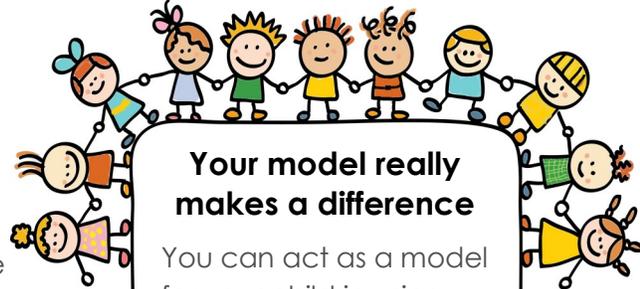


# Self-regulation News from spark\*



## Your model really makes a difference

You can act as a model for your child in using the strategies they've learning. By doing that, you show your child that everyone can benefit from using them. Use modeling in two main ways:

**Positive model**—you can talk out loud to yourself about needing to remember where to start a task (on the left side and/or at the top). You can also cover up distractions or use your finder finger and comment out loud how that helps you not get distracted. Comment how it helps you to look with your eyes and work systematically.

**Negative model**—forget to use a systematic approach and miss something. Ask your child to help you— "What can I do to help myself so I don't miss anything?" Then work together to fix things up by using one of the

Our new focus is Cognitive Self-Regulation. Your child will be learning how to use their 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 they start something.

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

This may sound a bit tedious but we want to make sure they're careful and don't skip around when looking at things. By being systematic, they'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 they're systematic and look at everything, they'll be in a better position to decide what they need to do. Also, if they're systematic, they 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. We always work from the top left and move left to right and top to bottom. You can use this same strategy at home if your child finds it helpful—ask them.
- **Covering up things that may distract** them 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 their 'finder finger'.** This is their index finger on their right hand. We use it to look at things in an organized way. By pointing with their 'finder finger', your child can help themselves look at only one thing at a time. It helps them keep from getting distracted. Try this at home too.
- **Looking with their eyes.** This is something we emphasize when children use their 'finder finger'. It helps them coordinate their eyes with pointing and thinking. Remind them every so often when doing an activity: "Be sure to look with your eyes". Also, be sure to tell them when they look 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 them what to do. Ask them, "What could you do to help yourself?" If they can't figure it out, show them.

Just like before, we're 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 their toys away will make it easier to find them next time or being systematic when they brush their teeth will mean they don't miss any. Write some ideas in the attached form under the *At home* column.

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

Think about when your child is out **in the community**. For example, they might be systematic helping find everything on the grocery list. Write some ideas in the *In the community* column.

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



### Importance being positive with your child

Children learn better when they're relaxed and feel safe. They sense when we have confidence in them.

As much as possible, we avoid negative words, like "no" and "don't". It's not that we never tell them to stop or change what they're doing. We just use positive language. Instead of saying, "Don't do that!", we might say, "How about we do this?" or "Let's use gentle hands."

We need to tell them, "You worked really hard.", "You did a great job there.", "I like the way you did that." Be honest but positive—"That one didn't work out really well. But you have a good brain. What do you think might help?"

We know our children work hard. It's better to praise them more often than remind or correct them. That way they'll be less likely to become discouraged.

**How I want my child to be systematic and use their strategies in these places.** Describe the situation and what you'd like to see your child do. When would it be helpful for them to do one thing at a time at home, at school, and in the community?

<b>At home</b>	<b>At school</b>	<b>In the community</b>