

Co-Regulation & Problem-Solving Together



What Is Co-Regulation?



The Flooded Brain

During a tantrum, the amygdala and limbic system take over—the thinking, problem-solving part of the brain goes offline.



Together, Not Alone

Co-regulation means helping your child move from emotional dysregulation to calm—together, not expecting them to manage it alone.



Your Calm Sets the Tone

If this is the only thing you do during a tantrum, that's perfectly fine! Your calm presence is a regulating force for your child.

How to Co-Regulate



Breathe Together

Model slow, steady breathing and encourage your child to join you.



Gentle Touch

A reassuring hand on their back, holding their hand, or a hug if they're receptive.



Calm, Steady Voice

Your tone matters as much as your words. Speak slowly and softly.



Soothing Activities

Offer a stress ball, play calming music, or rock gently to ease their nervous system.



Modeling Regulation

When they see and feel your composure, they gradually learn to do the same for themselves.

From Regulation to Problem-Solving



Watch for Readiness

Slowed breathing, relaxed body, and eye contact are signs your child is ready to engage.



Guiding Questions

"What can we do differently next time?" or "What helped you feel better just now?"



Simple Choices

For younger children, offer choices: "Would you like a break or a hug?" to build autonomy.



Tantrums = Learning

Tantrums are not failures—they're a developing brain learning to manage enormous emotions.



Repair When Needed

"I didn't handle that the way I wanted to. I'm learning too." Modeling accountability is powerful.

The Full Process: Every Step Builds Your Child's Brain



Pause

Pause before reacting to avoid matching your child's chaos.



Regulate

Regulate your own emotions first so you can show up grounded.



Connect

Connect with your child so they feel safe and seen.



Validate

Validate their emotions without judgment or minimizing.



Co-Regulate & Solve

Guide them to calm, then problem-solve together to build lasting resilience.

References

- References: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Geller & Porges, Hoffman et al., Rosanbalm & Murray, Siegel & Payne Bryson, Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, Zero to Three.