

## Self Regulation: Information for Parents

### Self Regulation

Self regulation is our ability to meet life's challenges and rise to life's potential (<http://www.self-regulation.ca/>). It is a broad term that refers to how people manage energy expenditure (stress), recovery and restoration in order to enhance growth. Effective self regulation requires learning to recognize and respond to stress (<https://self-reg.ca/>).

Children develop self-regulation at different rates. It initially develops by receiving comfort and care from warm, supportive and trusted adults. **Children begin to learn to self-regulate** their feelings by watching how their caregivers manage their own feelings and behaviors. Children need ongoing support from adults (co-regulators) to help them learn to regulate.

### Is all stress bad?

**No!** The stress reaction in the body is designed to protect us from dangerous situations and in small amounts stress can be helpful to increase our performance or success at a task.



However, if there is too much stress experienced by the body for too long it can become unhelpful. Too much unmanageable stress can negatively impact areas of our life, and we can see changes to our physical, emotional and social health.

### Signs of Stress

Signs of stress to watch out for:

- Physical: Headaches, neck aches, indigestion, stomach aches, sweaty palms, racing heart, difficulty sleeping, etc.
- Emotional: Crying, anger, loneliness, forgetfulness, diminished sense of humour, irritability, hopelessness, unhappiness, indecisiveness, sensitivity, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, etc.
- Behavioural: withdrawal or avoidance, needing to be in control, acting aggressive, feeling restless, grinding teeth, eating poorly, having nightmares, drinking, smoking or using drugs, etc.

<http://teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/teen-parent/>

### What can Parents do?

- Understand that some stress is expected and developmentally appropriate.
- Help your child to learn how to identify their stressors and reduce those that are not helpful. Get to know what triggers your child's stress response.
- Teach kids how to recognize and communicate their feelings (sad, mad, scared, etc.) and help them become more self-aware of their stress response (holding their breath, clenched fists, running away). Consider using feeling charts, social/emotional coaching, or practicing mindfulness.
- Help your child learn what works for them; explore calming techniques or things to avoid so they can return back to their calm/regulated state.
- Remember children will need ongoing support from parents and other adults to build strong self regulation skills.

<https://self-reg.ca/>

### Feeling stressed!

Kids and teenagers experience all types of stress; stress about school, friends, classmates, family, personal identity, health, the future, and even financial concerns. Some experience stress more than others, but **it is our ability to manage and cope with stress that determines how 'stressed' we might feel**, not necessarily the amount of stress in our lives.

### Learning to Cope

There are many ways to learn to cope with stress, to manage it, and to decrease it in a child's life.

- Basic lifestyle changes include getting enough **sleep**, **eating well**, and regular **exercise**. These healthy habits can reduce stress levels in the moment and increase your ability to cope with stress in the long term.
- Having and maintaining a **regular routine** at home and at school can be helpful to reduce stress in one's life.
- **Social supports** such as family, friends, and healthy adult supports that are physically and emotionally available help children learn to cope.

### Calming Techniques

Consider the following list of calming techniques and find the ones that work best for your child:

- Take deep breathes – breathe slowly and deeply to help calm the body and the brain.
- Relax from head to toe – flex and relax muscles in your body.
- Use positive self talk – tell yourself things like “this will pass” or “I can do this”.
- Listen to music.
- Move - play or do something active to move your body.
- Take a break – take a walk or splash water on your face.
- Distract yourself with a game or craft.
- Take a squeeze – use a stress ball or hug a stuffed animal.
- Practice mindfulness – focus your mind on an activity to get back to the present. For example, eat a small piece of chocolate - focus on the taste, the smell and the feel of it.
- Reach out – talk to a friend, family member or trusted adult.

<https://mindyourmind.ca>

### Phone Numbers:

- Call Health Link Alberta: 811
- CYFAMH Intake: 780-342-2701
- Youth Addiction Services Edmonton: 780-422-7383
- Mobile Response Team: 780-427-4491
- Call 211 – Alberta Community resources
- Catholic Social Services: (780) 432-1137
- The Support Network, Edmonton Distress Line: 780-482-HELP (4357)
- Kids Help Phone: 1 800 668 6868