



How to Support **Self-Regulation Across Disciplines**

CPI EXCLUSIVE DOWNLOAD



Delays in self-regulation skills are all too often mistaken by others as a “behavior problem.”

If we’re honest with ourselves, we all become overwhelmed by the stressors of life, the hurdles we encounter, and the flood of emotions that come with this.

During these times, we may struggle to self-regulate, or in other words, manage our internal feelings and emotions in order to meet the demands placed on us within the social context. We may have a meltdown, shutdown, or breakdown that incapacitates us for a moment of time.

Now consider a student who naturally doesn’t have the resilience of an adult, but also does not have the developmental skill set like his peers to cope and manage internal or

external conflicts during the countless trying circumstances he encounters throughout his everyday routines and activities.

Lacking awareness of his feelings and how to regulate them in the social context, his delays in self-regulation skills are all too often mistaken by others as a “behavior problem.”

> **All the team members are stakeholders in supporting a student in this area. It is not any one discipline's responsibility.**

When self-regulation skills do not come naturally and a student's ability to function at home and in the school and community is impeded, skills need to be taught, practiced, and reinforced.

This is best done by a multidisciplinary team comprised of the key players in the student's life, which may include a combination of any (or all) of those who support the student across environments:

- Caregivers
- Teachers
- Counselors
- Aides
- Therapists
- Administrators
- Behaviorists
- Social workers
- Childcare providers
- Etc.



When self-regulation skills are lagging, a student's ability to manage himself is often impacted in multiple settings with multiple people. Therefore, interventions aimed at building self-regulation skills are optimally applied when the entire team is working in collaboration.

All the team members are stakeholders in supporting a student in this area. It is not any one discipline's responsibility.

Each discipline brings a unique and specialized set of skills to the table that, when pooled together, can make a profound impact on the student who is learning adaptive ways to manage feelings and perform more prosocial behaviors.



Each team will be different given the team members and their unique strengths and knowledge sets brought to the table.

It is important to set aside time to collaborate and establish a course of action for targeted skills to be addressed and an action plan for implementation of self-regulation skills that will suit the team. A team may determine that one or two members will do the direct instruction of skills while other members will reinforce the skills with the student across settings.

Alternatively, a team may decide that self-regulation skill instruction should be more evenly divided among members based on what suits their strengths. For instance:

- One discipline focusing on learning to identify emotions.
- Another discipline focusing on learning calming techniques.
- Another discipline focusing on perspective taking and social awareness.
- And another team member supporting the student in identifying triggers and problem-solving skills.

Working together as a team certainly requires an investment in time for team members to communicate with each other. However, time spent proactively planning and following up on how to support a student carrying over skills saves time down the road by decreasing the time spent on meetings and communications about behavior concerns.

Setting up a group email can be an effective way to inform others of content introduced to the student and provide ideas on how to support carryover of skills and concepts. Photos or copies of student work can be attached to an email for others to build off of.

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Close communication also allows teams to swiftly work together to problem-solve hurdles that may arise in instruction or challenges the student may face.

Make sure to follow HIPAA guidelines, obtaining consent from caregivers to be in communication with others who support the student.

Addressing self-regulation as a multi-disciplinary team also helps create a culture where the student feels supported by all, and it provides consistency among people and across environments.

Some students struggle with gestalt processing, or seeing past the details to grasp the bigger picture. Students who struggle with gestalt processing may mistakenly use self-regulation skills only in the context of where it is taught.

For example, if only one team member (Mr. Nelson) is addressing self-regulation skills every

(Wednesday) at (1:15) in (room 221) and is not in communication with others as to how to carry over the skills taught, the student may struggle to see how skills taught in this one setting connect to the bigger picture of how regulation is needed at school as well as at home and in the community.

When someone else suggests using a strategy taught by Mr. Nelson in a different environment than where it was introduced and practiced, the student may reply to that person, “I don’t do deep breathing in the cafeteria. That’s what I do with Mr. Nelson in room 221 on Wednesdays at 1:15” because they struggle to see the connection of how a skill can help them outside of the specific context of where it’s taught.





If you don't have a collaborative team to work with, start by reaching out to colleagues and caregivers with basic information (for example, if using The Zones of Regulation curriculum to address self-regulation, Reproducible A and B: Information about The Zones and The Zones of Regulation Glossary is meant to serve this purpose) and gauge who else is invested in supporting self-regulation needs.

Continue to foster these relationships by providing small chunks of information over time (through conversations, handouts, short trainings) and let them know you are a resource to come to when they are ready for more information or to start working together on skill building.

As others gain knowledge and understanding, you may find them coming onboard to help support the student in developing fundamental regulation skills.

If in a school setting, another idea is setting up a Professional Learning Community (PLC) (DeFour & Eaker, 1998) or a book club on a book or curriculum that supports self-regulation skills to deepen and extend learning. Using a PLC model, educators can be agents of change in their schools in how regulation skills (or a lack of) are addressed by focusing attention on communication, collaboration, and culture.

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We hope you found this resource helpful.

Please feel free to share this guide with a friend or colleague.

Have questions? We're here for you!

Give us a call at 877.877.5390 or email info@crisisprevention.com



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About Leah Kuypers

Leah Kuypers is the creator of The Zones of Regulation curriculum and Apps, which foster self-regulation skills and allow for a uniform teaching framework across disciplines and settings, orchestrating a common language, visual structure, and system to support students.



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