

# What is Self-Regulation?

2/1/2021

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Have you ever seen a baby suck their fingers, a toddler throwing a tantrum, or an adult taking a deep breath before reacting to something? Those are all ways a person self-regulates. Self-regulation is our ability to identify, regulate, and control our emotions and behavior. This includes calming down after something exciting, controlling impulses, and regulating reactions. Self-regulation is important for a child because it will help them learn, behave in socially acceptable ways, make friends, become more independent, and help them to manage stress.

As a person grows and develops, so does their ability to self-regulate. Children learn to self-regulate by watching the adults around them. Infants may suck on their fingers or turn away when overwhelmed. Toddlers start to label feelings and turn to adults for help with strong feelings. School-age children can recognize a wide range of emotions in self and others, identify solutions to problems, use strategies with support, and start taking perspective of others.

Self-Regulation is one of the many things that an occupational therapist can help a child to learn. Through various programs and interventions such as “The Zones of Regulation”, ALERT Program, biofeedback, sensory diets, and finding strategies that work for the child’s specific needs (i.e. belly breathing, deep pressure like squishes between couch cushions, going for a walk, taking a break, etc.)

If your child struggles with any of the things to look for, contact your pediatrician or give us a call at 952-223-2506.

**. As a person grows and develops, so does their ability to self-regulate**



## Things to Look For

A child may struggle with self-regulation if they have the following:

- Under-reactive to certain sensations such as tactile input
- Has tantrums or behavioral outbursts that last longer than usual or more often than is typical
- Typical behavior strategies tend to be ineffective
- Easily distracted or has difficulty concentrating
- Seeks out intense pressure or movement (spinning, crashing, jumping, etc.)
- Has difficulties accepting changes in routine or transitioning between tasks
- Has difficulty regulating their own behavior or emotional responses

## References

Rosanbalm, K.D., & Murray, D.W. (2017). Promoting Self-Regulation in Early Childhood: A Practice Brief. OPRE Brief #2017-79. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Self-Regulation (n.d.) Retrieved on April 29, 2020 from <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/sensory-processing/self-regulation/>