#### **EQUIPPED FOR THE JOURNEY**

## Regulation





### Goals as parents with a child who is stuck in a pattern of dysregulation:

- Keep everyone safe.Grow your child's window of tolerance.
- Return to a state of calm and connection.
- Get changed behavior over time.
- Reset their nervous system over time.

# What can we do proactively to keep our child regulated?



Eat food and drink water every two hours.



Get movement breaks every two hours.



Get good sleep.



Chew bubble gum.



Create a sensory diet, and meet sensory needs. Get help from an Occupational Therapist as needed.



Create a <u>calm down kit</u> for tricky places like the car or to be pulled out during stressful times like case worker visits.

Let's stay in the Green zone!



Provide felt safety by using a <u>visual daily schedule</u>, providing structure to the day, and alerting them to changes.



Give transition cues by telling them how long they'll be able to do an activity for, use countdowns when the end time approaches, or use a timer.



Journal and track the dysregulation challenges to find patterns or triggers as you "chase the why." Work with your County Director or Trauma Informed Team at Restore if you want a second set of eyes on it!

# What can we do proactively to keep our child regulated?



Use playful engagement with low level behavior to disarm the child's fear response.



Give right brain empathy responses and name emotions: "I see you're having a hard time." "You're mad right now." "You don't like what I just asked you to do." "I'm sorry this is hard for you right now."





Use simple scripts: "Let's try again." "Choose a better way." "Do over." "Try again with respect." "Did you want to make a deal?" (<u>Learn more here</u>.)



Use script of safety: "You're safe here."



Offer choices or compromises. (Learn more here.)



#### 1.Encourage them to breathe with you.

Some options: cupping your hands and blowing on hot chocolate or soup, box blowing, blowing out a candle, blowing bubbles, blowing on a pinwheel, blowing a cotton ball across a table, etc.

#### 2.Offer safe physical touch.

This might be hugs, rocking, backrubs, etc. (a parent's coregulating presence)

#### 3.Offer sensory items you know regulate your child.

Please note that you may need to experiment with this to find what fits in your child's sensory diet! Examples: a weighted blanket or weighted stuffed animal, noise cancelling headphones, fidgets, chew jewelry or other oral sensory tools, etc.

#### 4.Offer snack or drink as food & water resets the body and brain.

Cold items (like a popsicle), chewing gum, or sucking through a straw (like a smoothie) are especially regulating.

#### 5.Offer a movement break.

Examples: swing them in a blanket, jump on a trampoline, go for a walk, etc.

6.Use "calm down cards" to offer choices to your child for what helps them regulate.

# What can we do to calm our child's nervous system once it's flipped?



#### Stay regulated yourself.

You won't be able to use these tools if you are too dysregulated. A dysregulated adult will generally not be able to regulate a dysregulated child. Take a moment. Take a deep breath. Practice the pause.





#### Watch your own body.

Get close to them, get down at their level, watch your nonverbal cues, match their body posture, give eye contact, change your tone, offer physical touch if not triggered by it.



Stop talking. ©



#### Ignore verbal aggression from them.

Refrain from saying "no" during this time.



#### When you do talk, validate their feelings but not actions.

Give empathy responses, and name the behavior you are seeing. "I see you're having a hard time." "You're mad right now but you can't kick." "You don't like what I just asked you to do but you can't hit." "I'm sorry this is hard for you right now."



#### Offer physical touch.

This could be hugs, holding, rocking, backrubs, etc. (a parent's coregulating presence). If your child is too dysregulated, don't touch without permission or it could make it worse. If physical touch might trigger escalation; sit near, match posture, be silent, keep everyone safe.



#### Consider whether there is an opening for a change of scenery or a nurture break.

This could be taking a walk, going outside, getting a snack, going to another room, all of which can sometimes redirect the child and reset their nervous system.



#### Stay with them for however long it takes.

"I'm right here, tell me what you need."

THE GOAL OF THIS MOMENT ISN'T
CHANGED BEHAVIOR OR COMPLIANCE.
THE GOAL OF THIS MOMENT IS TO
SIMPLY GET YOUR CHILD'S NERVOUS SYSTEM BACK ONLINE
SO YOU CAN GET BACK TO BUSINESS.

#### After your child's nervous system is back online:

- Resume conversation.
- Remind child of the right way to handle that situation next time.
- Redo and go back to the scene of the crime and engage in the right way so they have the motor neuron connection wired in their brain for doing this a better way.
- Repair any relational or physical damage done—clean up the toys that were thrown, talk to the person you hurt, give physical affection, etc.

This cycle leaves you and your child with connection, calm, & changed behavior-an important combination for our kids.

\*If you begin to put these things in motion and your child still consistently struggles in a way that interferes with his daily functioning at school or home, consider getting additional support by engaging early intervention services for children 0-3yrs, seeking an occupational therapy evaluation for sensory needs, or talking to your pediatrician about the possibilities of other diagnosis impacting their regulation skills. Also contact your Restore County Director to see if we can help you come to better understand the need your child is communicating through his behaviors.

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