

Domains and Strategies for Self-Regulation

The Biological Domain

Key Attributes:

- Physical health, which includes a healthy immune system.
- Sufficient energy on waking up, which is maintained through the course of the day.
- The ability to recoup energy after difficult experiences.
- The ability to calm amid distracting visual and auditory stimuli.
- The ability to follow healthy daily routines (e.g. healthy diet, sufficient exercise, hours of sleep).
- Engagement in – and enjoyment of – physical activities, enabled by well-functioning motor systems that allow the coordination of arms and legs and of eyes and fingers.

Classroom Strategies:

- Limit visual stimulus
 - Limit materials on classroom walls to those that match the activities and learning purpose of the class.
 - Use basic, natural light colours to have a calming effect.
 - Use bins to organize materials and put items not being used out of sight.
- Be aware of auditory stimulus
 - If floors are uncarpeted use tennis balls or felt glides at the bottom of chairs and tables to reduce noise.
 - Arrange your classroom so that noise making activities are in one area and quiet activities are in another.
 - Turn off computers when not in use.
 - Provide a quiet, calming area where children can go to down-regulate.
- Transitions:
 - If there is a school-wide bell or buzzer, determine if this is too large a stimulus and determine as a staff how it might be changed.
 - For in-class transitions, consider using a chime, drum, music, clapping or other auditory cue.
- Scheduling:
 - Create and keep a classroom schedule to help students anticipate regular transitions.
 - Determine if there is a time when a majority of students have difficulties transitioning or focussing and insert a physical such as Simon Says between scheduled activities.
- Individual Student Needs:
 - For students who experience hypo-arousal (withdrawal) or hyper-arousal (over stimulation) regularly, determine what the triggers are and attempt to reduce those.
 - Provide fidget toys, exercise bands, worry beads, or alternative seating to help students remain calm and focussed.
 - Provide activities that allow for student choice to encourage focus and engagement.
 - Make self-regulation techniques obvious to your students so that they know why you are using them in order for them to understand and internalize the concept.



The Emotional Domain

Key Attributes:

- The ability to modulate strong emotions.
- Emotional resiliency – the ability to recover from disappointment, challenging situations, embarrassment, and other difficulties, and move forward confidently and positively.
- Willingness and interest to experiment and to learn, on one’s own and in collaboration with others.
- A desire to create and innovate, and while doing so to use a wide range of strategies and techniques.
- A healthy self-esteem that is based on awareness of personal efforts and achievements – as well as those of others.

Classroom Strategies:

- Be conscious of your own emotions and attempts to self-regulate throughout the day. Model and ‘think aloud’ your own monitoring and strategies to up-regulate or down-regulate.
- Become familiar with and use resources on emotional self-regulation such as CASEL, Edutopia and the Canadian Safe Schools Network.
- Encourage and teach emotional regulation throughout the day as children are working in pairs and small groups in any subject area or playing on the playground. Teach them cooperation, tolerance and respect.
- Teach what different emotions look like using photos of people showing emotions.
- Be aware of how students’ cultural and/or social backgrounds affect their awareness of emotions and attempts at emotion regulation.
- Introduce yoga, breathing exercises, and meditation or mindfulness strategies to your class as a way to regulate emotions.
- Teach and encourage students to express how they are feeling verbally to reduce the possibility of physical expressions to their emotions.

The Cognitive Domain

Key Attributes

- The ability to focus, and switch focus, as required.
- The ability to consider perspectives other than one’s own.
- The ability to plan and execute several steps in a row, including being able to try different courses of action when an initial plan has failed to work.
- The ability to understand cause and effect.
- The ability to think logically.
- The ability to set learning goals, including monitoring and self-assessing performance.
- The ability to see that failure provides an opportunity to learn.
- The ability to manage time effectively.
- The ability to develop self-awareness, especially the recognition of personal learning strengths and weaknesses.



Classroom Strategies

- Issues with cognition may have a physical root, so if parents have not already done so, encourage them to have hearing and vision checked.
- Using teaching and learning techniques and strategies consistently and routinely to allow students to predict expectations and allow them to focus.
- Provide scaffolding to students who have difficulty focussing attention. Smaller steps, hints, links and cues can be helpful.
- Provide a quiet space where students can retreat to if they are feeling overwhelmed or distracted.
- The ability to learn can be enhanced by using games:
 - Impulse-control games include:
 - Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders: When a body part is called out, students need to touch a different body part. For example, when shoulders is called out, they need to touch their knees.
 - Simon Says: Students only obey instructions if it is preceded by the phrase “Simon Says...”
 - The Name Game: A group sits in a circle. Your chair/spot becomes your name. One person begins by saying someone else’s name. That person must quickly say another person’s name who is in the circle. If they make a mistake, the person who called their name and the person who made the mistake switch places. They also switch names and now respond to the new person’s name.
 - Red Light/Green Light
 - Enhancing Visual-Spatial ability games include:
 - Treasure hunts
 - Orienteering
 - Jigsaw puzzles
 - Enhancing Motor-Coordination games include:
 - Obstacle courses
 - Going on a lion hunt (follow the leader)
 - Enhancing Sequencing of Thoughts and Attention games such as:
 - Hand clapping games such as Miss Mary Mack
 - Musical chairs
 - The cup game



The Social Domain

Key Attributes:

- The ability to understand the feelings and intentions of self and others.
- The ability to respond to the feelings and intentions of others appropriately, both verbally and nonverbally.
- The ability to monitor the effects of one’s responses on others.
- The ability to be an effective communicator – as a listener and as a speaker.
- The ability to demonstrate a good sense of humour that does not rely on ridicule.
- The ability to recover from and repair breakdowns in interactions with others.



Classroom Strategies:

- Provide collaborative learning experiences to encourage social self-regulation.
- Play games that encourage students to analyze others facial expressions and body language for what they are thinking and feeling.
 - Role playing games
 - “Mind reading” games where students are paired up to try to figure out what the other is feeling.
- Allow students to select their own activities and set goals.

The Prosocial Domain

Key Attributes:

- The ability to help regulate others and to co-regulate with others.
- A sense of honesty, both with oneself and with others.
- Empathy, or the capacity to care about others’ feelings and to help them deal with their emotions.
- The ability to put the needs and interests of others ahead of one’s own.
- The desire to ‘do the right thing’.

Classroom Strategies:

- Extend children’s understanding of empathy when situations arise in the classroom. This can be done through a talking circle where students share how they felt in a situation.
- Use literature or media to have students try to figure out how a fictional person feels in different situations, and what others could do to help them.
- Have children explore and research motivation behind bullying so that they can better understand the reasons people bully. From there, create a class or school-wide anti-bullying contract/campaign which students can sign their commitment to.
- Provide opportunities for increased sense of citizenship and volunteerism. Researching the power of other young people and the difference they have made can be a starting point.
- Encourage social activism and support students in taking actions that make a difference within the school community and beyond.

