

Self-Regulation: Regulating Yourself First



Why Self-Regulation Comes First



Crisis Mode

When your child melts down, your body reacts – heart racing, jaw clenching, stress response activated.



Prefrontal Cortex Goes Offline

Your amygdala triggers fight, flight, or freeze – the thinking part of your brain steps back.



Co-Regulation

Your child needs you to co-regulate with them – but you can only do that when you're regulated yourself.

What Happens in Your Nervous System



Threat Response

Stress activates your amygdala, shifting your body into survival mode.



Shallow Breathing

Your heart rate spikes and breathing becomes shallow, keeping you in a reactive state.



Slowing Down

Slowing your breath and softening your shoulders signals safety to your brain and body.



Calm is Contagious

Your regulated presence sends a message of safety to your child, even amid big emotions.



It's a Practice

Self-regulation is cultivated daily so it becomes second nature when challenges arise.

Grounding Phrases to Lean On



"This is hard, but I can handle it."

An anchor of inner strength when you feel overwhelmed.



"My child is having a hard time, not giving me a hard time."

A reframe that shifts you from reaction to compassion.



"I choose connection over control."

Keeps your values front and center in a tense moment.



"Breathe in calm, breathe out tension."

A simple breath cue that resets your nervous system.



"I am the safe space my child needs right now."

Reminds you of your powerful role even in difficulty.

Your Practice This Week



Choose One Phrase

Pick the phrase that resonates most with you right now.



Place It Where You'll See It

Write it down and post it in the kitchen, on your car visor, or on your phone lock screen.



Pause When Tension Rises

When you feel that familiar tension, pause and read your phrase.



Take Three Slow Breaths

Literally train your nervous system to respond differently – one breath at a time.



Build the Foundation

Little by little, these moments add up to a foundation of calm and connection in your home.

References

- References: American Academy of Pediatrics, Porges (Polyvagal Theory), Siegel & Bryson, Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology.