



# Rev It Up or Calm It Down: Trauma-Informed Regulation Strategies for Every Body

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National Center on

Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety





# Blessing





# Today's Presenters



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Training and Technical Assistance  
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# Objectives

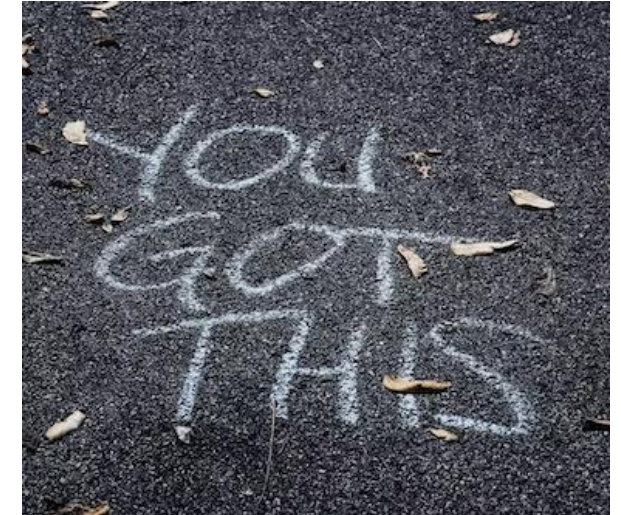
- Review how dysregulation might show up in behavior
- Explore ways energy is matched with tasks and activities
- Link "regulation stations" with trauma-informed practices to be used in a variety of settings
- Experience sensory-based strategies to support regulation in children and adults





# From the Start

- Take three deep breaths (especially long exhales).
- Micro-movements
  - Fidget, doodle, play with pen, drink water
  - Roll your neck; relax and contract parts of your body.
- Macro-movements
  - Stretch your body.
  - Take a walk.
- Talk with someone you trust.
- Write down concepts, feelings, thoughts you want to reflect on.
- Remind yourself of an encouraging mantra, “I can do hard things.”
- Pay attention to yourself — self-regulate.





# Share Your Thoughts



What are the first things that come to mind when you hear the word “regulation?”

Put it in the room!



# Video



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# Regulation $\neq$ Calm







# Trauma to Trauma-Reducing



## Trauma-Reactive

- Fragmented
- No safety felt
- Overwhelmed
- Fear-driven
- Reactive
- Rigid



## Trauma-Informed

- Realizes widespread impact, including sociocultural trauma
- Recognizes effects
- Responds by shifting practice
- Resists re-traumatizing



## Safe, Supportive Healing

- Integrated
- Reflective
- Relationship-centered
- Collaborative
- Growth- and prevention-oriented
- Flexible and adaptable



# Share Your Thoughts

When you think of dysregulation, what does it look like, sound like, feel like? Who do you think of?

Put it in the room!



# Lion Breathing

- Place your hands on your knees and lean slightly forward
- Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue as much as you can
- Exhale forcefully with a roar or a “ha” sound





# Preverbal Trauma

- Processing is done in the body when there is no context for language (this is developmentally appropriate).
- Healing happens through the relationship.
- Thoughtful strategies that support the physical experience can foster healing.
- Utilizing regulation zones is trauma-informed care and can be part of a pathway to healing.

<https://smartmovespartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/the-boy-who-was-hit-in-the-face-somatic-regulation-and-processing-of-preverbal-complex-trauma-article.pdf>

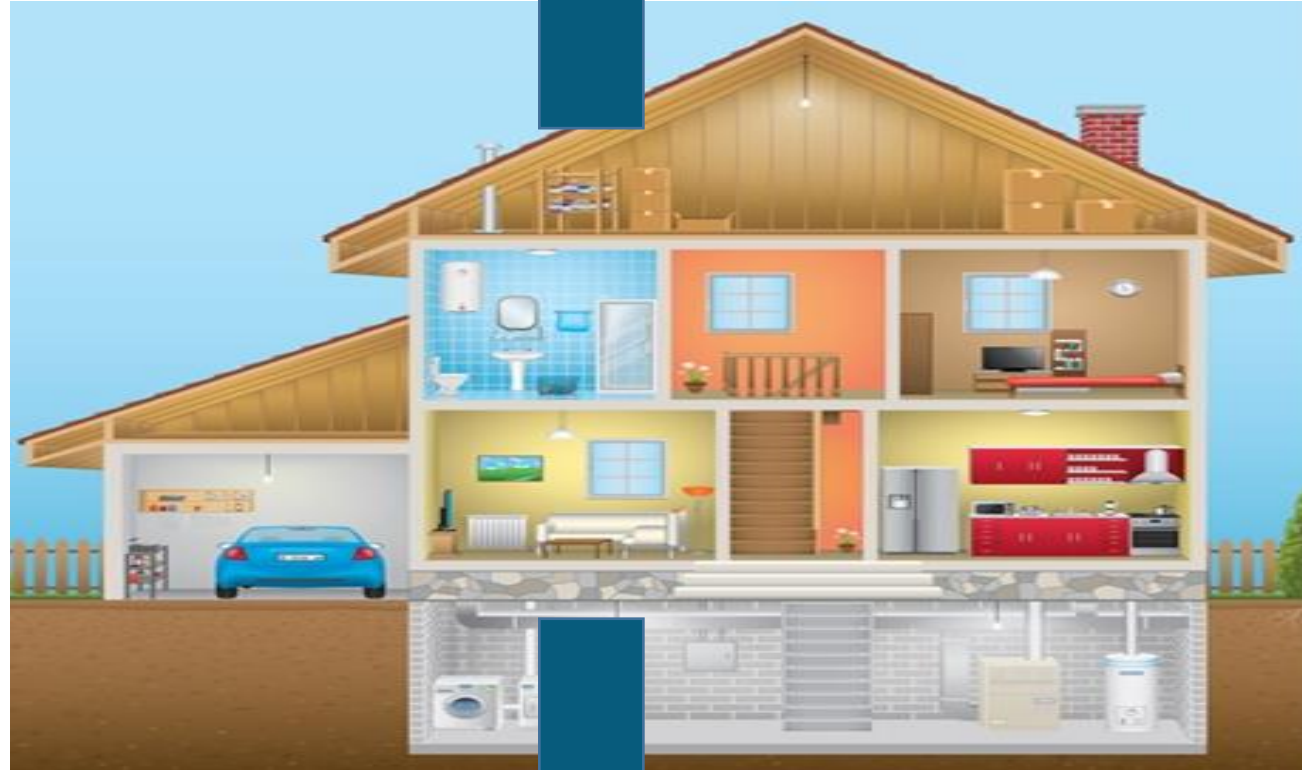




# Regulation

## Flying Through the Roof

- Crying
- Anxious
- Angry
- Out of control
- Running away



- Sad
- Withdrawn
- Zoned out
- Blank
- Falling asleep
- Silent
- Frozen

## Falling Through the Basement





## 3 Modes of Regulation

- **Auto-regulation:** Regulating independent of others, such as breathing, heart rate, sucking reflex, foot tapping
- **Co-regulation:** Using relationships to either stimulate or calm systems, for example, rocking, rubbing a child's back, bouncing a child on lap
- **Self-regulation:** Effective, flexible regulating skills built upon the foundation of good co-regulation, such as deep breathing, meditation, counting backward



# Experiences build brain architecture.

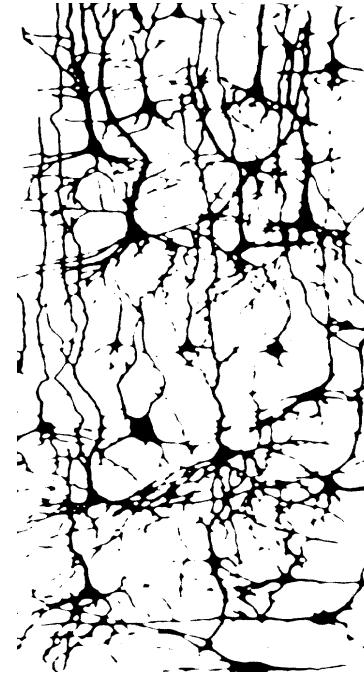
Birth



6 Years Old



14 Years Old





# Adopting a Trauma-Informed Lens

## REALIZING

Asking “What happened to this child?” instead of asking “What is wrong with this child?”

## RECOGNIZING

Seeing a child’s behavior struggles and saying “This makes sense based on what I know about brain science”

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884.



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# Adopting a Trauma-Informed Lens

## RESPONDING

Implementing systems that build adult skills and mindsets so they can respond to children in ways that heal

## RESISTING RE-TRAUMATIZATION

Implementing systems that support keeping children in their programs by teaching them skills to manage stress, to self-regulate, and become self- and socially aware.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884.



# Share Your Thoughts



What does trauma-informed care look like within your role, program, agency? Is regulation part of the conversation yet?

Let's chat!





# “Ha” Breathing

- Place your palms together in front of your body
- Hold your breath as you lift your hands above your head
- Exhale quickly with a “ha” or “ho” sound as you let your hands fall





# Increased Regulation Improves

- Capacity for self-expression
- Emotional awareness and identification
- Executive functioning





# A regulated nervous system doesn't look like:

**This**



Always “Calm”

Or  
**This**



Lots of highs  
and lots of lows

But  
***This***



Having the capacity  
to move in and out  
of stress while  
staying within your  
window of tolerance



# Share Your Thoughts



How do you stay in your “window of tolerance”? Share your favorite in the **moment** strategies.

Let's chat!



# “Cupid Shuffle” to Still



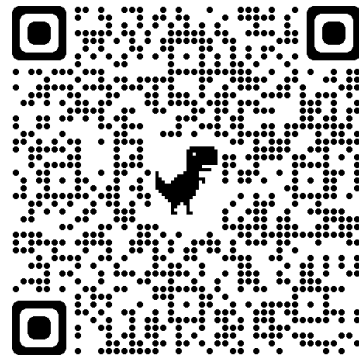




# Daily Schedule

## Energy Level Inventory

- Help recipients recognize whether they have a balance of active and passive activities.
- How do they bump into each other?
- Is there room for thoughtful transitions supporting energy shifts needed between tasks?



Classroom Schedule	Activity Level	
	Active	Passive
Arrival/Tables	X	
Circle		
Center Time		X
Story Circle	X	
Snack		X
Books		X
Outside		X
Small Groups	X	
Closing Circle	X	
		X



# Share Your Thoughts



How can you use this resource?  
What are you seeing in classrooms lately?

Put it in the room!



# Regulation Stations

- Calm-down spaces
- Contained energy zones



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# Calming Corner

- A designated space children can use to take a break from an activity or sensory inputs, or to go if they are having a big feeling and need a quiet area to regulate
- Include items that support children in calming down
  - Puzzles, books, stress ball
  - Identifying feelings visuals
  - Visuals for breathing
  - Steps for problem solving
  - Solution tool kit





# Tips for Using the Calming Corner

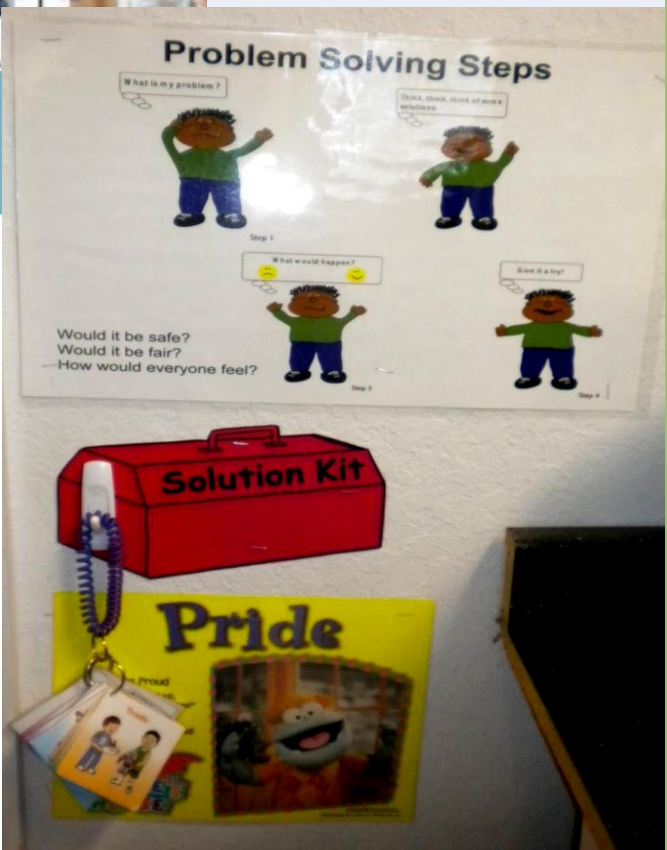
- **Preview:** We need to teach children how to use the calming corner.
- **Practice the strategies:** Any strategies included in the corner need to be taught and practiced across the day.
- **This is not used as a punishment.**

**Help Us Calm Down**  
Strategies for Children

I can...

- take deep breaths
- count
- go for a walk
- take a drink
- take a break
- listen to music
- draw a picture
- swing
- rock
- read a book
- hug a favorite toy
- do a puzzle

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# Tips for Using the Calming Corner, cont'd.

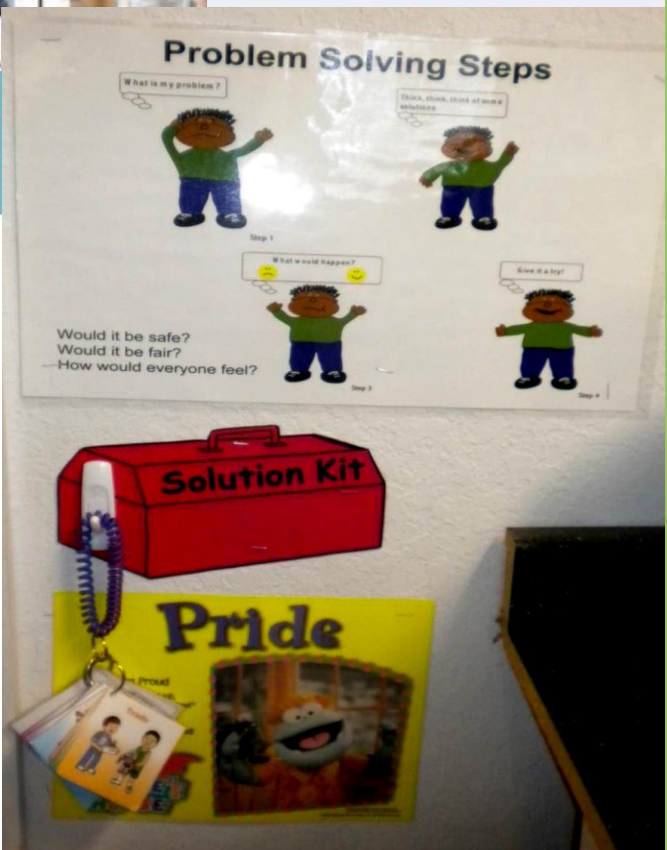
- **Use as a prevention tool:**  
Encourage children to use the space before they are dysregulated.
- **Try to limit distractions.**
- **Check in and offer support:** Help children calm their systems using your relationship paired with strategies.

**Help Us Calm Down**  
Strategies for Children

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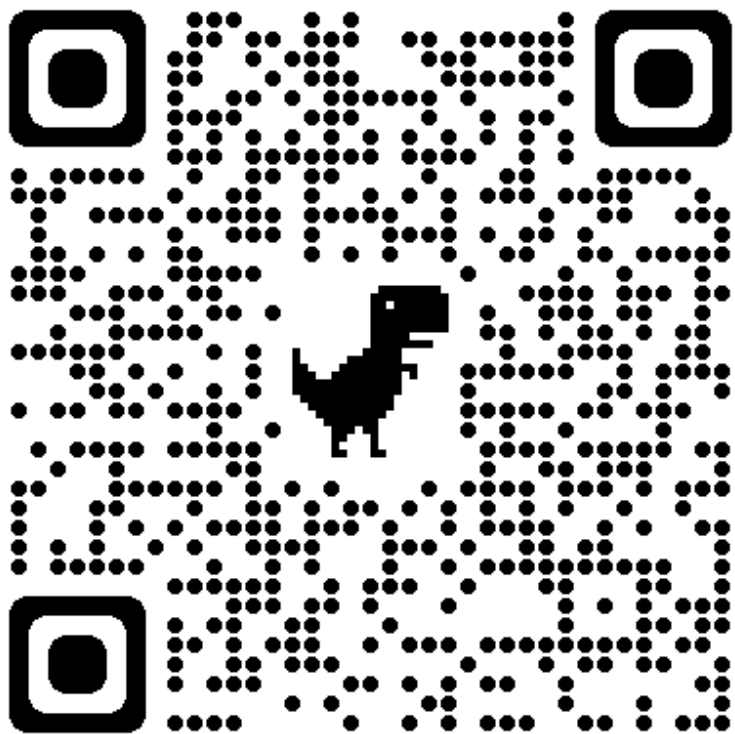
# Emotional Regulation: Calm Down

Now in  
Spanish!

- Taking a Break: Using a Calm Down Area at Home
- Help Us Calm Down: Strategies for Children
- Help Us Stay Calm, infographic
- Relaxation Thermometer
- Breathing Strategies



# Taking a Break: Using a Calm Down Area at Home



## Taking a Break: Using a Calm Down Area at Home



**A calm down area provides a child a place to calm down and take a break.** It is one strategy that might be used when children are feeling anxious, stressed, or overwhelmed. Families can help children learn how to take a break from activities or interactions that are challenging to them. Just like adults, young children might react to stress, frustration, and disappointment by becoming angry, shouting, refusing help from adults, or engaging in other challenging behaviors. Adults might use helpful strategies such as self-talk, deep breathing, or taking a break when they are feeling the need to take a break and calm down. The calm down area provides children with a place to let go of strong emotions and begin to feel calm and ready to engage with others again.

### Getting Started

The calm down area or calm down spot does not need to require a lot of space. It might be a chair that your child prefers, a group of toys that your child likes that are in a bedroom, or an area where you place a basket of calming toys. The only requirement is that it is an area that is quiet, away from interactions with others, and soothing for the child.

When you create your calm down area, think of things that your child already uses to calm down. They might be stuffed animals, a favorite pillow, a puzzle, squishy toys, or books. Put those in the calm down spot.

Show your child that you have created a calm down area and let your child know that they can use the area when they need to "feel better". You might explain to your child that sometimes you go to a calm down spot that helps you feel better (e.g., "When I am feeling frustrated with my work, sometimes I lay down on the couch.").

Encourage your child to play with what you have put in the spot. You might add a visual that helps the child take deep breaths ([link](#)) or a social story like "Tucker the Turtle ...." ([link](#)) that might help your child calm down. Encourage your child to get familiar with the calm down area when they are calm. This will give them a chance to explore the items in the calm down area and figure out what is most soothing and calming.

When you think your child might benefit from the calm down area, remind your child that they can go to the calm down area to feel better or guide your child to it (e.g., "I am going to help you go to your calm down spot so you can feel better.").

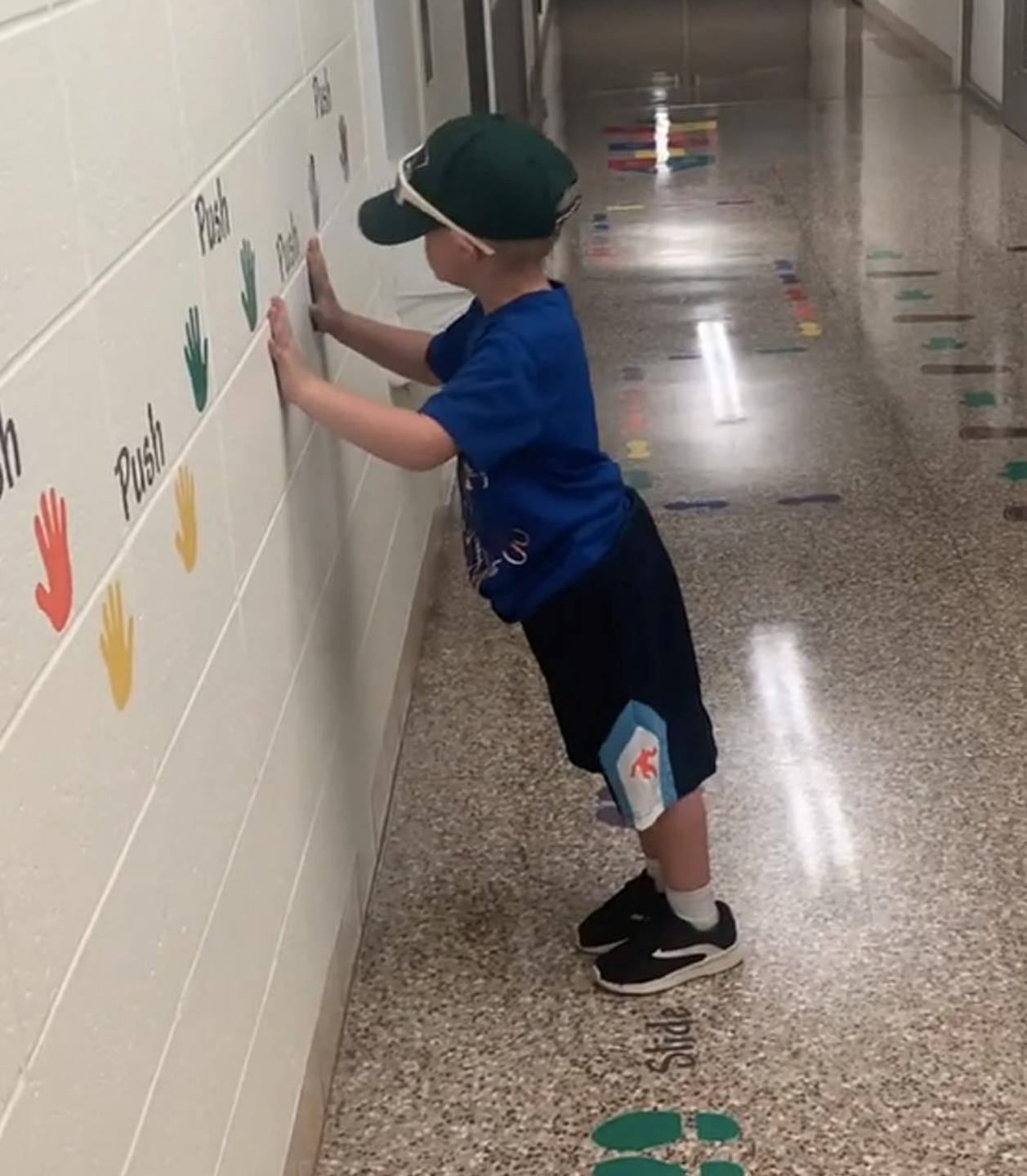






# Rev It Up Areas





# More Examples of “Up-Regulating” Activities

- Climbing
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Jumping
- Bouncing
- Rolling
- Army crawl
- Pushing or holding open doors
- Wiping tables
- Carrying paint bottles or a yoga ball
- Using a tunnel
- Wooden block cleanup



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## KIDS 7 MINUTE HIIT WORK OUT FOR SELF-REGULATION

Set an interval timer and complete each animal movement for 45 seconds, with 15 seconds of rest in between. Do as many as you can!



### FROG JUMPS

Hop, hop, back and forth like a frog



### BEAR WALK

Hands & feet on the floor, hips high - walk left and right



### GORILLA SHUFFLE

Sink into a low sumo squat, with hands on the floor, shuffle around the room.



### STARFISH JUMPS

Jumping jacks as fast as you can, with arms and legs spread wide.



### CHEETAH RUN

Run in place, as FAST as you can! Just like the fastest animal in the Sahara.



### CRAB CRAWL

Sit and place your palms flat on the floor behind you near your hips. Lift up off the ground and crawl.



### ELEPHANT STOMPS

March in place lifting your knees as high as you can and stomping the ground as hard as you can!

RAISING AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON  
[HTTPS://HES-EXTRAORDINARY.COM](https://hes-extraordinary.com)

## Tips for Using a Rev It Up Area

- Have a clearly marked area for up-regulating activities.
- Teach and practice activities to ensure body awareness and safety.
- Provide visual cues.
- Build in rest breaks/body checks.
- Support transition into lower energy tasks.
  - Check in with adult.
  - Get a drink of water.
  - Push in chairs on way back.



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# Outside the Box Ideas

What other ideas have you seen utilized in programs or homes?

## USE A WATER BOTTLE AS A SENSORY TOOL:



The mouth, face, and jaw are full of sensory receptors.



Activating the oral sensory receptors through sucking provides intense, calming sensory input.



Jaw, tongue, and lip movements activate calming proprioceptive inputs through sucking.







# Give it a try!





# Share Your Thoughts



How can you share this message in your role? Where do you see the buy-in, and what barriers might you anticipate?

Let's chat!

## Key Take-Away

Regulation is more than simply thinking about calming a system down. Instead, it is having enough energy, self-control, and cognition to complete the task at hand.





# Questions?



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# Thank You!



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