helped to learn when and where to use their new self-regulation skills and strategies. With each family's help, children identify when and where to use their new skills.
- 3. Resilience.** This is one of the unique features of spark\*. In this step, children learn how to use their new self-regulation skills, even amid distractions and temptations or when stressed or anxious. This promotes self-reflection.
- 4. Self-advocacy.** This is another unique feature of spark\*. Children learn how to change a situation to make it easier to cope and learn. For example, a child might ask other people to speak more quietly or might find a quieter place.



### EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION

- Notice gestures, facial expressions and people and setting differences
- Use this information for responding appropriately