

# Educator Reset: Regulate Before You Respond

Office of Mental Health | New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

## ABOUT THIS TOOL

**Audience**
- Teachers
- Teaching Assistants
- Student Services Staff
- School Operations and Technical Staff

**Description**
This quick reset helps educators pause, steady their own bodies, and respond in a calmer way before reacting to student behavior. By slowing breathing, lowering voice, and moving more intentionally, teachers can help shift the energy in the room and support students in settling down.

**When to Use**
Use this when student behavior begins to escalate, emotions feel high, or the classroom energy becomes loud, reactive, or unsettled.

## WORKPLACE STRESS

When things get tense in the classroom, the adult's emotional state can strongly influence what happens next. Students often pick-up on adult tone, body language, and level of calm. In stressful moments, the adult's response can either increase tension or help reduce it.

## THE PRACTICE

- Feel both **feet on the floor**.
- Take **one slow, deep breath** in and a longer breath out.
- Relax your **jaw, shoulders, and hands**.
- **Lower your voice slightly** when speaking.
- Move your body **more slowly and deliberately**.
- Respond with simple, calm language when ready.
- Remind yourself: ***Calm spreads faster than conflict.***

## WHY THIS HELPS

Emotions can spread quickly in group settings. When one person becomes escalated, others may match that energy without thinking. Calm energy also spreads in the same way. When a teacher stays grounded and steady, students are more likely to regulate their own emotions and return to focus.

Research suggests that students often mirror the emotional state of adults in the room, especially during stressful moments. A calm adult presence can help support co-regulation, where students begin to calm down through interaction with a regulated adult.

## WHY THIS WORKS

- **Slow breathing helps regulate the nervous system.**
  Longer exhales signal the body to reduce stress and tension.
- **Grounding increases stability.**
  Feeling your feet on the floor helps you stay present instead of reactive.
- **Slower movement reduces emotional escalation.**
  Calm body language helps signal safety to students.
- **Teacher calm supports student regulation.**
  Students often adjust their emotions based on adult cues in the room.
- **Short resets prevent escalation from spreading.**
  Small moments of regulation can change the direction of a situation before it grows.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org

Looking to go deeper? Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community. Check out the website here for additional details.

Sources:
Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525.
Porges, S. W. (2011). *The polyvagal theory: Neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation.* W. W. Norton & Company.