Emotional Regulation

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Aims

• What are emotions and what are they for?
• How does emotional regulation develop?
• What things get in the way of emotional regulation?
• How can I help my child recognise and regulate?
Part 1:
What are Emotions?
HAPPY

DISGUSTED

ANGRY

PANICKED

EMOTIONS

FRIGHTENED

CONNECTED

PLAYFUL

CARING

ASSERTIVE
The purpose of emotions

• Helping animals to survive for millions of years

• Tell us what gives us pleasure and pain

• Help work out where we are, where we need to be and how to get there

• If we ignore our emotions, we can feel depressed or anxious
Emotions aren't "good" or "bad"

**Examples:**

**Stress**
"I need to slow down. I need self-care."

**Sad**
"It's okay. I need love & to look for joy & gratitude."

**Anxious**
"I need calm & grounding. I can remind myself I am safe & can manage this."

They are signals to us...

Our body bringing our attention to something → Maybe letting you know that something is 'off-kilter' or out of balance.

Ask yourself: "What is this feeling trying to tell me?"
Excitement
Anger
The only time we do not feel, is when we are dead

(Jon Frederickson, 2013)
Part 2: Developing Emotional Regulation
What do we mean by emotional regulation?

- A lifelong developmental process
- Underlies attention and social engagement
- Essential for optimal social, emotional and relational development
- Well regulated = most available for learning
- Poor regulation may lead to tantrums, rigidity, anxiety and disconnection
Window of tolerance
The typical development of emotional regulation

- We all use both physical and verbal expressions of emotions
- Most people use both together
- As we get older, we get better at using verbal expression to help others understand how we are feeling
The typical development of emotional regulation
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The typical development of emotional regulation
“Flipping One’s Lid”

Why do we lose control of our emotions by Kids Want to Know - YouTube

Prefrontal cortex
P.F.C.
“THE WISE LEADER”

“Flipped Your Lid”

The big emotions, anger, fear, anxiety etc...
The AMYGDALA - The alarm center
Acts on instinct
fight, flight or freeze

Credit: Daniel Siegel, M.D. is the creator of this concept and explanation “Flipped Lid”. Copyright © 2014 www.sharonselby.com

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tension in hands</td>
<td>Dry mouth, throat and eyes</td>
<td>Lowered blood pressure</td>
<td>Racing or cloudy thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension headaches</td>
<td>Sweating</td>
<td>Breathing slows</td>
<td>Blurry vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension in arms, shoulders, neck</td>
<td>Cold hands</td>
<td>Light-headed</td>
<td>Dizzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidgeting</td>
<td>Blushing</td>
<td>Nausea and diarrhoea</td>
<td>Feeling confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting ready for fight/flight</td>
<td>Increased heart rate and breathing</td>
<td>Urge to urinate</td>
<td>Hallucinating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>Migraines</td>
<td>Ringing in ears</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freeze/ play dead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Summary

• We all have emotions but as we age and mature we can use our upstairs brain to express these in a measured and thoughtful way

• This requires us to develop emotional intelligence

• This process is a bit like learning to catch a ball or ride a bike: at first you might drop the ball or fall off your bike but you improve each time you practice
Part 3: The challenges
Neurodevelopmental Conditions

- Autism
- ADHD
- Language disorder
- Dyspraxia
- Social communication disorder
- Other conditions
Resulting Difficulties

- Information processing
- Interaction
- Self control
- Attention & concentration
- Learning
- Relationships
- Sensory processing
- Co-ordination
Emotional Reactions are Quick
Experiences can cause ‘Threat’
Different interpretations cause problems

Time for a shower

- Oh no! Time for a shower!
- Showers are horrible
- No!
- You have to do what other kids do!
- You are making a problem!
- Go for your shower!
Changing an interpretation or behaviour can provide a way out of the repeating pattern.
Part 4: Strategies
Change is Possible

Neuroplasticity

New thoughts and skills carve out new pathways.

Repetition and practice strengthen these pathways, forming new habits.

Old pathways get used less and weaken.

With repeated and direct attention towards a desired change, we all have the ability to rewire our brains.
Strategy 1: Proactive Before Reactive

**Family life**
- Predictability
- House rules
- Regular patterns
- Fairness across the family

**Emotions**
- Use your empathy
- Accept emotions but not behaviour
- Be a good role model

**Challenge**
- Break experiences down
- Plan well
- Explain why
- Support when facing challenges
Strategy 2: Recognising how emotions feel in the body
• Clenched jaw
• Rapid heartbeat
• Increased body heat
• Feeling hot in the face - turning red
• A sense of pressure building up inside
• Feeling empowered and strong
• Arises in waves
• tears or increase in tearing

• sensation of heaviness in the chest

• heaviness in face

• sensation of pressure behind the eyes

• engorged eyelids and redness around eyes

• subtle changes in facial expression

• touching around or rubbing the eyes

• voice can become lower and scratchy

• quiet crackling sounds in throat or swallowing
• Warmth or an upward moving energy

• An urge to reach out and embrace

• An urge to smile

• An urge to touch or hold the other person

• Eyes widen

• An expansive feeling in the chest

• A sensation of calm
## Strategy 3: The incredible 5 point scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does this feel?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What makes me feel this way?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How can I tell?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What helps?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could lose control!</td>
<td>School bells The loud talking and laughing keep going</td>
<td>Too late!! I am screaming!</td>
<td><strong>Stop talking. Close eyes. Deep breaths. Quiet room.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel really upset and shaky.</td>
<td>When I make a mistake or people laugh at me</td>
<td>I start swearing out loud. I say mean things to other people. I tear up my work.</td>
<td><strong>Take a walk out of the room!</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel tense and nervous</td>
<td>People are talking loudly or laughing. When chairs scrape on the floor</td>
<td>I say shut up really quietely. I start staring at the people talking.</td>
<td>Take my time out card to teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a bit bothered and a bit tense</td>
<td>When I can’t have my turn straight away</td>
<td>I start repeating the TV schedule, I get a bit twitchy</td>
<td>Breathing and distraction – do something else</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel really calm</td>
<td>Watching TV or playing XBox</td>
<td>My brain feels relaxed, I am smiling and look happy</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Summary

- Emotions are normal feelings which we gradually learn to control and regulate
- Neurodevelopmental problems can impact on the extent to which children can regulate their emotions
- As individuals mature however and with the right strategies, it is possible to develop effective emotional regulation skills