



Responding to Child Dysregulation and Teaching Self-Regulation

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My student is upset, angry, defiant & beginning to dysregulate

Teacher Self-Talk

"This child is upset because... and needs my help to self-regulate and problem solve."

"I can stay calm. This will help all my students to stay calm."

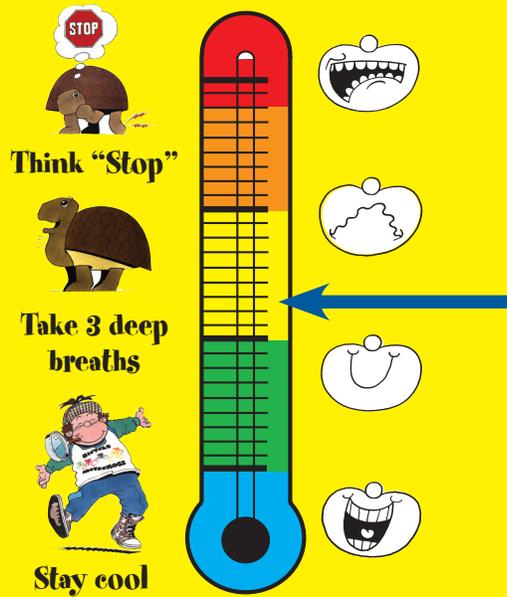
"I can ignore this behavior as long as he is not hurting someone or interfering with others' learning."

"I can be supportive without giving too much attention to this disruptive behavior."

"If my student is responsive and cooperative to my emotional coaching, then it's a good time to continue coaching.. If my coaching attention makes her angrier, then she needs space and privacy to calm down."

Teacher Response

- Model deep breathing, patience and being sympathetic to student.
- Help student use calm down thermometer and take deep breaths.
- Redirect student to another activity.
- Ignore student's dysregulated behavior as long as behavior is not unsafe.
- Label student's emotion and coping strategy: "You look angry, but you are trying hard to stay calm with breathing and remembering your happy place."
- Stay nearby and be supportive.
- Give attention and coaching to behaviors and thoughts that encourage the student's coping and emotion regulation.



Slow Down

When students are angry and dysregulated, teachers may also feel angry, frustrated, and out-of-control and may respond by yelling, scolding, or criticizing. At these times, Time Out can provide time and space for the teacher, as well as the child, to self-regulate. Here are some tips for teacher self-regulation:

- STOP and challenge negative thoughts and use positive self-talk such as: *"All children misbehave at times. My student is testing the limits of his independence to learn that our classroom rules are predictable, consistent and safe. This is normal for children this age and not the end of the world."*
- Do some deep breathing and repeat a calming word: "relax," "be patient," "take it easy."
- Think of relaxing imagery or of fun times you have had with the student.
- Take a brief break by drinking some water, feeding the fish, or talking to another teacher or child. Make sure your student is safe and monitored.
- Focus on coping thoughts such as: *"I can help my student best by staying in control."*
- Forgive yourself and be sure you are building in some "personal time" for relaxation and refueling.
- Ask for support from someone else.
- Reconnect with your student as soon as you are both calm.

Like your student, you can get yourself into a "green" calm state and try again.



My student continues to dysregulate and becomes aggressive

Teacher Self-talk

"My student is out of control and too dysregulated to benefit from prompts to calm down or to discuss solutions to problems."

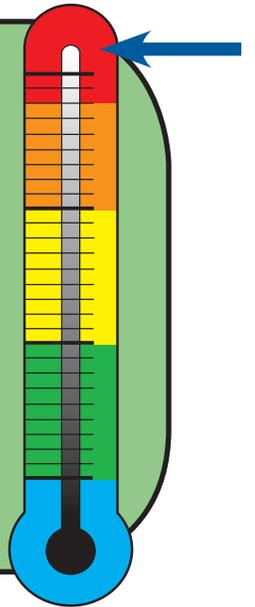
"I need to give my student time away from attention to calm down so he doesn't hurt someone."

"I have taught my student how to use the Time Out or Tiny Turtle chair to calm down so I can do that now."

"Time Out is a safe and respectful way for my student to learn to reflect and self-regulate."

Teacher Response

- I say, "Hitting is not allowed, you need to go to Time Out to calm down." (This place has a calm down thermometer to remind my student of what to do in Time Out to calm down.)
- I wait patiently nearby to let him re-regulate and make sure others don't give this disruptive behavior attention.
- I give him privacy and don't talk to him during this calm down time. I help other students to give him privacy.
- When he is calm (3-5 minutes), I praise him for calming down.



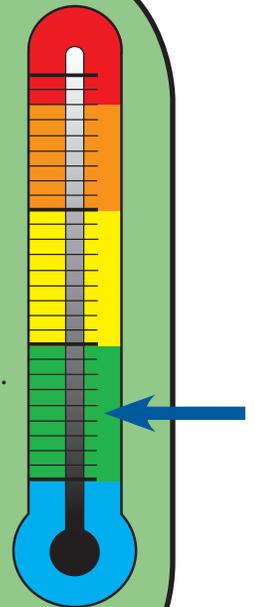
My Student Is Calm Now

Teacher Self-talk

- "Now I can reconnect with my student and help her learn an alternative way to solve her problem."
"She is learning she gets more attention from me for positive behavior than inappropriate behavior."
"I can help her learn to express her frustration and anger in more appropriate ways."

Teacher Response

- I praise my student for calming down.
- I redirect my student to a new learning opportunity.
- I do not force my student to apologize because insincere apologies do not teach empathy.
- I engage her in something else so that we have positive Time In together and she feels supported.
- I start using social coaching in my interactions with my student.
- I look for times when she is calm, patient, happy, or friendly to give my positive attention to.
- I use emotion coaching to help my student understand these self-regulated feelings get my attention.
- If she starts to dysregulate again, I name her uncomfortable feelings, help her express these verbally, and prompt her to remember her coping strategies.
- During times when my student is calm, I use puppets, games, and stories to help her learn alternative solutions to common childhood problem situations.



Bottom Line

My student learns that taking a Time Out feels like a safe and secure place to calm down; it is not punitive or harsh and isolating; my student understands that when he has calmed down, he can join in peer activities without blame and has a new opportunity to try again with another solution to his problem. He feels supported when this strategy has been used and has sometimes seen his peers or teachers use this same strategy when they are angry. My student gets far more Time In attention from me for positive behaviors than negative behaviors. He feels secure when using Time Out because it gives him time to re-regulate and try again in a caring environment. Time Out provides me with a chance to take a deep breath and calm down so I can respond to my student in a calm, firm, consistent, nurturing and caring manner.