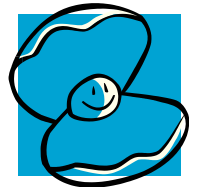




Self Regulation



"Self-regulation" is a fancy term for something that most of us do automatically. If we need to **rev up** our energy or **stay focused** during a meeting or church for example, adults use all kinds of sensory strategies: we drink coffee, we eat candies or suck on mints, we tap our fingers or our toes, we fiddle with paper clips, we get up and walk around or stretch. If we need to **calm down** or **unwind**, some might take a hot shower, others drink tea, listen to soft music or watch TV. The sensory strategies used to self-regulate - or **attain/maintain/change your level of alertness and attention for the tasks you need to do** - are as individual as the individuals themselves! Kids have the same need for self-regulation, but they haven't had as much time to learn what strategies work best for them and are appropriate in different situations. Our job as educators and parents is to help them discover and use appropriate and effective strategies for self-regulation and thereby have the most success in what they do!

These can be done **during** the activity and/or incorporated throughout the day.

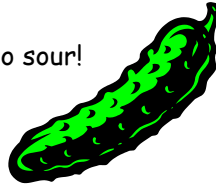
THE TOP 5 WAYS TO SELF-REGULATE

Adapted from: "How Does Your Engine Run" A Leader's Guide to the Alert Program for Self-Regulation by Williams and Shellenbeger

1. Put something in your mouth (oral motor input)

You might notice your children chewing on their shirt collars and just about everything around them! They are not misbehaving, just self-regulating. Try:

- ☺ Snacks that allow biting, crunching, chewing, sucking and blowing and that are sour, sweet, salty, spicy, bitter or cold.
- ☺ A water bottle with some lemon water and a straw allows for chewing, sucking and blowing that's also sour!
- ☺ Playing with toys that involve the mouth - harmonicas, bubbles, kazoos, etc.
- ☺ Use an electric toothbrush.



2. Wiggle while you work (movement and position input)

It is **impossible to sit still AND listen** - we can't do it and neither can our children. So, encourage movement breaks about every 10 minutes *minimum*. This might be the walk from one center to another; it might be running an errand in the home or classroom, a stretch break, a dance break, jumping jacks, etc. Some children listen better when they sit in a rocking chair, on a special cushion or on a ball-chair.

3. Fidget and fiddle (tactile input)



During listening activities, give your child a squish ball, paper clips, flexible straws, or stuffed animals to hold. Putting a heavy blanket on the lap or legs, being squished between two pillows, getting tickles, petting an animal, etc. often help you keep an "even keel".

4. Look (visual input)

If your children are off the wall, look at the walls - what colour are they? Bright colours - even bright white - are alerting and pastels or muted colours are calming. Now look around - is the room visually distracting? Your child may have a hard time falling asleep if there's clutter and decorations everywhere. Now, consider the light - dim or natural light is calming and fluorescent light bothers some people. Sometimes kids zone out by staring at the screen saver on the computer, a lava lamp a ceiling fan - this is their way of getting a sensory break by looking at repetitive visual information.



5. Listen (auditory input)



Are you the kind of person who needs noise to concentrate? What about your child? He/she may be bothered by the "white noise" of the fridge or ticking clock, or may find this comforting. Put on headphones or change rooms, and be aware of where your child works best!