

Improve Regulation of Affect

Regulation of affect involves the ability to manage one's feelings effectively in order to make decisions, control behavior, and complete a task. In order to improve Regulation of Affect, one must be able to sustain one's effort in the face of frustrations and difficulties.

Individuals who can effectively regulate their feelings display the capacity of self-control and can easily adapt to varied social situations. They are able to label and describe their feelings and can generally recognize what is behind or the cause of one's feelings.

Home and School Situations Requiring Regulation of Affect

- Completing a lengthy or frustrating homework assignment or test
- Working with classmates on a group project
- Completing a difficult puzzle or riddle
- Playing and sharing with siblings or friends
- Completing a series of chores around the house
- Reacting appropriately to teacher or parental discipline
- Accepting an athletic team loss or perceived unfair situation

Hints and Strategies to Improve Regulation of Affect

1. Model effective strategies for dealing with anger and

frustration. Your child can learn how to appropriately express their feelings by observing your behavior. Model appropriate “stopping” behavior or take a “time out.” To properly model this, verbalize your strategy. For example, say, “The computer’s not working, I’m going to walk away for a few minutes, then when I’m calm I’ll come back and figure out how to fix it, call for help. If I allowed myself to get upset about it, I’d probably take it out on somebody, regret that, and still have the computer problems.”

2. Have your child develop stories or narratives that explain their behaviors. By encouraging your child to talk about their feelings, (for example, “I’m angry because my brothers always tease me when I lose”) your child will often be able to better regulate their expression of feelings. Provide an example from your own experience, such as how you were upset when your boss gave you a large project to do on your way out the door from work, and describe how you handled your frustration. Role-play hypothetical scenarios and discuss various reactions.

3. Don’t sweat the small stuff. Regularly point out minor issues that could cause stress. For example, the school bus in front of you is stopping every 500 feet and you’re in a hurry, or it is cloudy out when you’ve planned a beach trip. Use expressions such as, “Oh, well” followed by a determination to move forward. This mentality is key to handling emotions and not getting stuck. Engage in discussions with your child to help them move concerns from the “big stuff” to the “small stuff” category.

4. Work with your child to identify stressful situations ahead of time and encourage him/her to work towards practicing smaller, similar tasks. For example, if your child is extremely self-conscious, you can set gradual and age-appropriate goals to increase their ability to take on new challenges. These could include tasks such as calling friends and relatives on the phone, ordering food at a

restaurant, or applying for a job.

5. Use your child's video game play or introduction to a new digital technology as an opportunity to talk about frustration. Many children become visibly angry at their video games or video game consoles when they are sent back to the beginning of the game or cannot solve the problem. Similarly, they may experience some initial frustration when learning how to use a new cell-phone or setting up preferences on an iPod/iPhone. Interestingly, the same children who may be more willing to go back and try to resolve these problems with video games and digital technologies may be rigid about doing the same with their homework. Use this as an opportunity to have a discussion with your child about the strategies, self thoughts, and approaches that she is using to overcome frustration with technologies and encourage him/her to redouble their efforts to overcome these obstacles.

6. Do not be afraid to show your own frustrations; just be sure to not overdo it. Frustration and disappointment are a part of life and real-world modeling of this can be helpful. Use strategies such as self-talk, acceptance of situations that have not turned out how you would have liked them to, and "letting go." Demonstrating that you are upset but are coping effectively can be extremely valuable for children to observe. Talking about a previously frustrating and disappointing experience and how you were able to move on from it may be helpful as well.

7. Watch home videos with your child of when they were younger to illustrate how much they have matured. This is often an opportunity for children to engage in some reflection about interests, behaviors, and verbalization that they would consider to be immature. Because the video is of your child when they were much younger, it is less threatening to discuss the need for improvement in her regulation of her feelings.

Games and Activities That Can Practice Regulation of Affect

“Dance Dance Revolution” (DDR) and Guitar Hero – *DDR* enhances regulation of affect because it is a fast-paced dancing game and players must fight frustration in order to be successful. Like *DDR*, *“Guitar Hero”* is a fast-paced guitar simulation game that requires players to follow button combinations, which can be very frustrating.

“Charades” and “Cranium” – These games allow your child to work together with their team to achieve a goal. Having other team members model the appropriate behaviors for both success and failure will assist your child in practicing these responses.


Team and Individual Sports – Many sports, such as swimming, baseball, and lacrosse, can be frustrating to children initially. This offers them the opportunity to practice dealing with their frustration. Also, similar to *“Charades”* and *“Cranium,”* team sports can allow your child to observe and imitate teammates’ appropriate reactions to failures and successes.

Learning to play an instrument – Playing an instrument for the first time can be a frustrating experience and will require your child to exhibit regulation of emotions in order to successfully master the instrument.

“Jenga” and “Villa Paletti” – Games, such as *“Jenga”* and *“Villa Paletti,”* will challenge its players to keep a tower standing upright, while each player takes turns removing pieces. This type of game can allow your child to practice monitoring their emotions to their own play, as well as their reactions to the playing of others.

Websites on Regulation of Affect

[LearningWorks For Kids](#): The premier resource for executive function information, offering a detailed explanation of regulation of affect, tips for parents, and activities to

improve this skill. 

[KidsHealth](#): This site offers a wealth of articles and information on various emotionally-heavy situations that children might face.

[The Parents Zone](#): This site provides a bulleted list of tips for parents to help them assist their children in managing emotions.

Books and Articles on Regulation of Affect

[A Teens Guide to Getting Stuff Done](#) by Jennifer Shannon, LMFT. (Ch. 15)“In this fun and illustrated guide, author Jennifer Shannon blends acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and cognitive behavioral strategies to help you recognize your procrastination habits, discover the strengths of your unique procrastination type, and find the motivation you need to meet important deadlines and reach your highest goals.”- Amazon

[ADHD, Executive Function & Behavioral Challenges in the Classroom: Managing the Impact on Learning, Motivation and Stress](#) by Cindy Goldrich, EdM, ADHD-CCSP & Carly Goldrich, BS, Ed (Ch. 5,6)“Take advantage of the latest brain research and evidence-based best practices to get kids motivated, focused, organized and performing closer to their real potential.”- Amazon

[Attention, Girls!: A Guide to Learn All About Your Ad/Hd](#) by Patricia O. Quinn, MD. (Ch. 7,8)“Contains practical ways to

improve organization, focus, study and homework skills, as well as information on making and keeping friends, dealing with emotions, improving self-esteem, overcoming sleep problems, understanding medication, and managing anxiety.” – Amazon

[Brain Hacks: Work Smarter, Stay Focused, and Achieve Your Goals by Lara Honos-Webb, PhD. \(Ch. 5\)](#)“Filled with actionable strategies proven to improve focus, increase productivity, and promote well-being, Brain Hacks will help you transform the way you work, live, and feel by tapping into the power of your executive functioning skills.” – Amazon

[Bright Kids Who Can't Keep Up: Help Your Child Overcome Slow Processing Speed and Succeed in a Fast-Paced World](#) by Ellen Braaten, PhD, and Brian Willoughby, PhD. (Ch. 8)“ Filled with vivid stories and examples, this crucial resource demystifies processing speed and shows how to help kids (ages 5 to 18) catch up in this key area of development.”- Amazon

[Communication Skills for Teens: How to Listen, Express & Connect for Success](#) by Michelle Skeen, PsyD | Matthew McKay, PhD| Patrick Fanning | Kelly Skeen. (Ch. 3) “Communication is an essential life skill that every teen must learn. Based on the New Harbinger classic, Messages, this book will teach you the necessary skills—such as assertiveness, active listening, and compassion—to become an effective communicator for life.” – Amazon

[Executive Functioning Skills Printables Workbook: For Students Learning Life Skills](#) S.B. Linton (Pg. 35-41)“For teens and youth with special needs. These are Executive Functioning Skills Printables Worksheets for Students with Autism, Similar Special Needs, ADHD, LD and Executive Functioning Needs.”- Amazon

[Executive Functioning Workbook for Kids: 40 Fun Activities to Build Memory, Flexible Thinking, and Self-Control Skills at](#)

[Home, in School, and Beyond](#) by Sharon Grand, PhD, BCN. (Ch. 4,5)“Help kids grow their executive functioning skills with activities for ages 6 to 9!”- Amazon

[Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management for Teens](#) by Earl Hipp. (Ch. 3)“Fresh edition of a popular title offers teens straightforward advice on stress management, anxiety reduction, and digital well-being.”- Amazon

[Just As You Are: A Teen’s Guide To Self-Acceptance & Lasting Self-Esteem](#) by Michelle Skeen, PsyD, Kelly Skeen. (Ch. 6)“Stop comparing yourself to others—you’re special just as you are! In this fun, practical guide, you’ll learn how to silence your nit-picky inner critic, cultivate self-compassion, and discover what really matters to you.” – Amazon

[Knowing Yourself, Knowing Others: A Workbook for Children with Asperger’s Disorder, Nonverbal Learning Disorder, and Other Social-Skill Problems](#) by Barbara Cooper, MPS, Nancy Widdows, MS. (Activity 1-11)“Knowing Yourself, Knowing Others includes activities that will help kids with Asperger’s disorder and related conditions learn how to read social cues, avoid meltdowns, understand others’ needs and intentions, resolve conflicts with friends, build basic nonverbal skills, and more.”- Amazon

[Playing Smarter in a Digital World: A Guide to Choosing and Using Popular Video Games and Apps to Improve Executive Functioning in Children and Teens](#) by [Randy Kulman](#), Ph.D.(Ch. 13)“A book to help parents to make their children’s digital playtime educational”- Amazon

[Scattered to Focused: Smart Strategies to Improve Your Child’s Executive Functioning Skills](#) by Zac Grisham (Ch. 5)“Set your child up for success with simple strategies to develop executive function in kids 4 to 12”- Amazon

[Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential](#) by Peg Dawson,

EdD, and Richard Guare, PhD (Ch. 13)“Small changes can add up to big improvements—this empowering book shows how.”- Amazon

[The ADHD Workbook for Kids: Helping Children Gain Self-Confidence, Social Skills, and Self-Control \(Instant Help Book for Parents & Kids\)](#) by Lawrence E. Shapiro, PH.D. section (Ch. 1)“The ADHD Workbook for Kids offers a simple way to help children with ADHD learn these critical skills in just ten minutes a day.” – Amazon

[The Conscious Parent's Guide To Executive Functioning Disorder](#) by Rebecca Branstetter, PhD (Ch. 11)“With the strategies and advice in this guide, you and your child will build sustainable bonds, develop positive behaviors, and improve executive functioning skills for life.” – Amazon

[The Everything Parent's Guide to Children with Executive Functioning Disorder: Strategies to help your child achieve the time-management skills, ... needed to succeed in school and life](#) by Rebecca Bransetter, PhD. (Ch. 12)“The vital skills children need to achieve their full potential!” – Amazon

[Too Stressed to Think: A Teen Guide to Staying Sane When Life Makes You Crazy](#) by Annie Fox, M.Ed., and Ruth Kirschner. (Pt.1)“Quotes from real teens remind readers that they're not alone—that stress affects everyone, but it doesn't have to ruin your life. Includes resources.” – Amazon

[Tween You & Me: A Preteen Guide to Becoming Your Best Self](#) by Deb Dunham. (Ch. 1) “In this positive and empowering book, Deb Dunham, tween self-esteem expert and mentor, provides the tools you need to feel really good about yourself.” – Amazon