



# Staying Cool When Things Heat Up

## Ways to Encourage Self-Regulation for Young Children

The development of self-regulation begins very early on. As soon as children are able to access working memory, exhibit mental flexibility, and control their behavior, you can get started with helping them develop self-regulation.

Self-regulation is the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses in check, and to think before acting. Here's a good list of suggestions for supporting the self-regulation of very young children (e.g., toddlers and preschoolers):

- Provide a structured and predictable daily routine and schedule
- Change the environment by eliminating distractions: turn off the tv, dim lights, or provide a soothing object when you sense a child is becoming upset.
- Roleplay with the child to practice how to act or what to say in certain situations;
- Teach and talk about feelings and review home/classroom rules regularly
- Redirect inappropriate words or actions when needed
- Allow children to let off steam by creating a quiet corner with a small tent or pile of pillows
- Encourage pretend play scenarios
- Stay calm and firm in your voice and actions even when a child is "out of control";
- Anticipate transitions and provide ample warning to the child or use picture schedules or a timer to warn of transitions.
- Take a break yourself when needed, as children with limited self-regulatory skills can test an adult's patience.

