**Coregulation**  
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I was always taught that it was best for children to self soothe. Earlier decades of research preached the idea that if children depended too much on their caregivers for soothing, they would grow up dependent and without a clear sense of self. We know now this isn’t true, and in fact the nervous system isn’t even developed enough to begin to self-regulate until closer to age 3 and current research is suggesting there is ample benefits to coregulation.

Coregulation allows us to use another body, human or otherwise, to regulate against helping us return our nervous system to a state of balance. If you’ve ever been upset and a hug from a loved one helped calm you down, you were practicing coregulation. The process allows for more frazzled nervous system to better regulate by “borrowing” someone’s calm.

There’s absolutely no shame in needing some help when it comes to regulating – it’s human nature to get so wrapped up in our own experience that we cannot do it alone. Coregulation is a vital part of our lived experience as we often need a secondary input to come in and signal that everything will be okay. It’s a present moment of focus, allowing yourself to be fully in the space with this other being and receive messages of calm and safety.

What happens when we’re in a circumstance where there is no other body or you’re in a situation where every other body is also matching levels of dysregulation? In these situations, it’s also possible to use the energy of another living thing. Pets are the best example of this, but you can also use plants, or anything found in the natural world. If you allow yourself to sink into the experience of being with the other living thing - petting your animal or looking at the shades of green in your plant, the vagus nerve can be activated in a way that soothes us.

If there’s another regulated human in your presence you can practice corgulating with, I invite you to try it with physical contact, or just sitting in their presence and observing how your own bodily sensations change as you watch them. If there’s not another regulated human, try this same practice by looking at a flower, being in nature or any other present moment activity with a living thing. Notice how you shift in response and what change happens in you when you open yourself up.

Regulation is a cycle, constantly moving and flowing between leaning on others, regulating ourselves, and letting others lean on us. Instead of thinking our way out of feeling activated or expecting another person, place or thing to fix us, coregulation allows us to enter spaces where we are seen, loved and safe - it’s fundamental to who we are as humans.