

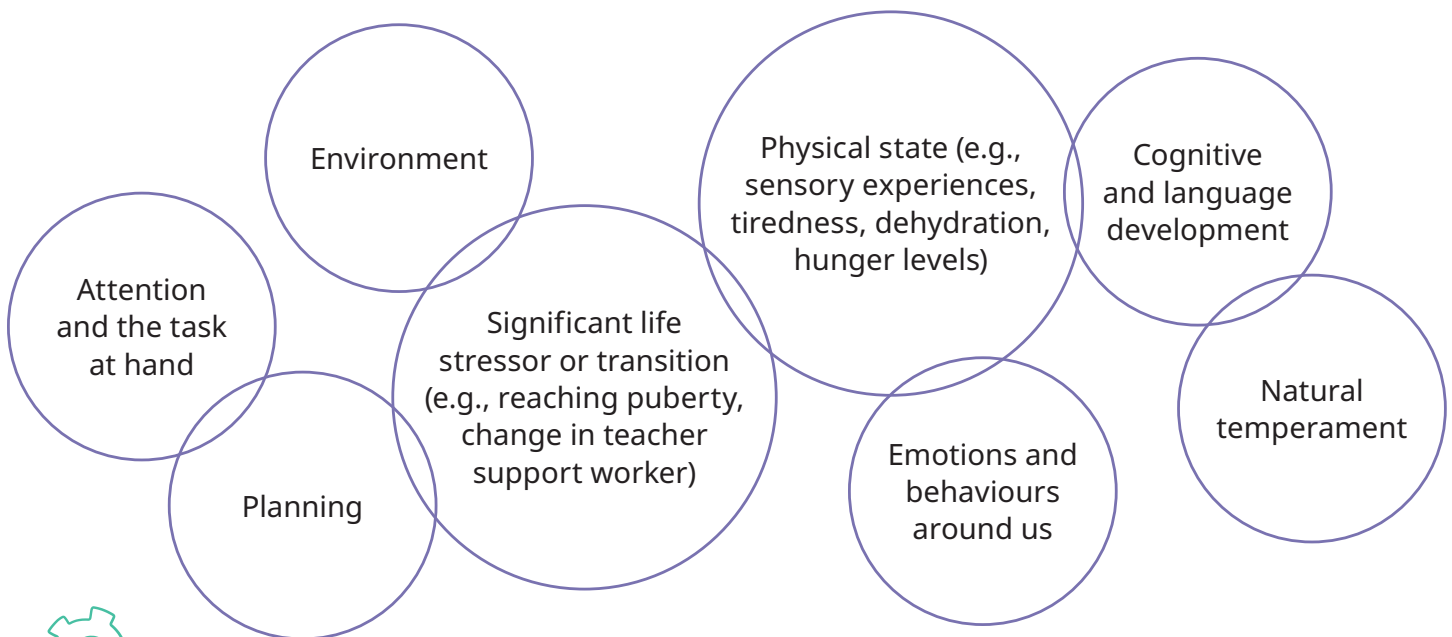


Emotional Regulation



Emotional regulation is the process of managing emotions to maintain balance and respond effectively to challenges. Having a mind and body that is well regulated is the foundation for being ready to learn. Some students need more time and tools to help them achieve this, especially if they are in an environment that poses barriers for them. Strategies are most effective when they are tailored to the individual student.

Factors that influence emotions and regulation



Strategies to support students' emotional regulation

Effective emotional regulation supports can help decrease stress, change levels of alertness and increase engagement and learning.

- Start the day with a breathing or relaxation exercise to ground yourself and your students.
- Address modifiable stressors or triggers in the learning environment.
- Tailor instruction in the classroom and provide students with a choice of activities. With this approach, students can begin to identify their learning strengths and stretches, and which activities best fit their learning style.

⚙️ Provide students with visual supports explaining what to expect for the day and what their activity choices will be. This is especially important when there will be unfamiliar activities or environments, such as field trips, that students might not understand or be prepared for, potentially experiencing overwhelm as a result.

⚙️ Use visual tools that can help students more concretely understand concepts like emotional regulation. For example, some teachers adapt five-point scales (For example, see [The Incredible 5-Point Scale](#)) for use with all students in their class, helping them to identify what they are feeling and to plan what they can do to support their regulation, well-being and learning needs as they arise.

⚙️ Differentiate between self-control (which often means compliance) and self-regulation. In classrooms where all students are expected to do the same thing at the same time, we often see students who disengage, showing a level of arousal that is too low or too high to sustain attention. This is just as much of a problem as the student who acts out when disengaged. Although a quiet class might appear to an observer to be under better “control,” it may not mean a level of alertness that supports learning for many students. That is, “quiet and in your seat” does not necessarily mean better self-regulation.

⚙️ Encourage self-reflection. When a student is having difficulty performing a task, provide choices (e.g., Would you rather do it this way or that way? Can you show me another way to do it? Where would you like to do this work? What would you like to do instead?). Point out what you notice about their strengths as well as what you notice about what makes it difficult for them to learn. Lead them through a problem-solving process (e.g., comic strip conversations, social-emotional scripts or stories, mind mapping, collaborative problem solving).

⚙️ Be aware of sensory sensitivities and accommodate for differences. For example, if a student is overwhelmed by noisy environments, provide quieter activities as alternatives, or use the student’s preferred topics or materials to boost their confidence when navigating unknown or new activities. For students with sensory sensitivities, provide self-regulation supports (e.g., fidget tools, headphones).

⚙️ Support students to recognize what *calm* feels like:

- Create a calming space in the classroom
- Teach a calming routine when they are in a calm state, so it is accessible when dysregulated (this is most successful once environmental factors are addressed)
- Do mindfulness activities with visual supports
- Do check-ins, using regulation visuals
- Teach, use and model emotional vocabulary
- Offer 2-3 choices (too many choices may be overwhelming)
- Use calming cards
- Provide positive feedback when students use their calming techniques
- Practise, practise, practise! —Use and model calming techniques throughout the day