



# Self-Regulation Snap Shot #5: A Focus on High-School Aged Youth



**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 youth 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 is one of six snap shots focused on different age groups based on a series of reports on Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress prepared for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). This snap shot summarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and intervention for high-school aged youth. It is designed to be a helpful resource for practitioners and educators interested in promoting self-regulation for this high-school age group. For more information, visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/toxic-stress-and-self-regulation-reports>

## Self-Regulation Skills Developing in High-School Aged Youth:

- Goal setting and commitment
- Maintaining orientation toward the future
- Planning and organizing time and tasks to achieve goals
- Self-monitoring and self-reinforcement in pursuit of goals
- Effective decision-making in the context of strong emotion and peer influence
- Complex problem-solving considering consequences and others’ perspectives
- Recognizing and accepting emotions
- Tolerating distress
- Using healthy coping strategies to manage stress
- Using empathy and concern for others to guide goals and decisions



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

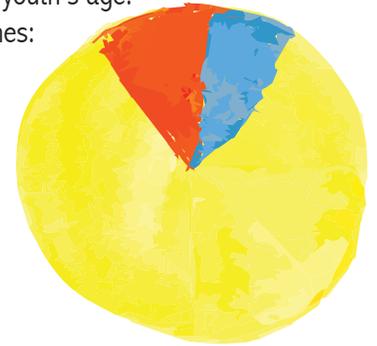


## Three components of co-regulation for high-school aged youth

## Lessons Learned About Interventions to Promote Self-Regulation in High-School Aged Youth

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 youth's age. Existing interventions for high schoolers utilize these approaches:

- 92% of studies focused on direct instruction alone;
- 0% focused on co-regulation alone;
- 5% combined both;
- 3% used another approach



Based on a review of preventive interventions published between 1989 and 2013, 36 studies were found that targeted self-regulation development for high-school aged youth (ages 14-18 years), with the following characteristics:

### Strengths:

- Diverse samples in terms of risk factors and cultural backgrounds
- Majority delivered universally in schools

### Limitations:

- Relatively small number of studies
- Aspects of self-regulation not covered systematically
- Limited focus on emotional regulation
- Few interventions target parents and none target teachers
- Majority of outcomes are youth self-report

### Conclusions:

- Positive and relatively consistent effects seen on cognitive regulation, delinquency, and mental health
- Lack of alignment with self-regulation framework: need more focused interventions that target emotion regulation, consider the importance of peers and relationships, and involve parents, teachers, and mentors

### Key considerations for promoting self-regulation in high-school aged youth:

- Encourage a positive school climate for all students
- Provide self-regulation skills training focused on emotion regulation in the context of relationships through existing youth development or mentoring programs
- Train teachers and youth program staff including mentors to teach, model, reinforce, and coach self-regulation skills
- Develop parent and teacher education supports that address co-regulation
- Identify ways to support the self-regulation capacity of parents, school staff, and youth program staff including mentors

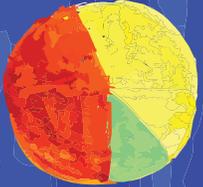
Outcome Assessed	# Findings	Average Effect Size*	% with Positive Effects*
<b>Core Self-Regulation Outcomes for Youth</b>			
Cognitive	28	Medium	86%
Emotional	11	None to Small	55%
Behavioral	10	None to Small	40%
Motivation/Initiative	7	Small	43%
<b>Other Functional Outcomes</b>			
Language/Learning	2	None to Small	40%
Delinquent Behavior	11	Small	82%
Health/Self-Care	6	None to Small	50%
Interpersonal	9	None	11%
Mental Health	18	Small to Medium	67%

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

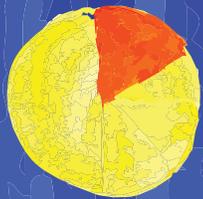
About 40% of the youth lived in adversity or were at-risk



59% of youth were minority (45% African-American, 14% Hispanic)



80% of the interventions were implemented in schools



100% targeted youth;  
5% targeted parents;  
0% targeted teachers

Project Officer: Aleta Meyer, Ph.D. OPRE

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