



Self-Regulation Snap Shot #3: A Focus on Elementary-Aged Children

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Support of self-regulation is critical at each stage of development from birth through young adulthood.

Self-regulation is the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal-directed actions.

Self-regulation develops through interaction with caregivers and the broader environment over an extended period from birth through young adulthood (and beyond).

Caregivers support self-regulation development by using three strategies in a process called “co-regulation.” Caregivers include parents, teachers, afterschool care providers, extended family members, and others.

Self-regulation includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills and processes that support children in coping with strong feelings, controlling impulses, learning, and getting along with others.

Self-regulation is important because it promotes wellbeing across the lifespan, including physical, emotional, social and economic health and educational achievement.

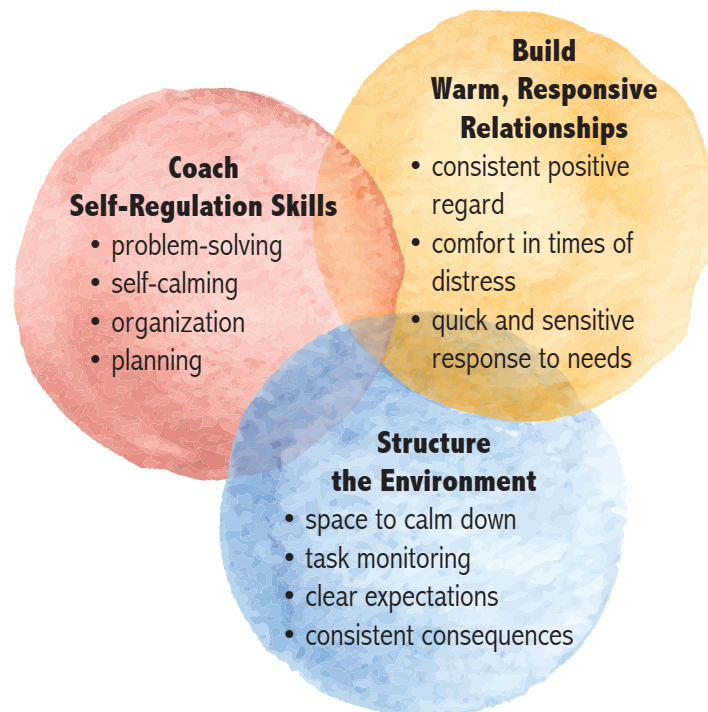
This snap shot summarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and intervention for elementary-aged children for practitioners and educators interested in promoting self-regulation for this age group. It is based on a series of four reports on Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress prepared for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). For more information, visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/toxic-stress-and-self-regulation-reports>

Self-Regulation Skills Developing in Elementary-Aged Children:

- Use of self-talk to control behavior
- Cognitive flexibility/problem-solving
- Attentional control/sustained focus
- Increased delay of gratification
- Managing emotion “in the moment”
- Goals and behavior guided by empathy and concern for others
- Organization of behavior to achieve goals
- Completion of larger and more complex tasks



Self-regulation is influenced by stress and adversity in the environment as well as caregiving supports and children’s own biology, skills, and motivation.

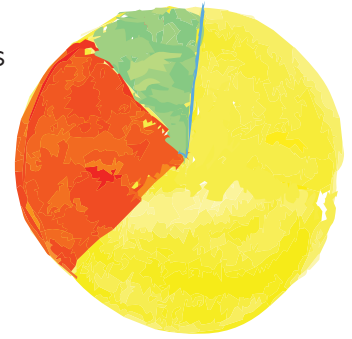


Three components of co-regulation for elementary-aged children

Lessons Learned About Interventions to Promote Self-Regulation in Elementary-Aged Children

Across the lifespan, there are two intervention approaches that support development of self-regulation: skills instruction and co-regulation support. The combination of these approaches is believed to be most effective, regardless of the child's age. In elementary-aged students, existing interventions utilize these approaches as follows:

- 65% of studies focused on skills instruction alone;
- 9% focused on co-regulation alone;
- 25% combined both;
- 0.1% used other approaches



Based on a review of preventive interventions published between 1989 and 2013, 134 studies with comparison groups were found that targeted self-regulation development for elementary-aged children (ages 5-10 years), with the characteristics described here.

Strengths:

- A large number of studies with diverse samples
- A variety of outcomes, particularly direct assessment of child skills

Limitations:

- A lack of interventions targeting parents and teachers
- Significant variability in effects exists across interventions

Conclusions:

- Broad positive impact seen across many child outcomes
- Targeting parents also has positive outcomes
- Room for enhancement exists with greater involvement of parents and teachers

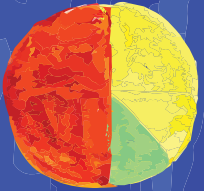
Outcome Assessed	# Findings	Average Effect Size*	% with Positive Effects*
Child Outcomes: Core Self-Regulation			
Cognitive	97	Small to Medium	73%
Emotional	23	Small	61%
Behavioral	159	Small	68%
Stress	10	Medium	70%
Motivation/Initiative	18	Small	44%
Child Outcomes: Other Functional Domains			
Language/Learning	24	Small	50%
Delinquent Behavior	21	Small	86%
Interpersonal	87	Small to Medium	66%
Mental Health	50	Small	60%
Parent Outcomes			
Co-Regulation	11	Small to Medium	73%
Parenting Skills	36	Small to Medium	78%
Parenting Attitudes	10	Small to Medium	60%
Mental health	4	Small	50%

*Reported only if findings are based on at least two studies

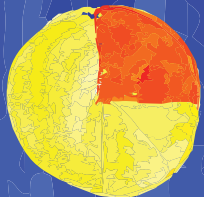
Key considerations for promoting self-regulation in elementary-aged children:

- Encourage a positive school climate for all students
- Deliver self-regulation skills training in at-risk schools
- Train teachers and afterschool staff to teach, model, reinforce, and coach self-regulation skills
- Identify ways to support school and program staff's own self-regulation capacity
- Provide parent education supports that address co-regulation

About half the children lived in adversity or were at-risk



Almost half of the children were minority (30% African-American, 17% Hispanic)



Three quarters of the interventions were implemented in schools



93% of studies targeted children;
36% targeted parents;
10% targeted teachers

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