Strengthening Self-Regulation

Jutta Dotterweich, ACT for Youth
Objectives

• PYD Network
• What is self-regulation?
• Introducing a co-regulation model
• Strategies to strengthen self-regulation
• Resources
PYD Network: History & Background

New PYD Curriculum 2015

New PYD Online Courses 2016-17

NYS Partnership: 1998 - 2012

http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/
Housekeeping

Experiencing delays? Try closing out the other programs running on your computer.

Questions? Use chat function. Post to Everyone.
Why talk about self-regulation?

Your interest? Your expectations?
Please chat them in...
Adolescence - Emotional brain in the driver seat!
Living in Adverse Environments

Working with young people from tough neighborhoods what do you see?
Self-regulation can be defined as the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal directed actions leading to success in school, relationships and work.

Foundational in promoting wellbeing across the lifespan
Behavioral Regulation

Skills
Follow rules and direction
Control negative behaviors/impulses
Delay gratification
Persist on complex tasks
Conflict Resolution
Active Behavioral Coping
Organization of time/materials

Emotional Regulation

Skills
Self-soothing
Physical relaxation
Feelings identification
Empathy/compassion
Attention shifting
Appraisal
Cognitive restructuring

Cognitive Regulation

Skills
Effortful attentional control
Cognitive flexibility
Goal-setting
Planning
Self-monitoring
Decision-making
Problem solving
Perspective-taking

Source: OPRE Report 2015: Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress
Self-Control

Walter Mischel: Marshmallow Experiment

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_o1y9614HQ
Core findings

- Self-control is a great predictor for success later on in life (school, work, healthy lifestyle)
- Self-control can be taught

Walter Mischel. 2014
How Our Core Capabilities Work

Attention
Attention is the critical gatekeeper that’s needed to engage intentional self-regulation.

Automatic Self-Regulation
- Rapid, impulse-directed “Fight or flight” response
- Important for urgent situations

Intentional Self-Regulation
- Conscious, planful, proactive
- Inhibits automatic responses
- Important for achieving goals

Essential capabilities such as planning, focus, and self-control are all orchestrated by the balance of two kinds of self-regulation mechanisms: automatic and intentional. The proper balance ensures appropriately responsive and productive actions.

Executive Function
1. Inhibitory Control
2. Working Memory
3. Mental Flexibility

Impact of chronic stress

Stressful environments trigger impulsive reactions and focus on the self and the present

✓ Lack of planning
✓ Lack of future orientation
✓ Poor decision making
✓ Compromises memory

Chronic stress overloads self-regulation, tips balance towards automatic self-regulation
How Does Self-Regulation Develop?

Executive Function Skills Build Throughout Childhood and Adolescence

Factors Contributing to Self-Regulation

- Biology
- Skills
- Motivation
- Caregiver support
- Environmental Context
Co-Regulation Model

- Build supportive, responsive relationships
- Structure the environment
- Coach self-regulation skills
Let’s flesh out this model together:

- **Skills we need to coach**
  - Goal setting, problem-solving, stress management, time management
  - Organization, planning

- **Supportive, responsive relationships**
  - Support and empathy, responsive to needs, positive regard, model skills
  - Validation of emotional experiences, persistent reliable presence

- **Structure the environment**
  - Limit risk opportunities; clear expectations and consequences
  - Time and space to relax and calm down
Shortcomings of Current Practice

- Most interventions target youth, but do not involve caregivers such as teachers, parents, youth workers
- Cognitive and emotional regulation skills are not taught systematically with ongoing coaching, reinforcement, and support
- Greater emphasis on emotional regulation
Integrate Skill Building Activities

Integrate social and emotional learning activities into your programming

http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/sel/
Use “Inside Out” movie to teach about emotions

Kid Talk

Stop and Stay Cool

- Notice when you are about to lose control
- Tell yourself to stop and think
- Wrap your arms around yourself and give a big hug
- Practice breathing slowly while counting to five
- Regain control and return to the social activity

“I” messages

https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/09/brain-science-inside-out
Turtle Technique

1. Recognize that you feel angry.

2. Go into shell. Take 3 deep breaths. And think calm, coping thoughts.

3. “Think” Stop.

4. Come out of shell when calm and thinking of a solution.

https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/08/kernels-learning
FEELING STRESSED?

**STOP!**
Count to 10, take deep breaths and try to calm down.

**THINK!**
Why do you feel like this? What has upset you?

**SHARE!**
Speak to a person you trust about the issue.

---

**S.T.A.R. POWER**

**STOP**
Breathe.

**THINK**
How can I solve my problem?

**ACT**
Talk it out. Work it out.

**REVIEW**
How do I feel now?

© Stephanie Polly 2013
Resources for Older Youth

http://youth.anxietybc.com/
Executive Functions

- **Working memory** governs our ability to retain and manipulate distinct pieces of information over short periods of time.

- **Mental flexibility** helps us to sustain or shift attention in response to different demands or to apply different rules in different settings.

- **Self-control** enables us to set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses.

Source: Harvard’s Usable Knowledge: Executive Functions & Self-Regulation

[https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/)
Provide experiences that promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development broadly, including strategies

- Reduce stress
- Foster social connections
- Incorporate vigorous physical exercise
- Increase complexity of skills step-by-step (scaffolding)
- Include repeated practice over time

Activity Guides

NYU Character Lab: Self-Control [https://www.characterlab.org/self-control/]
Try WOOP

NYU Character Lab

https://www.characterlab.org/woop
WOOP Student Activity

WOOP helps people do the things they really want to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISH</th>
<th>My wish:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is an important wish that you want to accomplish? Your wish should be challenging but feasible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>Best outcome:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What will be the best result from accomplishing your wish? How will you feel? Pause and really imagine the outcome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSTACLE</th>
<th>My obstacle:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the main obstacle inside you that might prevent you from accomplishing your wish? Pause and really imagine the obstacle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>When:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s an effective action to tackle the obstacle? Make a when-then plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Then I will:</th>
<th>(my action)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Questions? Comments?

**Harvard’s Usable Knowledge:**

- Fun and (Brain) Games

- Executive Functions & Self-Regulation
  [https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/)

- Tools for Success
  [https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/03/tools-success](https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/03/tools-success)

**ACF. Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation (OPRE):**

- Toxic Stress and Self-Regulations Reports
Resources

ACT for Youth:
- Professional Development for Youth Workers
  http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/
- Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit
  http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/sel/

Readings


Jutta Dotterweich
Director of Training
jd81@cornell.edu

ACT for Youth Center for Community Action, BCTR
Cornell University
www.actforyouth.net