THRIVE EMERGE

Pre-Webinar Reflection:
Emotional Regulation in Neurodivergent Teens & Young Adults

Anecdote

Last week, a mom described her 17-year-old son, who spends most of his evenings gaming. When she reminds him about college applications or chores, he shuts down or lashes out. After one argument, he yelled, "You don't get it -- I can't even think when you start in on me!" Later, when calm, she asked what he meant. He said that when she "talks about everything at once," his heart races and he feels like he's going to "short-circuit." What she realized wasn't that he didn't care -- it was that his nervous system was flooded. Her role wasn't to push harder, but to anchor the calm he couldn't yet hold himself.

Deeper Conversation

Emotional dysregulation in autistic and ADHD teens and young adults rarely looks tidy. It can appear as defiance, avoidance, or apathy -- but underneath, it's often an overwhelmed system protecting itself. At this age, emotional challenges can quietly block developmental progress. Teens may withdraw, stop trying, or numb out through screens, cannabis, or sleep. Parents, fearing regression, push harder for responsibility -- which can trigger more avoidance.

Recognizing this pattern as a stress response -- not a character flaw -- allows you to step out of the control battle and into co-regulation. Your calm nervous system becomes the bridge back to safety, reflection, and growth. The goal of this workshop is not to remove conflict but to reframe it as communication: the nervous system's way of saying, "I'm overloaded -- help me slow down."

Pre-Workshop Reflection Questions

1. What I Notice at Home

When my teen or young adult feels stressed or overwhelmed, I most often see:

☐ Anger or yelling ☐ Withdrawal or shutdown ☐ Avoidance (screen time, sleep, cannabis, food)
☐ Self-criticism or hopelessness ☐ Arguing or defensiveness ☐ Masking calm until they collapse later

Biggest triggers seem to be:

Typical recovery time: ☐ Minutes ☐ Hours ☐ Most of the day ☐ More than a day

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2. How I Respond

When emotions rise, I tend to:

☐ Try to fix it right away ☐ Argue or defend my point ☐ Stay quiet or back away
☐ Get anxious or frustrated ☐ Use calm tone and wait for readiness to talk

What helps me stay grounded:

What usually makes things worse:

3. Our Family Patterns

☐ We walk on eggshells to avoid blow-ups ☐ I end up doing things for them to keep peace
☐ We have good stretches, then sudden conflicts ☐ We don't talk much about emotions
☐ We recover quickly and reconnect after conflict

4. Where I'd Like to Grow

What I most want to understand or improve through this workshop:

One situation I'd like to handle differently:

What I hope my teen or young adult could feel more of at home:

☐ Safety ☐ Trust ☐ Confidence ☐ Autonomy ☐ Belonging ☐ Calm

5. My Intention for This Workshop

"During this session, I hope to…"