



**ABA RESOURCES**  
**Winter, 2020**

## EMOTIONAL REGULATION

*The process by which individuals influence how they experience and express their feelings*

### **How can I help my child work on emotional regulation skills?**

- **Zones of Regulation:** Attached you will find a printout you can display in the home that can be referenced frequently throughout the day to help your child recognize his own emotions. These visuals provide visual depictions of each emotion, as well as several coping strategies that correspond to each zone. Ask your child, "how do you feel right now?" and allow him to tell you using the visual.
  - The **Red Zone** is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone.
  - The **Yellow Zone** is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions, however one has more control when they are in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone.
  - The **Green Zone** is used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the zone where optimal learning occurs.
  - The **Blue Zone** is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.
- One of the easiest ways to work on emotional regulation skills is by modeling these skills day to day. Children learn through observation and imitating what they see. If your child sees you staying calm and using appropriate coping strategies, he may be more inclined to use those strategies as well! Coping strategies are those skills we use to help ourselves feel better. Below you will find a chart with many different coping strategies to choose from! It is a good idea to practice these with your child when he is calm, so they are easier to use in the moment.
- Oftentimes, there are signs that signal your child may be experiencing emotions in the red, yellow, or blue zones. These signs may include increased rates of breathing, lethargy, increased sensory needs, etc. It is important to recognize these signs, as well as any potential triggers for these feelings so that you can proactively work through these emotions by talking about them and/or by using the coping strategies. Instead of avoiding these situations, use them as opportunities to practice appropriate responses to these emotions.

## TRANSITIONS

*Moving from one activity to another*

### **Why are Transitions Difficult?**

- Have you ever woken up in the morning to your alarm clock buzzing? For most of us, making that transition from lying in bed to getting ready for work is difficult!
- The same goes for children—When they are doing something super fun or highly preferred, it can be difficult to stop that activity and move on to something that may not be as preferred (and many times, activities that are non-preferred).

### **How can I Help my Child Transition?**

- **Visual Supports:** Visuals help improve understanding and can ease anxiety because the child can see what will happen next. First/then boards and visual schedules (samples attached below) are great tools to use when lesser-preferred activities may be followed by more highly preferred activities. For example, if you would like your child to eat dinner, you could show him a first/then board stating/depicting “first dinner, then video games.”
- **Timers:** Timers are useful tools for not only signaling when a preferred activity is finished (for example, the end of iPad time), but are also great to use for non-preferred activities that last for set amounts of time (for example, the amount of time left before a favorite TV show comes on). Visual timers are especially helpful because they allow the child to understand exactly what “X number of minutes” really means, and they can actually see the time running out (much like an hourglass timer). There are many options for free visual timer apps that can be used on a smartphone, including the TLS favorite, “Visual Countdown Timer.”



- **Pre-Transition Warnings:** Before any transition, it is important to give your child several warnings that the transition is coming. Oftentimes, transitions are abrupt, and the child does not have enough time to mentally prepare. By giving several vocal warnings, the transition can be less of a surprise. Using these warnings along with a visual timer is most effective. Before the timer goes off, you might say, “five more minutes... three more minutes...two more minutes...one more minute...thirty more seconds...10 more seconds...5, 4, 3, 2, 1...”
- **Give Choices:** Whenever possible, give your child choices before a transition (even if those choices are small). When we offer choices, it can give a sense of control in a situation that may otherwise feel so out of control for your child. For example, if it is time to get ready for bed, you may give your child the opportunity to decide the order in which he prepares for bed. If it’s time to get ready in the morning, you may let your child decide what shirt he would like to wear that day.

## COMMUNICATION

*How your child expresses his/her wants and needs*

### **Types of Communication:**

- Vocal Communication- Vocally speaking to communicate
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)- Methods of communication that do not involve vocal communication including: Speech-Generating Devices (SGD), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), sign language, writing.

### **What can I do to help my child communicate at home?**

- Ensure any AAC devices/materials are available at all times. For those who use iPad apps to communicate, you can place the device on guided access (triple click the home button) so that only the words can be accessed (if needed). Attached to this document you will find several basic PECS to print and use at home as well.
  - If your child is new to PECS, start with 1 or 2 picture symbols before introducing more.
- Label common household objects or toys to expose your child to the printed word and picture symbol associated with those objects (basic labels are attached below).
- Model appropriate communication for your child. One of the best times to do this is during play time by narrating your play and your child's play (ex: "the car is going up the ramp," "the baby is hungry. Let's feed the baby!").
  - If your child uses an alternative method of communication, you can model how to use that communication device appropriately (guiding their hand to point to a PEC or to select an option on their speech-generating device).
- Reinforce any and all attempts at communication. Let your child understand that communication is powerful!
- Give your child enough time to respond (at least 10-seconds) before repeating yourself.

## **ROUTINES**

*A sequence of actions regularly followed*

### **Why are routines important?**

- Children learn best through repetition, and many children with autism spectrum disorder thrive on predictability and patterns.
- Establishing routines for everyday activities at home can help ease the unpredictability of everyday life for young children.
- Consistent routines can also help increase sleep quality.

### **Tips for creating and maintaining routines:**

- Even on the weekends or during extended breaks from school, encourage your child to get dressed in the morning. This can help ease the transition when school resumes.
- Display simple visual schedules (like the ones attached below) for your most common activities to help promote independence. For example, a morning routine, a bedtime routine, hand washing, etc.
- Use timers and pre-transition warnings to signal that a routine may begin or end.
- Set a specific time every day to complete these routines and be consistent.

## SENSORY REGULATION

### **What is Sensory Regulation?**

- Sensory regulation is the ability to match the level of arousal in the body to the activity or environment. The process by which we do this is often referred to as self-soothing.
- We all do this! Do you tap your foot? Twirl your hair? Do you watch your favorite TV show when you're feeling down?
- Many times, children have difficulty regulating their sensory systems and as a result, may engage in problem behaviors to have those needs met. Your child may scream, pinch, chew on inedible objects, run his body into other objects or people, or may be "bouncing off the walls."

### **What are some ways I can help my child with sensory regulation?**

- Offer your child squeezes or hugs
- Turn off the light—For some children, bright lights are aversive and are too visually stimulating
- Play some calming music
- Chewies—Chewies, or "chewelry", can offer an appropriate outlet for oral stimulation
- Dance—There are many YouTube videos for children that encourage them to dance along and get their wiggles out!
- Fidgets—Fidget spinners, stretchy noodles, silly putty, etc.
- Yoga—The "Super Stretch Yoga" app is kid-friendly!
- Swing or bounce on a ball
- Weighted blankets or vests

## MASKS



### **How can I help my child wear a mask?**

- Practice at home!
- Model wearing a mask—Children learn best through observation. Show your child how to wear a mask, and wear a mask while you encourage your child to wear one.
- Start slowly! And reinforce each step below with praise, along with your child’s favorite item or activity.
  - Begin by letting your child hold and explore the mask on their own
  - Once he is comfortable holding the mask, you can try placing the mask on the face (no ear loops) briefly (1-2 seconds)
  - Next, add the ear loops and have your child wear the mask for 1-2 seconds
  - Build the time wearing the mask slowly (no more than 5-second increases at a time). Visual timers may be helpful so your child can see how long he must wear the mask.
  - Once your child can wear the mask in the home, try different settings.



## MOTIVATION

### *Tips for increasing motivation for non-preferred activities/tasks*

#### **How can I help increase my child's desire to complete a lesser-preferred activity?**

- Children often need rewards for doing things they do not typically enjoy doing (for example, schoolwork or daily living skills)
- Providing a reward for completion of a task can help to strengthen their engagement and motivation. Some examples of rewards can include tablet access, outside play/going on a walk, highly preferred toys, and favorite snacks
- Children may require visual reminders of what they are working for. First/then boards and token charts are often helpful!

#### **How to use token boards:**

- First, establish how the child will earn each token. For example, one correct answer, or one-minute of active engagement. Keep the token schedule the same throughout the task so the child knows what is expected of him
- Next, set a goal. How many tokens should the child earn until he gets the chosen reward? It is important to set reachable goals so the child does not become frustrated. For larger tasks, you can break it down into smaller tasks/sections. It might take 30 tokens to complete the task, but earning reinforcement after 5 tokens each time can make the task feel less daunting.
- Personalize the tokens. You can use simple star tokens (like the ones below), or you can make each token your child's favorite TV show character, or different animals. Laminating these tokens and using Velcro to attach them to the chart can help keep everything clean and organized.
- Make sure you give both visual and spoken reminders of what your child is working for to help keep motivation high. First/then charts can help with this.
- Once all required tokens are earned, be sure to provide the chosen reward *immediately*. Research has shown that immediate reinforcement is most effective in changing behavior.

Zones of Regulation:

Yellow Zone



Earphones

Water

Body Break

Blue Zone

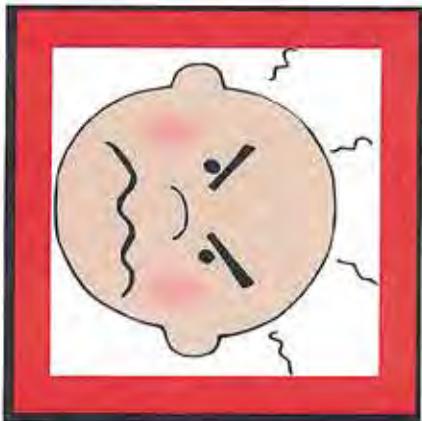


Walk

Body Break

Water

Red Zone



Quiet & Alone

Walk

Breathe

Green Zone



Desk Work

Listen to Teacher

Talk to Classmates

Zones of Regulation—Emotions:



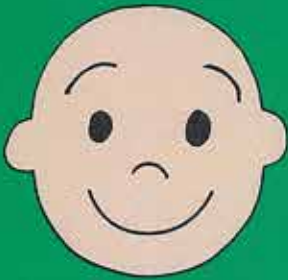
Sick



Sad



Tired



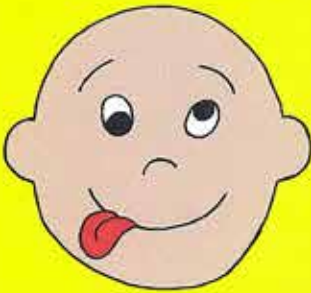
Good



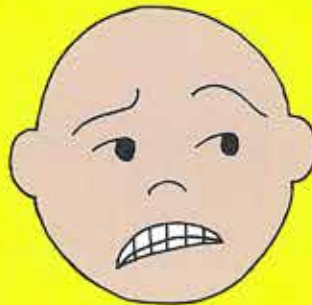
Proud



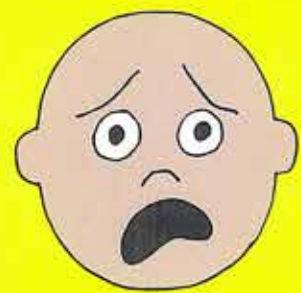
Happy



Silly



Upset\_+Worried



Scared



Frustrated





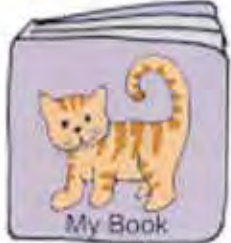














Mad



Angry\_+Furious

Coping Strategies:

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
|  <p>Take a Walk</p>             |  <p>Find a Calm Spot</p>  |  <p>Colour a Picture</p>    | <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>  <p>Count to Ten</p> |
|  <p>Read a Book</p>             |  <p>Take Deep Breaths</p> |  <p>Ask for Hug</p>         |  <p>Hug something</p>                            |
|  <p>Get a Drink</p>            |  <p>Squeeze Clay</p>     |  <p>Yoga or Stretching</p> |  <p>Take a Rest</p>                             |
|  <p>Think of a Calm Place</p> |  <p>Have a Snack</p>    |  <p>Talk to someone</p>   |  <p>Draw How you Feel</p>                      |
|  <p>Jump 5 Times</p>          |  <p>Push a Wall</p>     |  <p>Listen to Music</p>   |  <p>Smell Something Nice (like lavender)</p>   |

Picture Symbols



Yes



No

open

open



Bathroom



Eat



Drink



Toys



Color



Ball



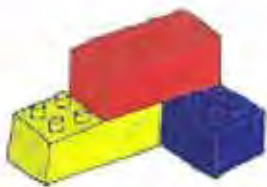
All Done



Puzzle



Puzzle



Legos



Stop



Go



Bubbles



Blocks



Book



Play-Doh



Dolls

Picture Symbols



Music



Tablet



Outside



Blanket



More



Animals



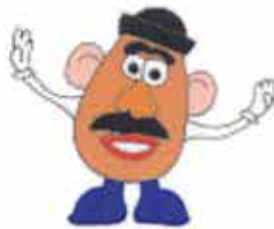
Spinner



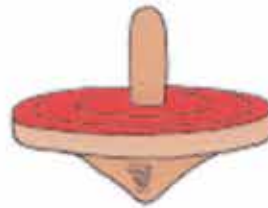
Slinky



Cars



Mr. Potato Head



Top



Wind-up Toy



Device

mom

mom

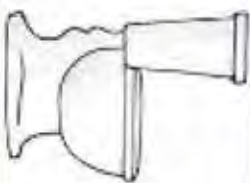
dad

dad

Home Labels



Bathroom



Toilet



Sink



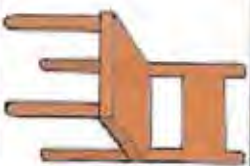
Bathnub



Shower



Table



Chair



Refrigerator

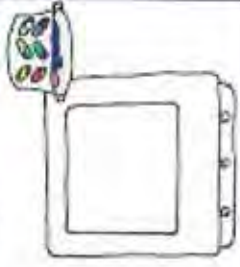
House Labels



Fork



Brush



Laundry



Trash Can



Toothbrush



Clothes



Laundry



Bedroom