

Self Regulation: Practical Possibilities for All Students

20/10/17

In the hour and 1 minutes we have today, I will share some practical possibilities for helping students develop self regulation. If you would like more comprehensive information I am available to do come to schools or present at ProD Days.
You can contact me at
jcpolitano@gmail.com

Whether we work with a full class of students, small groups or individuals we know that helping students learn what self regulation is and what they can do to help themselves is an investment in learning and well-being.

This session is planned for educators who are working toward:

- Helping students understand what self regulation is.
- Helping families and other educators deepen their understanding of self regulation.
- Continuing to make classrooms more self regulation 'friendly.'
- Seeking possibilities that will help students be more able to make independent choices to support their own self regulation.

Supporting Calm, Alert, Focussed, Engaged Living and Learning

I believe that we can help people become self regulating learners by:

- having inquiring attitudes toward behaviour (others and our own)
- helping people understand self regulation
- adjusting environments to meet peoples' needs
- helping people learn possibilities they can use independently
- designing learning experiences and activities that support self regulated learning

Self-regulation Definitions

“Self-regulation is the ability to manage your own energy states, emotions, behaviours and attention, in ways that are socially acceptable and help achieve positive goals, such as maintaining good relationships, learning and maintaining well being.” Stuart Shanker

Self-regulation does not involve the inhibiting of impulses but, rather, **being able to deal effectively and efficiently with stressors** – for example, noise, light, and movement, or frightening experiences during infancy and childhood – that can result in a chronic state of energy-depletion.” S. Shanker

Calm, Alert Learning Stuart Shanker

SELF-REG Stuart Shanker

Check out the Mehrit Center at self-reg.ca

Link to the Stuart Shanker’s PowerPoint:
<http://www.ernweb.com/StuartShanker.pdf>

Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative (CSRI)

www.self-regulation.ca/about.../canadian-self-regulation-initiative

Self regulation gives us a different way to look at and respond to behaviour that gets in the way of learning and ‘doesn’t work’ in public settings like schools.

It gives us the basis for building better relationships, making student’s experiences better and BONUS making things better for ourselves.

It isn’t a cure-all but it offers possibilities for making learning better for everyone.

Dealing with stressors takes huge amounts of energy and depletes the reserve of energy needed for learning.

We can make environments that are more self regulation friendly and we can help students learn ways to deal with stressors.

People who are self regulating learners are more able to be calm, alert, focussed and engaged.

“Self regulation makes self-control possible; not the other way around.”

Stuart Shanker

Self regulation is much more of an ongoing process than a product!

Developing self regulation is a process throughout our lives.

There's a big difference between "bad behavior" and "sensory overload."

Learning what overloaded behavior "looks like," and what actually helps to avoid getting overloaded in the first place. While needs vary from child to child, opportunities to obtain the sensory input a child's nervous system craves and to avoid noxious sensory experiences should be provided across the board. We all need to "wake up" by moving after sitting for a long time, and an occasional break from the intense sensory stimuli in noisy, busy environments such as school, but for kids with sensory issues, brief respites may be crucial in order to remain focused, calm, and attentive throughout the school day."

www.sensorysmartparent.com

Helping Students Understand Self Regulation: Waving, Humming and Tapping

Most students don't understand the term regulation. Have a conversation with them about things we can regulate like temperature, volume, intensity of light, and speed. If possible demonstrate regulation by adjusting the volume and brightness and dimness on an iPad or TV, adjusting the thermostat, or use whatever you have available.

Explain that we can regulate ourselves. Give them an experience in self regulation, Tell them that you are going to wave your hand and you would like them to join you and follow your pattern and speed. Start by waving you hand back and forth slowly, speed up, stop, slow down, wave higher, wave lower... Explain to the students that they are regulating their waving style and speed to match yours. Try the same activity with humming and tapping. Invite students to lead the activity then give the students time to talk about how they felt and what they learned.

Helping Students Understand Self Regulation: Mirrors

The students stand in pairs facing each other.

Tell them they are going to follow

Tell students that they are going to regulate their movements to match the movements of their partner.

Students take turns to be the leader.

What ever the leader does the other child does.

Try it! It takes real concentration and it is fun!

Have them talk about how it felt to match what their partner was doing.

Were their challenges? Was it a positive experience.

Helping Students Use Self Regulation Possibilities Independently

Whenever I introduce students to a possibility for self regulation we try it out and refine it to suit our needs. I follow up by initiating a conversation about how could we use this outside our space? If I have students who have specific issues I have private conversations starting with, "I wonder if this might be something you could try on the bus, at recess..."

Helping Students Recognize and Understand Their Feelings

Reflection

Students need to learn to recognize their feelings. We check in daily to have students think about what zone or state they are in. We talk about how to get to a productive learning state.

Mood Meter

The program uses engine language and a colour gauge.

The gray zone is:

when we feel lethargic or tired.

Our engine is running "slow" or "low."

I say it is a little like our engine is stalled.

The 'green zone' is:

when we feel calm and alert, ready to learn and to listen.

Our engine is running "just right."

I say it is a little like our engine just humming along.

The 'red zone' is

When we feel stressed,

our engine is running "high" or "fast."

The 'red zone' does not always mean negative indicate a negative state.

It can just be excitement.

I say it is a little like our engine is revved up.

You can make a class 'mood meter' or individual 'mood meters' out of tag board.

Some teachers put 3 colors of paper on a magnet board and have students put their name magnet in the space that matched their state. They talked about what they could do to get into a good learning state. During the day they could move their magnet to show their learning state.

Gray	Green	RED

Practical Possibilities: Creating Supportive Environments and Routines

Guidelines

Ready made rules can elicit the response, Rules are made to be broken."

Guidelines take care of 99% of the rules most classrooms (and homes) have but are more effective.

I tell students of all ages that we each have 3 jobs:

**"It is my job:
to do everything I can do to keep you safe,
help you do your learn
and help make this a place where everyone can learn.
It is you job:
to be safe,
do everything you can do to learn
and support other people in their learning."**

Diminishing Distractions: Classroom Possibilities

Using Visuals

90% of processing is visual. Visuals support self regulation by making it easier for students to do what is expected. Check out, northstarpaths.com for wonderful stop motion videos and a great blog.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1eZ7h6u3JM>

Longstoryshortz presents - Visuals: I See What You Mean.

Reducing visual distractions, modulating lighting, rethinking wall displays

Many teachers are rethinking the physical set up of classrooms and or learning areas and are adding more natural materials and moving toward more neutral backgrounds with the purpose of providing a more calming environment. One thing that has been effective in promoting self regulation is doing a 'makeover' because clutter, color, crowding and sounds can put some students on sensory overload.

If our goal is to have students calm, focussed and attentive consider:

Walking around and taking a thoughtful look at the classroom. Take photos.

Decide:

- what can I get rid of?
- what can be done to de-clutter?
- where neutral could neutral colors make the room more restful?
- how can we create 'micro zones' of for quiet spaces?

Some teachers have found that using a blind or drape to cover the contents of some shelves actually makes the children feel and act calmer.

Auditory-noise canceling headphones

Many classrooms have 4 or more sets of noise cancelling headphones available for student use. If headphones are not available ear plugs or buds can be a temporary possibility.

Making Sitting More Self Regulation 'Friendly'

For some students a 'sit cushion,' a semi-inflated rubber chair cushion with bumps which provide sensory input can literally give some wiggle room -- giving the feeling of movement without disruption. Many students who need to move find all-in-one desk-and-chair furniture challenging and sometimes have problems because rocking the chair results in rocking the whole desk. A desk with a separate chair may be safer. If there are funds available there are chairs that rock, desks that allow students to stand or have built in fidgets. It is possible to wrap the bottom legs of a standard chair with Thera-band, inner tubing or rubber tubing. The student can push against the band and gain some movement without providing a distraction for others. Some teachers put 3 tennis balls or felt sliders on the legs of the chair to cause a small amount of unevenness so the student get movement.

Sit or Stand

Many students can be much more able to be focussed and alert if they can stand. When I observe students who have difficulty focussing while sitting we have a conversation about trying standing at a table or desk to work but I make it clear that their part is to be engaged in their assignment or activity. An area of desks or tables where students can stand with out getting in the way of other people helps some students to be more productive.

Arranging for Focus

Many teachers have had great success in helping students be more focussed during discussions and during independent work time by arranging the furniture so that students are looking at each other. Betty a university instructor has her students arrange their chairs in a circle so students make eye contact and leave phones 'stowed' during class. Despite a very small class room Jen arranged her intermediate students' work spaces in a rectangle with a space for movement in the center. The feeling of being in a 'public space' led students to be more courteous to each other. She observed that when students could see each other during independent work times so they tended to be more engaged in their own projects.

Fidget Tools

Many educators have fidget tools available for students. I have been collecting things that students can use to keep their focus. We make it clear that these are tools and need to be treated as a tool rather than a toy. I look for **tools students can use without risk of embarrassment**. For older students I've collected various rings and bracelets that are inconspicuous. When students are listening it may work for them to doodle or use modeling materials.

When we began introducing the use of fidget tools responding to questions like, "Why does he get to have that?" "Isn't she just playing?" or "Couldn't he just pay attention like the 'other kids' do?" came up.

We needed to have conversations about why some of us can be better learners when we have something to handle or do that keeps us more focussed and alert. The important thing is that we reach an agreement that fits with the guidelines of:

"We do everything we can do to learn and let other people do their learning."

"Fair isn't everybody getting the same thing ...

Fair is about everybody getting what they need to be successful." Pinterest Pin

Great kids books by Jennifer Veeneland: Arnie and His School Tools, Why Does Izzy Cover Her Ears?

Check out, northstarpaths.com for wonderful stop motion videos and a great blog.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1eZ7h6u3JM>

Longstoryshortz Fidgets

Tie Ons

The simple placement of yarn tied around the leg of a chair or desk can make a highly effective fidget tool. Cut 3 pieces of yarn. (approximately 40 cm) Tie around the top of the leg of a desk or chair or simply put out yarn on desks or tables. It makes a silent and fairly unobtrusive fidget.

Macrame bracelets, RAINBOW LOOM bracelets and elastic hair ties also make great fidgets.

Spinner or Meditation Rings

Spinner or Meditation rings are metal rings made with a piece that spins around the outside of the inner ring. I got one in Stainless steel for under \$10.00. Amazon is the best source I've found for inexpensive rings. B.C. Ferries often has spinner rings near the cash desk for \$9.99.

Acupressure Rings

Acupressure Rings are small metal rings made of little triangular shaped points that stimulate fingers and can help concentration. They are listed on **Amazon**. Most teachers don't have a budget for such items but I found soft pony tail elastics at the \$ Store which make inexpensive, quiet fidget tools.

Rocks and Shells

Polished rocks and worn pieces of shell make great fidgets because they can be kept in a pocket and used as the student needs them. Other students find a scrap of soft fabric and excellent claiming device.

Chew Bands

Plastic straws and coffee stirrers were used for kids who needed to chew but they can misalign teeth. There are some silicone 'chewies' available and some teachers have tried food safe tubing. For kids who chew clothing a wrist band or top cuff of a small sock makes a less destructive, less obvious outlet. PUR gum is another possibility. It does not contain aspartame.

Using Movement to Help Students Regulate their Energy**Cooperative Rock, Paper Scissors**

Students stand back to back with a partner.

Show the signs for Rock, Paper Scissors.

When you say, "TURN" partners try to send each other a silent message so they both show the same sign.

This results in lots of laughter and all to do it again.

Tiger, Alien, Salesperson

Tiger: make hands like claws, make snarling tiger face

Alien: put fingers up beside forehead to make antenna

Salesperson: Hand out, eye contact, huge smile

Action Wave

Have students meet in a circle or line.

Demonstrate the wave like fans do at sports events.

Have 1 person do an action which is repeated in a wave pattern around the group until the motion ends up at the person next to the person who started the action.

The next person does another action that goes around the group.

Take 5

I have quieting activity to go with every active break I do with students

Students put one hand out in front of them, about shoulder level. They use their index finger on their other hand to trace around the fingers of the hand they are holding up. Starting with their thumb, they breathe in as they trace up and out as they trace down. I teach kids that if they want to do this on their own but don't want to attract attention, they can just look at their hand and visualize tracing as they breathe in and out.

Knees, Knees

Knees, knees, shoulders, shoulders, (tap knees then cross hands and tap opposite shoulders)

Knees, knees, shoulders, shoulders, (tap knees then cross hands and tap opposite shoulders)

Knees, 1 shoulder, knees, 1 shoulder, (tap knees then opposite shoulders)

Knees, cross-over, knees, snap (tap knees, cross arms in front and tap opposite knees, then snap fingers)

Brush, brush, (brush hands in front of you)

Elbow, elbow, (tap opposite elbows)

Nod, nod, side, side (nod head then nod to each side)

Wax on, wax off, wax, together. (circle one hand then the other then end by circling both hands)

Repeat!!!

(I use Build Me Up Buttercup by the Foundations)

Shifting Thinking to Help Kids DO and Be Their Best

Traditionally,

unwanted behaviour has been labeled with words and phrases like:
naughty, difficult, bad, inappropriate, hyper, lazy, inappropriate...

Thinking shift

Instead we could think about what works for the context.
Some things are fine at home or outside but don't work in a group or inside setting.
I say, "That doesn't work in here." (right now) "We need to figure out how/what you can..."

Be assured, we are not going to let kids 'get away with' behaviour that has negative effects on themselves or others, rather we are going to look for ways to make the situation better.
Michelle Garcia Winner uses 'expected and unexpected' behaviour.

What Can We Do to Help ALL Kids Do and Be their Best?

Traditionally,

when students did or kept doing something that was 'wrong' they were disciplined which usually equalled being punished. The problem is punishments don't really work in the long run and even more concerning, don't help students learn positive, productive behaviour.

Thinking shift

Instead we help our kids to think about what works for the context. We can help them learn to figure out:
"Is this time for a **problem solving strategy** or a **coping strategy**?"
(Thank you Cindy Andrew!)

One definition of discipline means 'to lead out of.'
Now we can ask,
"What's going on?"
"Can we do anything to to environment?"
"Can I show the person something they can do independently?"

References: Books, Articles, Sites and Slides on Self Regulation

Calm, Alert and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation Stuart Shanker
Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education Elena Bodrova, Debra J. Leong
Self-Reg Stuart Shanker
The Zones of Regulation, Leah Kuypers
The Whole Brain Child Daniel Siegel
Developing A Learning Classroom Nic Cooper & Betty Garne
The Mind Up Curriculum The Hawn Foundation Scholastic
How Your Child Learns Best Judy Willis

Developing Self Regulation in Kindergarten Elena Bodrova, Debra J. Leong
Old Fashioned Play Builds Serious Skills Alex Spiegel
The Serious Need for Play Scientific American Mind FEB/March 2009

To purchase a set of Self Regulation Posters please contact Gilda Whitworth: gwhitworth@sd43.bc.ca
These laminated posters are being sold at cost for \$30.00 per set.
Kids Have Stress Too! Other posters and a course on helping children deal with stress
www.psychologyfoundation.org/kidshavestresstoo

My Favorite Self Regulation Quotations

“When will what we know, change what we do?”

Mike McKay has a excellent blog <http://mikemckay.ca//>

Self regulation is the ability to
start doing what needs to be done
and
stop doing what doesn't work in the situation.
Colleen Politano

Self regulation makes self control possible; not the other way around.
Stuart Shanker

Self regulation philosophy is an invitation to view behaviour through the lens of compassion.
Louise Lamont

You can't teach children to behave better by making them feel worse.
When children feel better, they behave better.
Pam Leo

Meltdown is not the same as a tantrum.
A meltdown means our kids are having a hard time, not giving a hard time.
They need our help and understanding.
theautismsite

The way we talk our children becomes their inner voice.
Peggy O'Mara

“Is this good use of student's time.”

David Booth