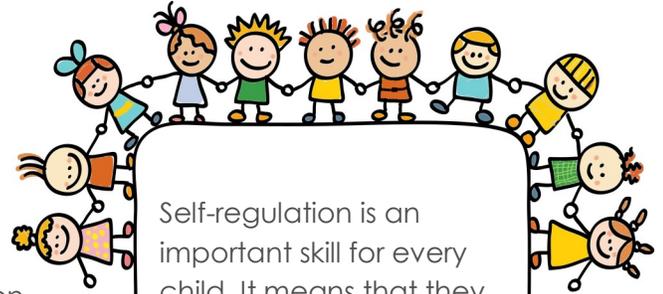


Self-regulation News from spark*



Over the next while, we're going to work on self-regulation skills. Your child will learn to control their body and manage their 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 their behavior, thinking, and feelings and to control them on their 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 they've learned all the necessary basic skills.

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

We'll work together to help each child learn:

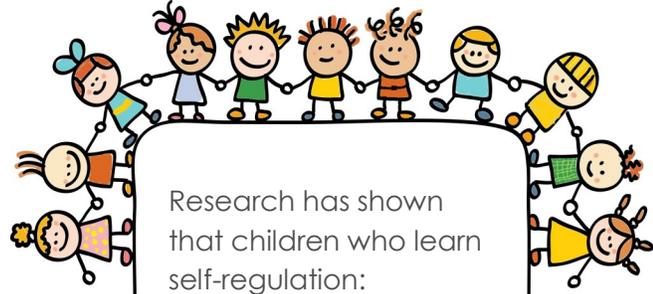
1. They can control their body, thinking, and feelings. They don't have to let their hand grab or their brain get distracted.
2. When and where they need to control themselves and when and where they can let loose a little more.
3. How to cope with excitement, distractions, and changes. They'll learn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

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

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

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

We're NOT trying to make the child stop being themselves. Our goal is to help them calm themselves where they should and be active and outgoing when they can. They'll learn to relax and enjoy life and not get overly upset at small changes and distractions. They'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 their movements. They'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. They'll find out how to ignore things that aren't important. They'll learn to check that they understand things they hear and see and what to do if they're 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 themselves and other people. They'll then learn how to figure out what some gestures and emotions mean. Finally, they'll learn how they need to change how they act with different people, like children versus adults or teachers versus parents.

See the spark* brochure attached on the following pages.

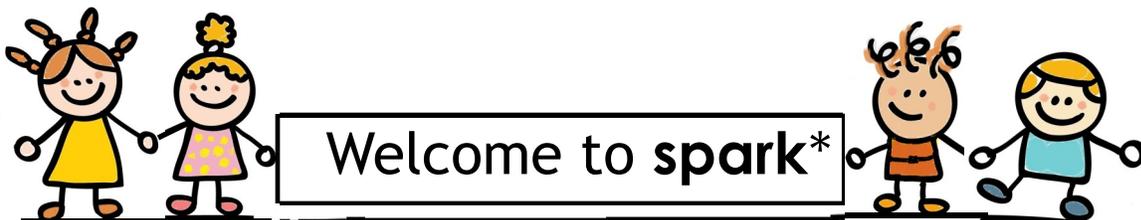
In the weeks ahead

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 happier
- Have more successful relationships with other people
- Are self-motivated
- Feel more self-confident
- Are calmer and less stressed by everyday events
- Are more interested in learning
- Enjoy learning more
- Persist with tasks and activities and don't give up easily
- Manage their time better
- Work harder at school
- Are more creative



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

CONTACT



Dr. Heather MacKenzie



selfregcentral@gmail.com



www.selfregcentral.com



facebook.com/selfregcentral/



twitter.com/alertkids



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