



# Communicating With Your Child by Co-Regulating

Young children can have BIG feelings and use BIG behaviors to communicate them. Behaviors like yelling and hitting can frustrate caregivers, making it hard to decide what to do.

Self-Regulating is how the child controls their behavior when they have big feelings. Children need lots of help to learn this skill.

Co-Regulating is how caregivers help the child learn to control their behavior by showing them. How can I help my child learn to self-regulate?

All behavior is communication, even yours. The best way to help your child learn self-regulation is to show it.

First, recognize your signs of frustration

- Assuming the worst
- Feeling hopeless or overwhelmed
- Losing your temper
- Saying things you later regret
- Withholding affection

Next, work to create a responsive mindset

- Stop. Take a few slow deep breaths. Close your eyes and count slowly to 10 while you tense and relax your muscles.

- Behave the way you want your child to behave.
- Use positive self-talk, such as, “I can stay calm and help support my child.”
- Show your child you understand what they are communicating by giving your child the calm words that match what they are feeling or wanting.
- Give your child a calm response to their request.
- Tune in and give your child the space or personal time, touch or emotional support they need to express their message.

When caregivers use co-regulation strategies, children learn to participate in positive, supportive interactions. This builds trust, social communication skills, and helps promote development of self-regulation, so they can start to manage those BIG feelings.