



NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 2026

REGULATION, RENEWAL, AND REAL-LIFE CONNECTION

WHY ADULT REGULATION MATTERS

In last month's newsletter, we focused on teen mental wellness and the importance of helping young people regulate their emotions and behaviors. This month, we are building on that idea.

Young people do not learn regulation from what we say — they learn it from what we model. When adults are overwhelmed, rushed, or stressed, students feel it — even when nothing is said out loud. Their nervous systems are constantly scanning for cues of safety or threat, and adult tone, body language, and reactions play a major role in that interpretation.

Research in brain science shows that:

- The brain develops through relationships
- Emotional states are contagious (co-regulation)
- A calm adult can help regulate a dysregulated child far more effectively than words alone

This is especially important during high-energy times of year like spring. As routines shift, testing approaches, and summer nears, behaviors often increase — not because students are “choosing to misbehave,” but because their capacity to regulate is being stretched. What may look like defiance is often dysregulation.



April brings longer days, warmer weather, and a noticeable shift in energy — especially in schools and homes. There's excitement, restlessness, and often a quiet countdown to summer break.

While this season brings a sense of renewal, it can also bring an increase in dysregulation — for both students and adults. Changes in routine, increased stimulation, and growing anticipation can challenge even the most regulated nervous systems.

As the pace and energy of this time of year picks up, it becomes even more important to slow down in intentional ways — to notice our own responses, to support regulation, and to create environments where others feel safe, connected, and understood. Because one of the most important truths in prevention work is this: **Regulated adults create regulated environments.**

When adults stay regulated, they:

- De-escalate situations more effectively
- Model coping strategies in real time
- Create environments where students feel safe enough to re-engage

The most powerful intervention is not always a consequence — it is a calm, consistent, regulated adult presence.





NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 2026 - PAGE 2

CO-REGULATION IN ACTION: SUPPORTING YOUTH IN THE MOMENT

If regulation is what we model, co-regulation is how we actively support young people when they are struggling. Co-regulation is the process of helping a child or teen move from a dysregulated state (upset, overwhelmed, shut down, or reactive) back to a place of calm where they can think clearly and make decisions.

Before students can access consequences, problem-solving, or even simple directions — they need to feel regulated. This is why what we do in the moment matters. When a young person is dysregulated, their thinking brain is less active. Logic, reasoning, and lectures are far less effective than calm presence and support.

WHAT CO-REGULATION CAN LOOK LIKE

- **Stay calm and grounded.** Your nervous system sets the tone. Slow your breathing, lower your voice, and be intentional with your body language.
- **Get at or below their level.** Physically lowering yourself (when appropriate) can feel less threatening and more supportive.
- **Use fewer words.** In heightened moments, less is more. Simple, calm phrases are more effective than long explanations.
- **Validate before redirecting.** “I can see you’re really frustrated right now.” Feeling understood helps reduce emotional intensity.
- **Offer simple choices.** “Do you want to take a break here or step into the hallway?” Choice restores a sense of control.
- **Allow space when needed.** Some students regulate best with a little distance — while still knowing you are available.
- **Model calming strategies.** “Let’s take a breath together.” Co-regulation often means doing the strategy with them, not just telling them to do it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

When adults consistently co-regulate with students, several important things happen over time:

- Students learn how to manage their own emotions
- Trust and relationships are strengthened
- Escalations decrease in intensity and frequency
- Accountability becomes more meaningful because students are in a regulated state

Co-regulation is not about removing expectations — it is about creating the conditions where expectations can actually be met.

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APRIL 2026 - PAGE 3

WHAT DYSREGULATION CAN LOOK LIKE IN ADULTS

When we talk about regulation, it's important to remember that adults experience dysregulation too – especially during busy, high-energy times of year like spring. Dysregulation doesn't always look obvious. It can show up in subtle ways that impact how we respond to students, coworkers, and even our own families.

For adults, dysregulation may look like:

- Feeling easily irritated or overwhelmed
- Reacting quickly instead of responding thoughtfully
- Raising your voice or becoming more directive than usual
- Withdrawing, shutting down, or feeling mentally checked out
- Having difficulty focusing or making decisions
- Feeling like you're constantly "on edge"



These responses are not a sign of failure – they are signals from the nervous system that support or a reset may be needed. Recognizing these signs is the first step. When adults are able to notice their own dysregulation, they are more likely to pause, reset, and respond in ways that support both themselves and the young people around them.

APRIL IS STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

Stress is not inherently bad. In fact, manageable levels of stress can help us stay alert, motivated, and responsive. However, chronic or unmanaged stress – for both adults and students – can interfere with learning, relationships, and overall well-being.

Stress impacts:

- Decision-making and impulse control
- Emotional regulation
- Physical health and energy levels
- The ability to focus and retain information

In classrooms and homes, stress often shows up as:

- Irritability or emotional outbursts
- Withdrawal or disengagement
- Increased conflict
- Difficulty concentrating

Understanding stress matters because behavior is often a signal, not the problem itself. When we respond to behavior without addressing the underlying stress, we miss an opportunity to support long-term skill-building.





NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 2026 - PAGE 4

SIMPLE, REALISTIC REGULATION STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS:

- **Pause before responding.** Even a brief pause allows your thinking brain to re-engage before reacting.
- **Name what you're feeling.** Labeling emotions helps reduce their intensity and models emotional awareness.
- **Lower your voice instead of raising it.** A calm tone communicates safety and helps regulate others.
- **Take micro-breaks.** Short resets throughout the day prevent stress from building.
- **Model coping out loud.** "I'm feeling overwhelmed, so I'm going to take a breath before I respond."

When adults consistently model these strategies, students begin to internalize them. Over time, this builds independence in emotional regulation – which is a key protective factor in both mental wellness and prevention.



SPRING ENERGY: CHANNELING IT PRODUCTIVELY

With nicer weather and increased energy levels, students often need more opportunities to move, connect, and reset. What we sometimes interpret as "restlessness" is often a need for movement, interaction, or sensory input. Instead of constantly trying to contain this energy, we can redirect it in ways that support both regulation and engagement.

Ideas for schools and families:

- Take learning or conversations outside
- Build intentional movement breaks into the day
- Use short walks as regulation resets
- Incorporate hands-on or interactive activities
- Provide structured opportunities for social connection

When we work with the natural rhythm of the season, rather than against it, we reduce frustration and increase engagement. Movement, connection, and environment all play a role in helping students stay regulated and ready to learn.





NEWSLETTER

WWW.PROJECTFRONTIER.ORG

APRIL 2026 - PAGE 5

APRIL 2: INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY

BOOK IDEAS THAT SUPPORT EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL IQ

If you're looking for ways to bring these conversations into everyday moments, books can be a simple and powerful starting point.

- [My Brain is a Home](#) series by Orlanda Bettison
- [The Color Monster](#) by Anna Llenas
- [In My Heart: A Book of Feelings](#) by Jo Witek
- [The Rabbit Listened](#) by Cori Doerrfeld
- [Listening to My Body](#) by Gabi Garcia
- [A Little Spot of Emotion](#) series by Diane Alber
- [What Should Danny Do?](#) by Adir Levy
- [Grumpy Monkey](#) by Suzanne Lang

These books help children recognize emotions, understand their experiences, and begin building the language and skills needed for regulation.



Stories are one of the most powerful tools we have to support emotional development and connection. Through books, children gain language for complex emotions, opportunities to explore problem-solving, and a safe space to process experiences. Just as importantly, reading creates a shared moment of connection between a child and a trusted adult.

Reading together is not just about literacy — it is about relationship-building. When adults take time to sit, read, and engage in conversation, children experience undivided attention, emotional connection, and a deep sense of being both valued and heard.

Simple Ways to Use Books for Connection:

- Ask: "How do you think that character felt?"
- Ask: "What would you have done?"
- Connect: "Have you ever felt like that before?"

These types of questions build empathy, perspective-taking, and emotional awareness — all of which are foundational for healthy relationships and decision-making.

Fun Ideas:

- Let your child choose the book (builds ownership and engagement)
- Create a cozy reading space (blankets, pillows, low lighting)
- Have a "family read night" — even older kids benefit from shared time

Connection does not require long conversations — it often starts with small, intentional moments.