



Responding to Child Dysregulation and Teaching Self-Regulation

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

Parent Self-Talk

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

"I can stay calm. This will help my child to stay calm."

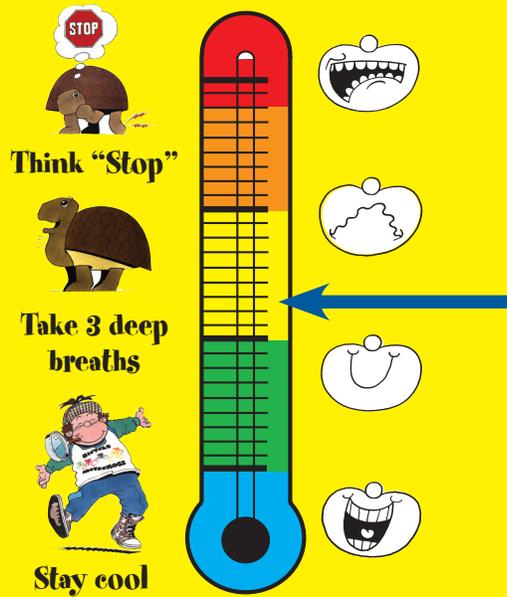
"I can ignore this behavior as long as he is not hurting someone or breaking something."

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

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

Parent Response

- Model deep breathing, patience and being sympathetic to child
- Help child use calm down thermometer and take deep breaths
- Redirect child to another activity
- Ignore child's dysregulated behavior as long as behavior is not unsafe
- Label child'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 that encourage your child's coping and emotion regulation.



Slow Down

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

- STOP and challenge negative thoughts and use positive self-talk such as: *"All children misbehave at times. My child is testing the limits of his independence to learn that our household rules are predictable 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 your child.
- Take a brief break by washing your face, having a cup of tea, putting on some music, or patting the dog. Make sure your child is safe and monitored.
- Focus on coping thoughts such as: *"I can help my child best by staying in control."*
- Forgive yourself and be sure you are building in some "personal time" for relaxation.
- Ask for support from someone else.
- Reconnect with your child as soon as you are both calm.

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



My child continues to dysregulate and becomes aggressive

Parent Self-Talk

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

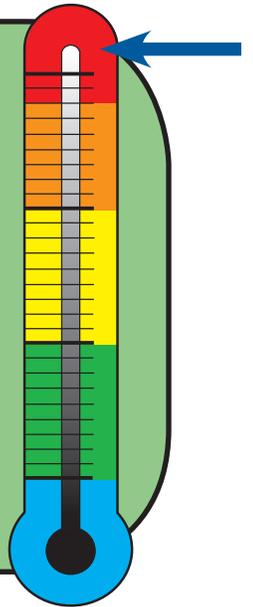
"I need to give my child time away from attention to calm down so he doesn't hurt someone."

"I have taught my child 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 child to learn to reflect and self-regulate."

Parent 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 child 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.
- When he is calm (3-5 minutes), I praise him for calming down.
- I support my child to re-enter an activity or routine.



My Child Is Calm Now

Parent Self-Talk

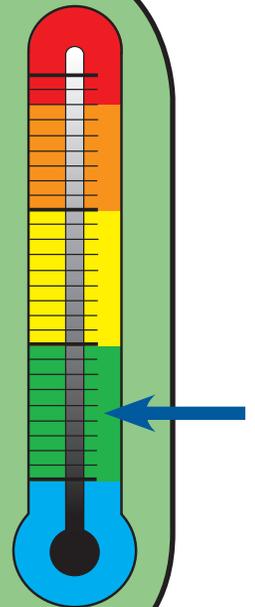
"Now I can reconnect with my child and help her learn an alternative way to solve her problem."

"She is learning she gets more attention for positive behavior than inappropriate behavior."

"I can help her learn to express her frustration and anger in more appropriate ways."

Parent Response

- I praise my child for calming down
- I distract my child to a new learning opportunity.
- I do not force my child 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 loved.
- I start using social coaching as my child plays
- I also look for times when she is calm, patient, happy, or friendly.
- I use emotion coaching to help her 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 child is calm, I use puppets, games, and stories to help her learn alternative solutions to common childhood problem situations.



Bottom Line

My child 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 child understands that when he has calmed down, he can join in family or peer activities without blame and has a new opportunity to try again with another solution to his problem. He feels loved when this strategy has been used and has sometimes seen his parents or teachers use this same strategy when they are angry. My child gets far more Time In attention from me for positive behaviors than negative behaviors. He feels loved and secure when using Time Out because it gives him time to re-regulate and try again in a loving environment. Time Out provides me with a chance to take a deep breath and calm down so I can respond to my child in a calm, firm, consistent, nurturing or caring manner.