

REGULATING OUR BODY

(WINDOW OF TOLERANCE)

Why is it important to regulate?

Regulation is the process of soothing ourselves and our body. When we regulate we calm the emotional regions of our brain so that we can begin to think rationally again and be able to use our 'thinking brain'. There is more information about our 'emotional brain' and 'thinking brain' in our sheet on the 'Hand Brain Model'.

Working to regulate and calm both yourself and your child is a really important step when managing difficult situations and supporting your child with tricky emotions like anxiety, upset and anger. Some children find this skill difficult so may need to experience it through co-regulation (regulation with an adult) before they learn how to self-regulate.

Most of the time we are in a calm state that allows us to be able to socially engaged and alert, we call this our 'window of tolerance' (see diagram below). However, there are times we slip out of our 'window of tolerance' and become either hyper-aroused or hypo-aroused. The diagram below shows what behaviours your child may show when they slip out of their window of tolerance.

We all need a balance of up and down regulating activity in our day. This 'up and down' happens unconsciously most of the time, but sometimes we need to help our children to first recognise they are becoming dysregulated and then know what will help them to become regulated again.

The activities below can be used when your child (and yourself) may have slipped outside the window of tolerance (i.e. into crisis behaviours), or they can be used to help stay within the window across a day to minimise under- or overstimulation.

The more you and your child practice these skills and notice how your body feels when you are doing them, the easier it will be for your child to know what helps them to self-regulate. Consider asking questions such as 'do you notice what your heart is doing? Is it beating fast or slow?' 'Does this make you feel fizzy or sleepy, or something else?'. The ideal is that they begin to recognise when they are reaching the edge of their window so that they can choose an activity that will regulate them back toward the middle of their window.



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

IDENTIFY YOUR STATE

HYPERAROUSAL



REACTIVE
HYPER-AWARE
TEARS
FAST SPEECH
CHAOTIC RACING THOUGHTS
HEIGHTENED PHYSICAL
SENSATIONS

**DOWN-
REGULATE**

REGULATED

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

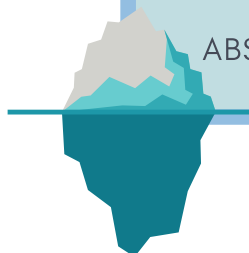


CALM
ALERT
FEEL PRESENT
FEEL SAFE
CONTROLLED
CAN PAY ATTENTION
SOCIALY ENGAGED

**BECOME
DYSREGULATED
(PUSHED OUT)**

UP-REGULATE

HYPOAROUSAL



LOW
SHUT DOWN
NUMB
UNMOTIVATED
LETHARGIC
ABSENCE OF PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

DOWNREGULATING ACTIVITIES

WHAT DOES THE BRAIN NEED?

Predictable movement, rhythmical, repetitive, slow, deep pressure, stretch pull, push, resistive, gentle rock inverted, horizontal, slow, soft tempo, sing song voice, low light/dark, contained space, familiarity, focused.

Remember: you will most likely have to do these activities alongside your child.



1. Making and blowing bubbles

Blowing bubbles is regulating as it helps children to slow down their breathing. Don't be afraid to try it with teenagers.
<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Bubble-Solution>



2. Nature hunt

Find a natural object outside (e.g. leaf, stick or something soft, something yellow etc), ask your child to bring it back and look at it together noticing all the different colours and shapes in it. Get them to notice the different textures, if it makes a sound if you listen to it, if it has a smell? You could create your own cards with these types of questions on, and then use those for your nature hunt. Or you can purchase packs of cards online at; <https://www.amazon.co.uk/gofindit-outdoor-nature-treasure-families> or <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mindfulness-Scavenger-Hunt-Kids>



3. Hand massage

Try massaging hand lotion into your hands slowly and ask your child to copy with their own lotion. You can also give your child a hand massage, and then get your child to do it back to you.



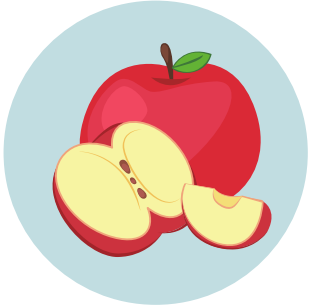
4. Balancing activities

See if you and your child can walk from one side of the room to the other on your tip toes. In the house, you could make a path of cushions and see if you and your child can get across them.



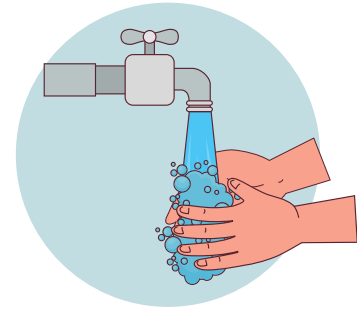
5. Tightrope

Have some rope or tape across the room. Have your child pretend to walk on the “tightrope” without falling. Once they are comfortable, have them walk sideways, tiptoeing, hopping or backwards for more of a challenge.



6. Stretches and yoga

The Childline ‘Calm Zone’ have some great videos for children and young people that demonstrate different yoga activities
<https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/#yoga>



7. A snack

Eating dry and crunchy snacks like crisps or an apple drinking a thick milkshake through a straw will help to regulate and calm. Be aware of allergies / preferences of your child.



9. Water

Have a warm shower or run warm water over hands.



10. Deep pressure

Wrap them up tight in a blanket (head should be out of the blanket, to ensure they can breathe!) or give a big bear hug.

11. Writing

Write or draw feelings down on a piece of paper and then rip it up.



12. Tug of war

Play a game of tug of war. Your child should be working hard to pull you (or another child) over a line.



13. Heavy work activity

This can include digging, carrying weights, pushing a wheelbarrow or wearing a back pack.

14. Pull ups and push ups

You and your child can do some pull ups or push ups together.



15. Swinging (backward and forward)

Your child can spend time on the swings, a hammock or if your child is young you can swing them in a sheet.

UPREGULATING ACTIVITIES

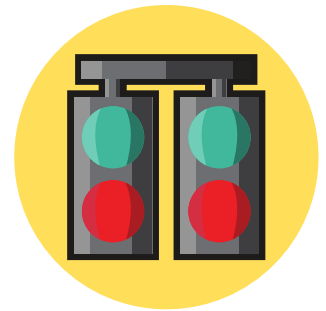
WHAT DOES THE BRAIN NEED?

Light touch, unpredictable, novel, contrasting, fast, short bursts of movement with change of direction, light rooms, sudden sounds of high or low frequency, variety and variation

Remember: you will most likely have to do these activities alongside your child.

1. Red light, green light

Ask your child to do something, e.g. Run, jump, move arms. Green light means go, red light means stop.



2. Singing and dancing

Put music on and start singing and dancing. Ask your child to join in. This can be turned into a different game, by telling your child to freeze when you pause the music.



3. Bike rides

Getting out into green spaces is regulating and allows your child to get their daily exercise and some fresh air.



4. Band leader

Your child makes musical sounds on household items, and you copy the rhythm. This could be trays or boxes, or saucepans if you have access to it. In the house there may be more options e.g. saucepans, frying pans, cake tins.

5. Musical bubbles

Spray bubbles into the air while music is playing. Ask your child to pop the bubbles. When the music stops your child must stop popping the bubbles. You could mix this up by getting them to pop the bubble with a particular body part, for example, finger, toe, elbow, shoulder, and ear. Change up the game by having them pop them as quickly as they can.



6. High intensity exercise

Any type of simple exercise e.g. star jumps, jumping or running. Short bursts of exercise to get their heart racing slightly, even if it for just 10 minutes. You can find some ideas of different exercises you can do in 10 minutes on the NHS website

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-workouts/>



7. Bean game

Shout a type of bean and you and your child make the gesture/movement for that type of bean (Runner bean = run around, Jumping bean = jump up and down, Jelly bean = wobbly like jelly, Broad bean = stretch out as wide as possible, String bean = stretch out as tall as possible, Frozen bean = Freeze, Chilli Bean = shake and shiver, French bean = shout French phrase e.g. bonjour etc.). Your child can then be the one to call out the type of bean. This could be adapted for an older child- instead of using types of beans, assign numbers to exercises. E.g. 1 = star jumps, 2 = High knees and so on.



8. Water

Have a cold shower, run cold water over hands or splash face with cold water.



9. Music

Listen to loud music.



10. Awaken the senses

Eat or drink something with a strong taste, or is ice cold. You could eat: a lemons /peppermint sweets/spicy food, or smell: citrus oil, perfume. Be aware of allergies / preferences of your child.



11. Move around

Bounce a ball as fast as they can, do star jumps with a turn between each one, or see how many different types of trampoline jumps they can do in a minute.

12. Soothing stroking

Stroke/hold something soft (e.g. a blanket, piece of cotton wool, or teddy).



13. Dancing

Put on your child's favourite music and dance!



14. Messy play

Messy play gives your child a chance to work with their hands using items that have traditionally seen as messy. You can use a variety of textures e.g. sand, clay, paint, slime. This can help to regulate your child as well as it can require a lot of concentration as they focus on the different sensations. It is important to be aware that your child may not like some textures so spend time figuring out together what they like.



This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg