



Self-Regulation Snap Shot #2: A Focus on Preschool-Aged Children



Support of self-regulation is critical at each stage of development from birth through young adulthood.

Self-regulation is the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal-directed actions.

Self-regulation develops through interaction with caregivers and the broader environment over an extended period from birth through young adulthood (and beyond).

Caregivers support self-regulation development by using three strategies in a process called “co-regulation.” Caregivers include parents, teachers, afterschool care providers, extended family members, and others.

Self-regulation includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills and processes that support children in coping with strong feelings, controlling impulses, learning, and getting along with others.

Self-regulation is important because it promotes wellbeing across the lifespan, including physical, emotional, social and economic health and educational achievement.

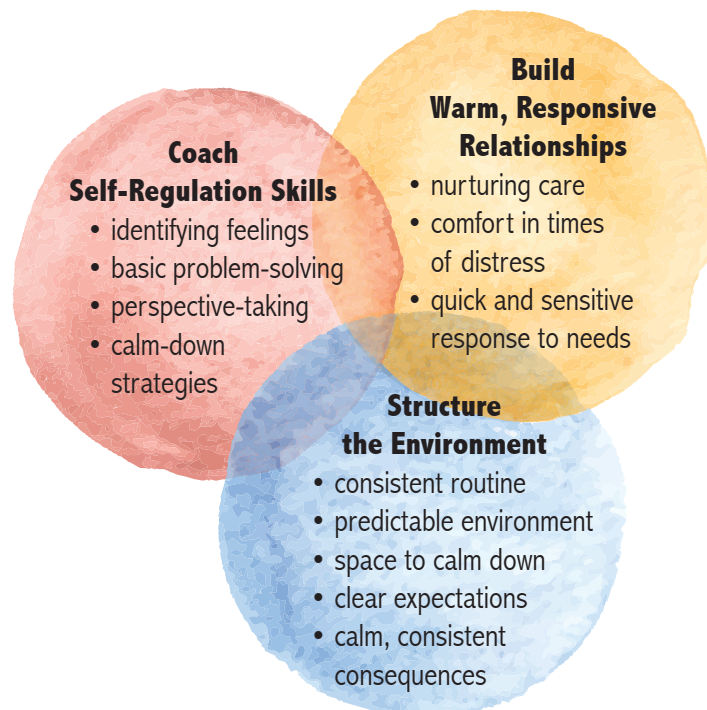
This snap shot summarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and intervention for preschool-aged children for practitioners and educators interested in promoting self-regulation for this age group. It is based on a series of four reports on Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress prepared for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). For more information, visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/toxic-stress-and-self-regulation-reports>

Self-Regulation Skills Developing in Preschool-Aged Children:

- Recognizing a broader range of feelings in self and others
- Identifying solutions to simple problems
- With support, using strategies like deep breaths and self-talk to calm down
- Focusing attention for longer periods
- Persisting on difficult tasks for increased lengths of time
- Perspective-taking and early empathy



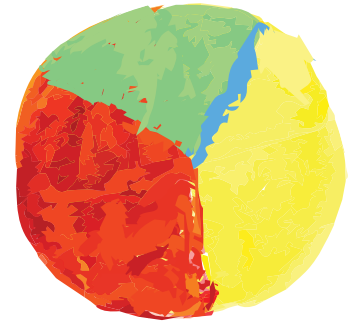
Self-regulation is influenced by stress and adversity in the environment as well as caregiving supports and children’s own biology, skills, and motivation.



Three components of co-regulation for preschool-aged children

Lessons Learned About Interventions to Promote Self-Regulation in Preschool-Aged Children

Across the lifespan, there are two intervention approaches that support development of self-regulation: skills instruction and co-regulation support. The combination of these approaches is believed to be most effective, regardless of the child's age. For preschool-aged children, existing interventions utilize these approaches as follows:



- 37% of studies focused on skills instruction alone;
- 27% focused on co-regulation alone;
- 32% combined both;
- 4% used other approaches

Based on a review of preventive interventions published between 1989 and 2013, 75 studies with comparison groups were found that targeted self-regulation development for preschool-aged children (ages 3-4 years), with the characteristics described here.

Strengths:

- Large number of studies with diverse samples
- Variety of outcomes, particularly direct assessment of child skills
- Most are implemented universally in preschool classrooms

Limitations:

- Programs are often lengthy
- Parent and teacher interventions are under-utilized

Conclusions:

- Broad positive impact seen across many domains
- Substantial effects for parents and teachers suggest benefit for expanding focus on co-regulation involvement of parents and teachers

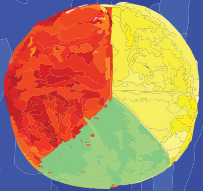
Key considerations for promoting self-regulation in preschool-aged children:

- Deliver self-regulation skills instruction universally in preschool classrooms
- Train preschool staff in co-regulation skills
- Identify ways to support school and program staff's own self-regulation capacity
- Share self-regulation information, ideas, and classroom approaches with parents/caregivers to support their co-regulation and promote consistency across environments

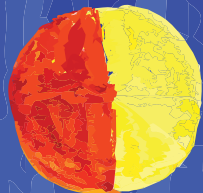
Outcome Assessed	# Findings	Average Effect Size*	% with Positive Effects*
Child Outcomes: Core Self-Regulation			
Cognitive	40	Small to Medium	78%
Emotional	30	Small to Medium	83%
Behavioral	84	Small to Medium	67%
Stress	17	Small	53%
Motivation/ Initiative	6	Small to Medium	67%
Child Outcomes: Other Functional Domains			
Language/Learning	31	Small to Medium	77%
Interpersonal	53	Small	66%
Mental Health	37	Small	65%
Parent Outcomes			
Parent Co-regulation	21	Medium	95%
Parenting Skills	37	Medium	95%
Parenting Attitudes	11	Medium	91%
Parent Mental Health	6	Small to Medium	67%
Teacher Outcomes			
Teacher Co-regulation	2	Small to Medium	50%
Classroom Climate	15	Medium to Large	87%

*Reported only if findings are based on at least two studies

60% of the children lived in adversity or were at-risk



More than half of the children were minority (34% African-American, 25% Hispanic)



More than half of the interventions were implemented in schools

The majority of studies targeted children (79%); 56% targeted parents; 23% targeted teachers

Project Officer: Aleta Meyer, Ph.D. OPRE

Suggested Citation: Rosanbalm, K. and Murray, D.W. (2017). Self-Regulation Snap Shot #2: A Focus on Preschool-Aged Children. OPRE Report #2018-11, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This brief was funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under Contract Number HHSP23320095642WC/HHSP23337035T.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health