Self-Regulation Snap Shot #5: A Focus on High-School Aged Youth

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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 youth 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.
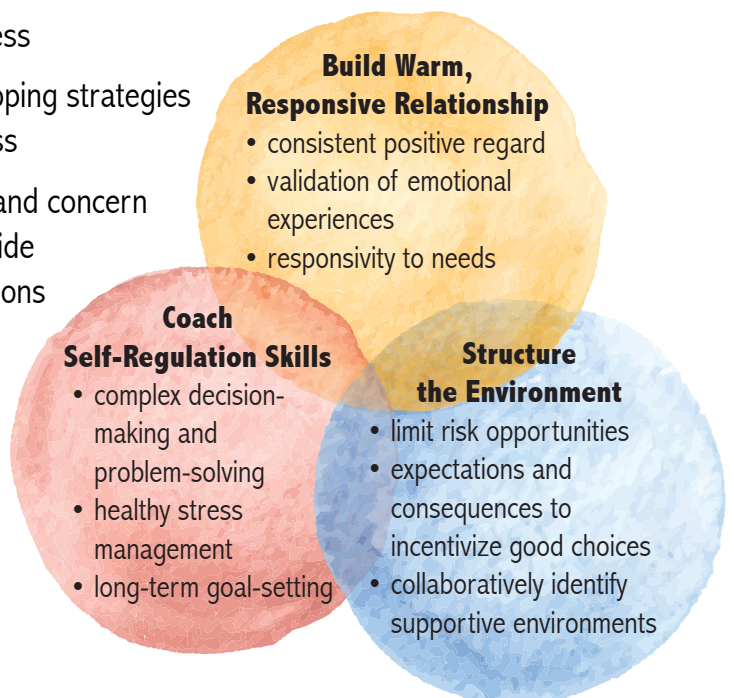
Self-Regulation Skills Developing in High-School Aged Youth:

- Goal setting and commitment
- Maintaining orientation toward the future
- Planning and organizing time and tasks to achieve goals
- Self-monitoring and self-reinforcement in pursuit of goals
- Effective decision-making in the context of strong emotion and peer influence
- Complex problem-solving considering consequences and others' perspectives
- Recognizing and accepting emotions
- Tolerating distress
- Using healthy coping strategies to manage stress
- Using empathy and concern for others to guide goals and decisions

Biology
Skills
Motivation (Internal & External)
Caregiver Support
Environmental Context

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


Build Warm, Responsive Relationship
- consistent positive regard
- validation of emotional experiences
- responsivity to needs

Coach Self-Regulation Skills
- complex decision-making and problem-solving
- healthy stress management
- long-term goal-setting

Structure the Environment
- limit risk opportunities
- expectations and consequences to incentivize good choices
- collaboratively identify supportive environments

Three components of co-regulation for high-school aged youth

Lessons Learned About Interventions to Promote Self-Regulation in High-School Aged Youth

About 40% of the youth lived in adversity or were at-risk

59% of youth were minority (45% African-American, 14% Hispanic)

80% of the interventions were implemented in schools

100% targeted youth;
5% targeted parents;
0% targeted teachers

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 youth's age.
Existing interventions for high schoolers utilize these approaches:

- 92% of studies focused on direct instruction alone;
- 0% focused on co-regulation alone;
- 5% combined both;
- 3% used another approach
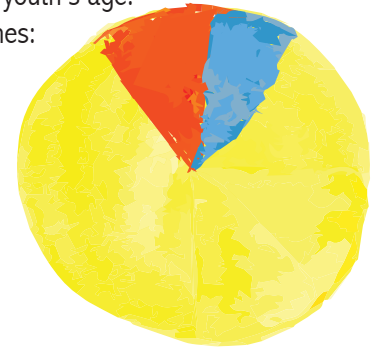
Based on a review of preventive interventions published between 1989 and 2013, 36 studies were found that targeted self-regulation development for high-school aged youth (ages 14-18 years), with the following characteristics:

Strengths:
- Diverse samples in terms of risk factors an cultural backgrounds
- Majority delivered universally in schools

Limitations:
- Relatively small number of studies
- Aspects of self-regulation not covered systematically
- Limited focus on emotional regulation
- Few interventions target parents and none target teachers
- Majority of outcomes are youth self-report

Outcome Assessed	# Findings	Average Effect Size*	% with Positive Effects*
Core Self-Regulation Outcomes for Youth			
Cognitive	28	Medium	86%
Emotional	11	None to Small	55%
Behavioral	10	None to Small	40%
Motivation/Initiative	7	Small	43%
Other Functional Outcomes			
Language/Learning	2	None to Small	40%
Delinquent Behavior	11	Small	82%
Health/Self-Care	6	None to Small	50%
Interpersonal	9	None	11%
Mental Health	18	Small to Medium	67%

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

Conclusions:
- Positive and relatively consistent effects seen on cognitive regulation, delinquency, and mental health
- Lack of alignment with self-regulation framework: need more focused interventions that target emotion regulation, consider the importance of peers and relationships, and involve parents, teachers, and mentors
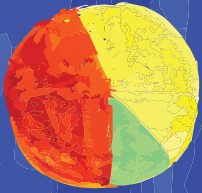
Key considerations for promoting self-regulation in high-school aged youth:

- Encourage a positive school climate for all students
- Provide self-regulation skills training focused on emotion regulation in the context of relationships through existing youth development or mentoring programs
- Train teachers and youth program staff including mentors to teach, model, reinforce, and coach self-regulation skills
- Develop parent and teacher education supports that address co-regulation
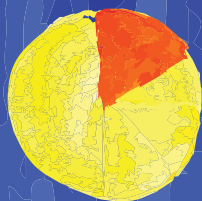- Identify ways to support the self-regulation capacity of parents, school staff, and youth program staff including mentors