



## **Emotion Regulation and Building Resilience: A Mentor's Toolkit**

**Emotion regulation** is more than just controlling your anger; it's the capacity to manage and cope with all kinds of feelings in a healthy way. Unfortunately, not all children learn emotion regulation in their early childhood but the good news is it's never too late. To that end, Seedling's October Training introduced mentors to essential information about emotion regulation and helpful tools that we can use to assist in our mentee's development and/or improve their ability to effectively manage their emotions as well as enhance their resilience.

**We use emotion regulation in our everyday lives.** Every minute of every day the information that comes through our senses is interpreted by our brain, the thinking part and the feeling part. Whatever these two parts tell us, the emotion they create drives our resulting behavior. Thankfully, we are able to keep it together (most of the time) when our emotions overpower us. Your thinking brain helps regulate your emotional response, and the best scenario is you are able to keep control using emotion regulation. Poor regulation in your elementary aged mentee can look like aggression/disruption or withdrawing/anxiety. In your adolescent mentee poor regulation looks like impulsiveness, risky behaviors, or the inability to complete complex tasks.

For young children, healthy regulation is modeled through a caring adult or "external modulator" until they can do it themselves. This may not happen in households where the child has an accumulation of adverse childhood experiences like poverty, an unstable living situation or overly stressed caregivers. Coordination between the thinking brain and the feeling brain is a skill and must be learned. The best strategy for healthy emotion regulation is to teach the child how to intervene before their emotional response results in an unhealthy behavioral response. This strategy is a process and implementing it in a meaningful way includes your ability to be objective.

- You must first regulate your own emotions. (Don't take it personally when it's intense or it doesn't change.)
- Notice signs of their feelings. (Watch their body language and facial expression.)
- Let the child name the feeling. (Don't name it for her, such as "You are sad." Instead, "You seem to be frowning.")
- Ask permission to talk about it. (If he doesn't want to talk, allow space and try again later)
- Empathize.
- Ask permission to talk about strategies.
- Resist saying "should" statements. Be patient with change.
- Follow the child's lead.
- Keep the end in mind.

The most important thing to remember is that the time you spend with your mentee each week reinforces a positive relationship. You are modeling so much by showing up and being a caring adult in your mentee's life.

To learn more about how temperament traits affect behavior [click here](#)

For tips to help children understand the link between feelings and behavior [click here](#)

To promote emotional literacy and empathy through play [click here](#)

To brush up on your own grown-up emotional vocabulary [click here](#)

To view the October Emotion Regulation training slide presentation [click here](#)