

Self-Regulation: Tips for Teachers & Child Care Providers

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Top 30 Tips on Self-Regulation

1. Model self-control and self-regulation in your words and actions when you are frustrated.
2. Anticipate transitions and announce changes in classroom and home routines.
3. Provide a visual schedule to let the child know what they are doing and what is next.
4. Provide structure and predictability.
5. Follow a daily routine.
6. Give the child a warning before you stop any preferred activity.
7. Clearly define your expectations for the child.
8. Give them a break and allow appropriate opportunities to run around, scream, shout, yell and get their energy out.
9. Redirect inappropriate words and behaviors by teaching them a better way.
10. Reinforce and praise all the positive behaviors you want to see continued with verbal praise, stickers or small edibles.
11. Reward good self-regulation with freedom and flexibility.
12. Set limits and make sure you enforce those limits.
13. Get rid of the temptations that are constant distractions or continuously cause problems.
14. Give the child something to hold in their hands while they are sitting during an activity.
15. Provide visual cues along with verbal directions.
16. Label their emotions, discuss feelings and teach them appropriate ways to show excitement, anger, jealousy, etc.
17. Give the child the language to communicate what they are trying to say with their behaviors.
18. Don't set a child up for failure. Change your expectations or provide help that allows them to be successful.
19. Provide guidance in problem solving, including planning and organizing activities.
20. Ask for self control but not too much.
21. Start off simple and then increase your expectations.
22. Work on empathy so that the child is aware of how others might be feeling.
23. With each new child or situation, explain to the child how to navigate the group or activity.
24. Use snack time or meals to practice waiting and turn taking.
25. Have a "quiet corner" with pillows or a soft chair where the child can go and take a break when they are upset.
26. Give the child time to clam down before talking about the problem.
27. Interact and play with the child to build a trusting relationship that will help them to form trust and empathy.
28. If you give a child a choice then respect their decision.
29. Use "If...then" statements to keep the child focused on the activity and motivated.
30. At the first sign of agitation, demonstrate the use of self talk to work through a problem.

Ideas for Circle Time

- Start off with very short increments and gradually increase their time in circle
- Use cube chairs, individual chairs or mats to let the children know their space and boundaries in circle.
- Assign seats so that children are strategically seated to decrease distractions and behaviors.
- Avoid pairing impulsive and reactive children together because the problem can escalate.
- Use PECS- picture exchange communication system at circle for different songs. Each child can pick a song from the icons presented by the teacher to practice turn taking.
- Use a “talking stick” during circle time to help the children practice waiting and turn taking.
- Have adults sit behind the child during circle to help them regulate their behaviors.
- When a child is not engaged in circle, give them a job or let them be a helper to get them involved.
- If a child will not sit during circle:
 - Provide deep pressure such as bear hugs to help the child calm down
 - Use a weighted vest
 - Give them thera-putty or a stress ball to squeeze in their hands
 - Provide a tactile cushion to sit on
 - Use a weighted blanket or large bean bag to place on their lap
 - Use a timer to let the child know exactly how long they are required to sit

Games that Promote Self-Regulation

- Simon says
- Mother May I
- Duck Duck Goose
- Bubbles are a great way to practice turn taking and waiting
- Red light, green light
- Red Rover
- B-I-N-G-O

Help with Transitions

- Prepare the child for a transition by giving them a “2 minute” warning to let the child know that a change is going to occur.
- Use a transition object or icons to help the child move from one activity to the next.
- Provide a picture schedule.
- Signal that it is time to transition by singing a song, ringing a bell or turn the lights on and off.
- Follow a routine so that the child knows what to expect.

How to Make Rules Effective

- 3 Times Rule: This rule helps children learn to listen and follow directions.
 1. Ask the child to do the task.
 2. Move closer to the child, touch them to get their attention and ask again.
 3. Help the child to complete the activity that was requested.
- Make a poster as a visual cue to follow the rules.
- Keep rules to a minimum and keep them simple.
Example: we don't hurt our friends, and we stay with the group.
- Be consistent and follow through with the rules you have established.
- Make up a simple song that reminds them of the rules.

Clap, clap, hands in your lap

Sitting on bottom

Feet on floor

Eyes on teacher

Mouths are quiet

Ears are open.

- Tell the child what you want them to do rather than what you don't want them to do.

Example: Instead of saying

"Don't run," say "walk please."

"No hitting," say "use your words."

"No yelling," say "ask nicely."

- If a child refuses to listen or follow your request, provide them with a choice. Ask them, "can you do it yourself, or do I need to help you?"
- Take a break from a frustrating activity by allowing the child to leave and calm down, then ask them to return a few minutes later.