

# Self-Regulation

What is it and how can you build these skills?



# Land Acknowledgement



We acknowledge that this presentation is taking place on the unceded and unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabe and Algonquin Nation. We thank the Anishinaabe and Algonquin Nation for hosting us and recognize their enduring presence on this land.





OTTAWA-CARLETON  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

“

The Self-Reg philosophy is an  
invitation to view  
behaviour through the lens of  
compassion.

- LOUISE LAMONT



#SHANKERSATURDAY  
self-reg.ca





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*Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and adjust your energy, sensory needs, emotions, attention, and impulses to meet the demands of the physical and social environment.*



# Self-Regulation

Is a better predictor of success  
than IQ

Is not the same as compliance

Needs to be taught and practiced



# It's all regulation



External Regulation



Co-Regulation



Self-regulation



# Developmental Milestones



# When they're dysregulated, they may...

- ... Act aggressively
- ... Struggle in social situations
- ... Have trouble turning off at bedtime
- ... Be picky about eating
- ... Worry a lot
- ... Have trouble listening
- ... Struggle with schoolwork
- ... Daydream
- ... Move constantly





## Misbehaviour

They are acting deliberately  
They CAN choose a different behaviour  
Negative consequences should work  
Our response is anger  
Reactive approach



## Stress Behaviour

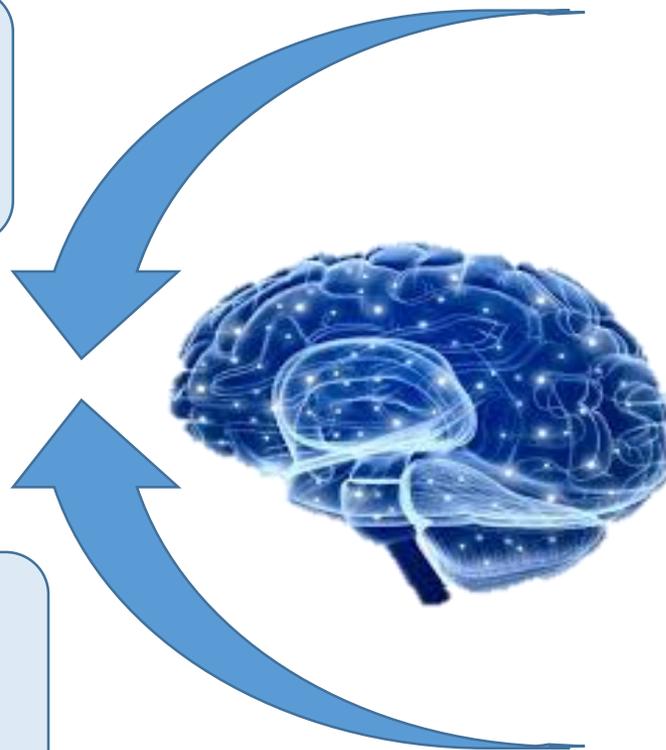
They are reacting to stress  
They CANNOT make different choices  
Negative consequences won't help  
Our response is curiosity  
Proactive approach



# It's a brain thing!

- Top-down Processing
- Executive functions
  - Rational thinking

- Bottom-up Processing
- Emotional reacting
  - Aroused, illogical



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# Stressors Children Experience Today



Social stressors

Family Stressors

Physical stressors: sensory sensitivities, sleep, lack of movement, hunger

Lack of connection

Urbanization

Video games, social media

Nature deficit



# Behaviour is communication

## Oppositional behaviour

- It's too hard
- I'm anxious
- I'm tired

## Aggressive behaviour

- I'm embarrassed
- I can't
- I don't have words to tell you



# Thinking Skills

Language and communication skills

Social skills

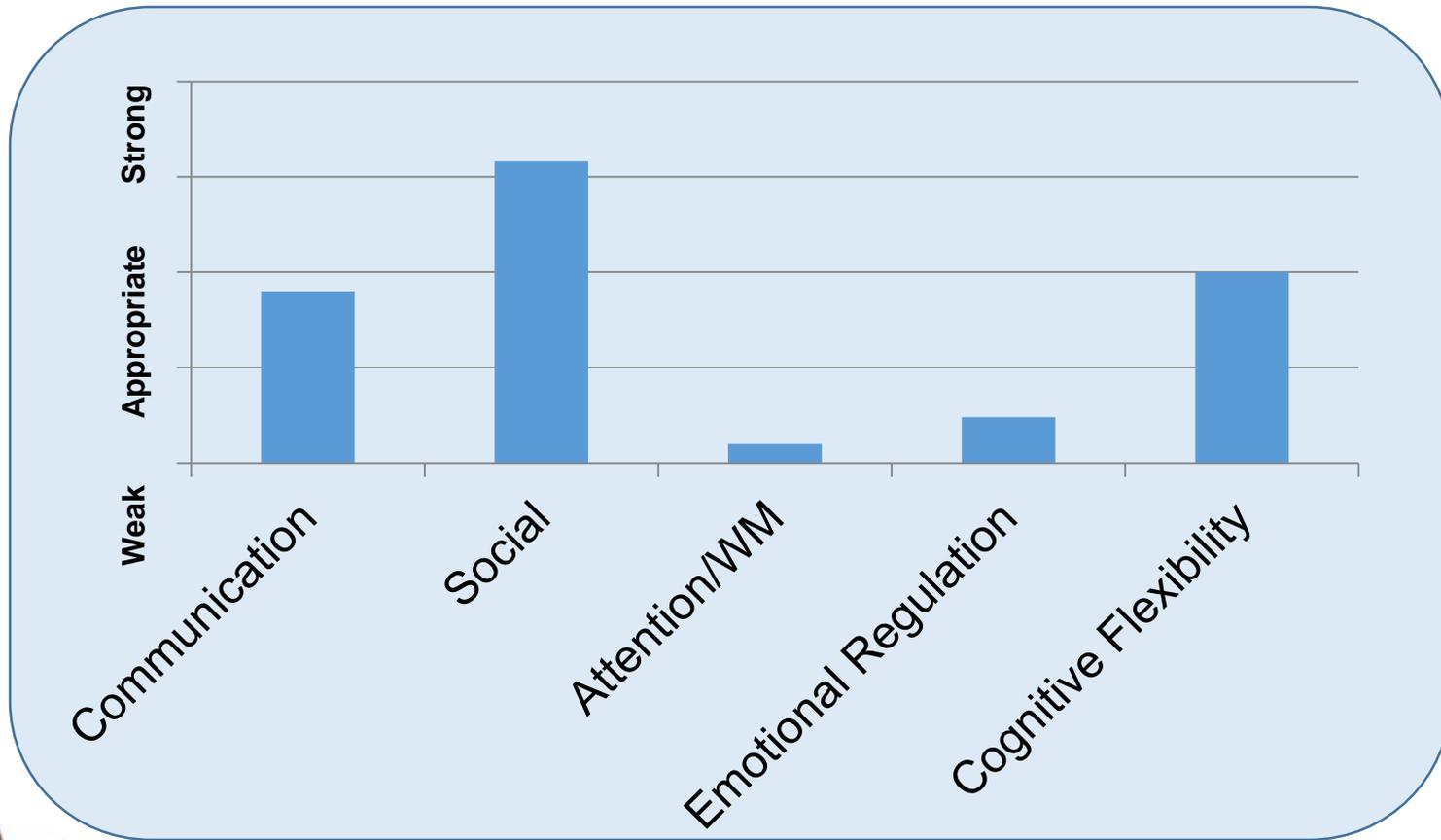
Attention and working memory skills

Emotional and self-regulation

Cognitive flexibility



# How do thinking skills affect kids?



# How to build self-regulation skills?

Modelling

Empathy

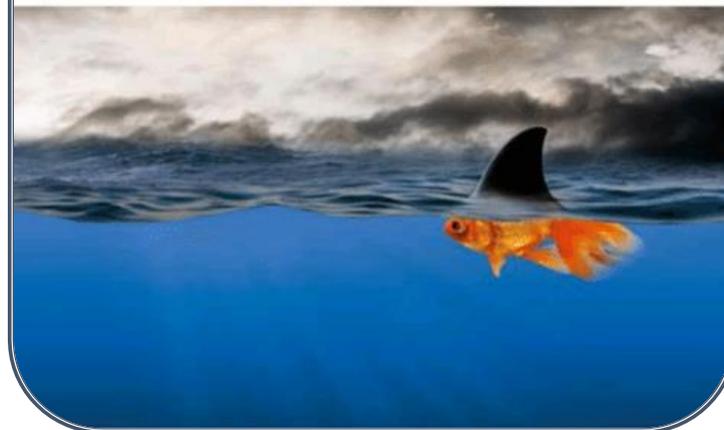
Co-regulation



# What to do when it's all going wrong?

- Stay calm, it's not about you!
- Empathize with the emotions
- Give time and space as needed, but stay with your child
- Remember, this is bottom-up processing

May we all spend the day looking for the goldfish, instead of punishing the shark.



# It's all regulation



External Regulation



Co-Regulation



Self-regulation



# Body calming strategies

Interoception  
Breathing techniques  
Progressive muscle relaxation  
Mindfulness  
Yoga  
Exercise  
Moving



# Thinking strategies

- ✓ Identify unhelpful thinking patterns
  - Black and white, catastrophizing, overgeneralizing...
- ✓ Challenge negative thinking
- ✓ Imagine a different outcome
- ✓ Counter “shouldy” thinking
- ✓ Teach positive self-talk
- ✓ Monitor your own internal (and external!) monologue





# Building emotion regulation

- Build an emotion vocabulary
  - Talk about emotions (books, tv, movies, etc.)
- Talk about intensity of emotions
- Link emotions to body cues
- Link emotions to triggers and reactions:
  - When \_\_\_\_\_, you felt \_\_\_\_\_, so you \_\_\_\_\_.
- Reassure that all emotions are okay!



# Putting it into practice

## Pick your battles

- Anticipate difficulties
- Plan ahead
- Match expectations to skills

## To encourage participation:

- Involve your child in problem solving
- Use humour and games
- Provide age-appropriate, realistic choices

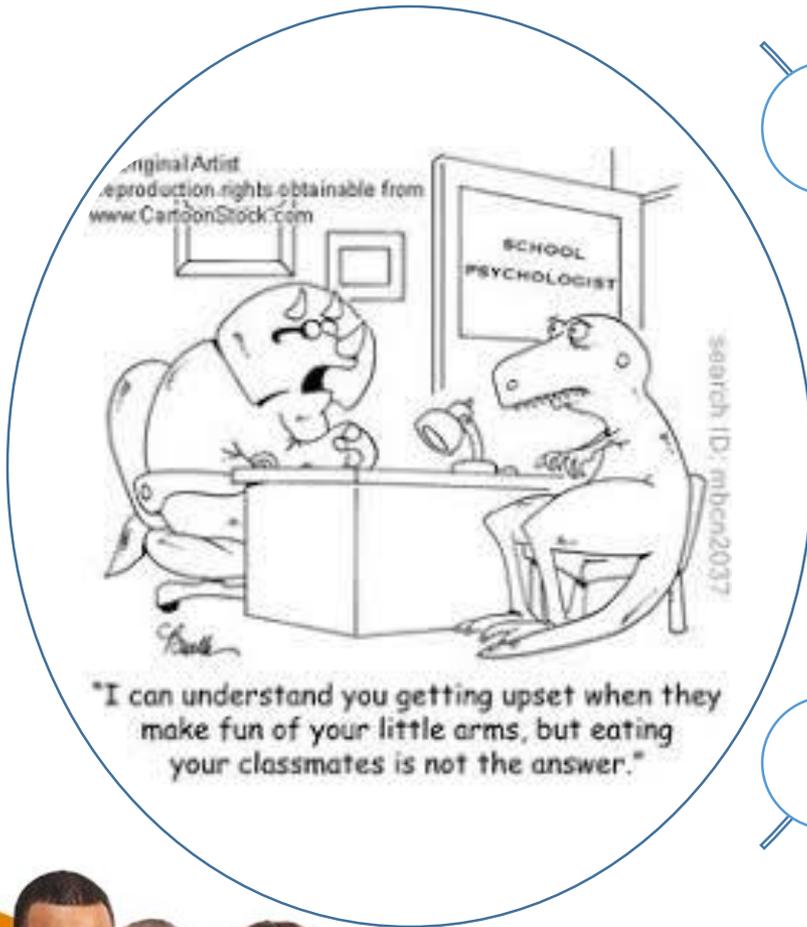
## If things get tough... and sometimes they will...

- Figure out what the behaviour is trying to communicate
- Acknowledge their emotions and stress
- Repair the relationships

Pick your battles. You don't have to show up to every argument you're invited to.



# What about discipline?



Having a focus on self-regulation does not mean no consequences

Self-regulation needs to happen first

Use natural and logical consequences when possible

Follow-up could include relationship repairs

Preventative planning for next time



# Break the bottom-up cycle

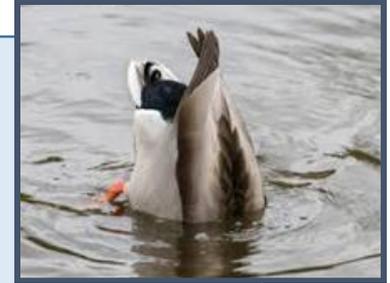
If your child is stressed, you're stressed

- So how do we as adults self-regulate?

What can you do in the moment?

- Acknowledge to yourself that this is hard
- Take a time out
- Give yourself permission to let go of expectations
- Reflect back on a couple of good things

What else can you do for self-care?



# For Additional Support

- Speak to a school staff
- Counselling Connect  
<https://www.counsellingconnect.org/>
- Child, Youth and Family Crisis Line  
(Eastern Ontario) 613-260-2360



# References

- <https://self-reg.ca/>
- Shanker, S. (2013). *Calm, alert, and learning*. Don Mills, Ontario: Pearson.
- <http://www.thinkkids.org/>
- Dawson, P. and Guare, R. (2011). *Smart but Scattered*. New York: Guilford Publications.



# Thank you!

Any questions?

