



**Shanker Self-Reg™ in the Early Years**  
**Dr. Sonia Mastrangelo, Associate Professor**  
**Shanker Self-Reg™ Consultant MEHRIT Centre**  
 November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.




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### Introduction

- Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University Orillia
- Former special education teacher, DPCDSB
- Editor, International Journal of Holistic Early Learning and Development <https://ijheld.lakeheadu.ca/>
- Miller Method therapist for children on the Autism Spectrum
- International clinical work (Bahrain, South Korea, NZ, Peru, US)
- Consultant with the MEHRIT Center (Certified in Foundations of Shanker Self-Reg™)
- Consultant with Curriculum Services Canada
- Mother of two ☺

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### Agenda

- Introduction: What is Stress?
- Stressors Across 5 Domains
- Distinguishing Between Misbehaviour and Stress Behaviour in our children
- The Foundations of Self-Regulation
- Distinguishing Between Self-Control and Self-Regulation
- 5 Steps of Shanker Self Reg™
- Reflecting on Your Roles in EC
- Q and A




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### Let's Make a Mental Note

- Think about your current role in Early Childhood
- Which child has been struggling (i.e. think about transitions, behaviour..etc)?
- Have there been any "stressful" relationships for you as the professional in your environment?



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### Your Perspective Matters



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### What Do You Believe?

1 Finger=Agree, 2 Fingers=Disagree, 3 Fingers= Unsure

- All children can learn.
- Stress and anxiety don't impede our learning.
- The 5 senses play an important role in our learning.
- Children should have fun when they are learning.
- Parents are the child's primary educators.
- Where there's confusion there's learning.
- We can learn from our mistakes.
- Mental health and well-being is as important as academic achievement.
- Technology has helped to improve children's social development.
- Children should be encouraged to be risk takers.



Gale (2015)

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### What is Stress?

*We commonly see stress as anything that makes us feel pressured, harried, anxious, ill at ease. Which, of course, it is. But stress is much more ubiquitous, as much a part of our life as the air we breathe.*  
-Dr. Stuart Shanker



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### Stress Continued

- automatic reaction that happens in your body when there is a 'perceived' threat.
- release of chemicals (i.e. adrenaline) sharpens your senses, focuses your attention, quickens breathing, dilates blood vessels, increases heart rate, and tenses your muscles.
- can be positive or negative, apparent or hidden, physiological/psychological, internal/ external, self-imposed or forced upon us.



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### Effects of Chronic Stress on Brain



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## The Brain and Stress



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- Initiation
- Problem solving
- Judgment
- Inhibition of behavior
- Planning/anticipation
- Self-monitoring
- Motor planning
- Personality/emotions
- Awareness of abilities/limitations
- Organization
- Attention/concentration
- Mental flexibility
- Speaking-expressive language

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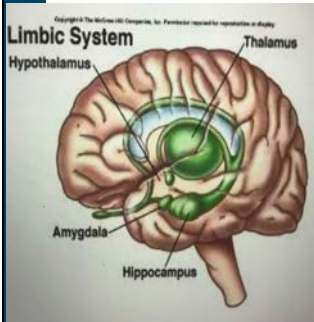
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- It is the primitive part of your brain.
- It controls the fight, flight, or freeze instinct.
- It is not rational; it is emotional!

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## How Does A Child Respond to Stress?

- FIGHT
- FLIGHT
- FREEZE
- FAINT/COLLAPSE



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### Stressors Affecting You

- Personal Life
- Professional Life
- Across 5 Domains (biological, social, emotion, cognitive, prosocial)



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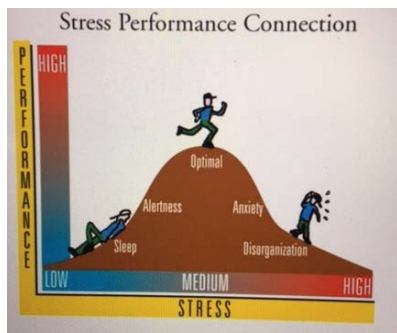
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### Stress Performance Connection



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### New Sleep Guidelines

- Infants 4-12 should sleep 12-16 hours per 24 hrs (including naps)
- Children 1 to 2 years of age should sleep 11-14 hrs per 24 hours (including naps)
- Children 3 to 5 years of age should sleep 10 -13 hrs
- Children 6 to 12 years of age should sleep 9-12 hrs
- Teenagers 13 to 18 years of age should sleep 8-10 hrs
- Younger adults (18-25) should sleep 7-9 hrs
- Adults (26-64): should sleep 7-9 hrs
- Older adults (65+): Sleep range is 7-8 hrs

**Reference: American Academy of Sleep Medicine**

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### Did You Know? Pizzled and Technology

- In 2006 the word pizzled entered our lexicon—a combination of puzzled and pissed
- Captured the feeling people had when the person they were with whipped out their iphone and started talking or texting—unfortunately this has become the norm
- Today's children are growing up where they are attuned more to machines and less to people

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### Drawbacks of Excessive Digital Use

- Social and emotional circuitry of a person's brain learns from contact and conversation with everyone it encounters over the course of a day—the interactions mold brain circuitry
- Research shows that children are having greater difficulty reading behaviour face-to-face
- Losing ability to maintain/sustain a conversation
- In Taiwan, Korea and other Asian countries, internet addiction is viewed as a national health crisis which isolates the young

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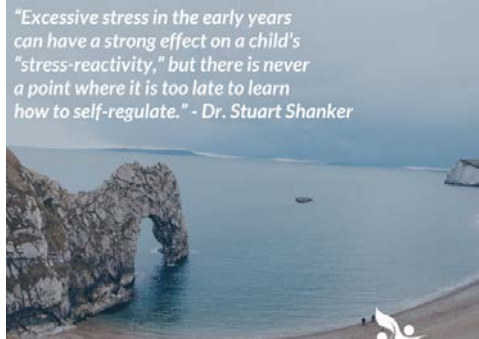
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*"Excessive stress in the early years can have a strong effect on a child's "stress-reactivity," but there is never a point where it is too late to learn how to self-regulate." - Dr. Stuart Shanker*



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## Shanker Self Reg™

Self-Reg is a powerful method, developed by Dr. Stuart Shanker, for understanding stress and managing energy flow to promote self-regulation.



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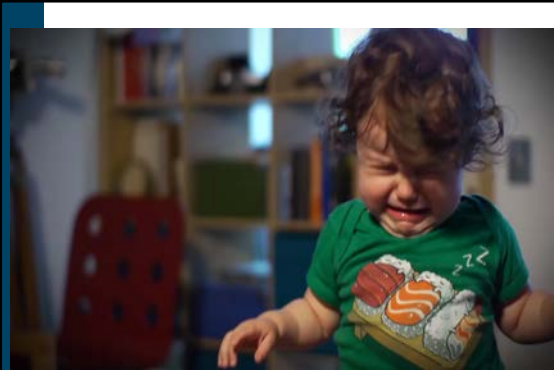
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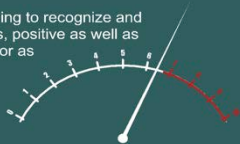
## Self-Regulation

The term self-regulation has come to be used in many different ways. When Dr. Stuart Shanker and TMC refer to "self-regulation," they are talking about the term's original neurophysiological meaning, which is about brain-body responses to stress, including energy expenditure, recovery, and restoration.

Effective self-regulation requires learning to recognize and respond to stress in all its many facets, positive as well as negative, hidden as well as overt, minor as well as traumatic or toxic.

The question is *how*.

That's where Self-Reg comes in.



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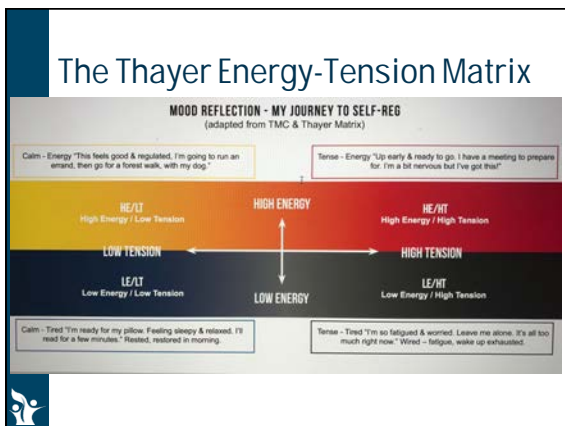
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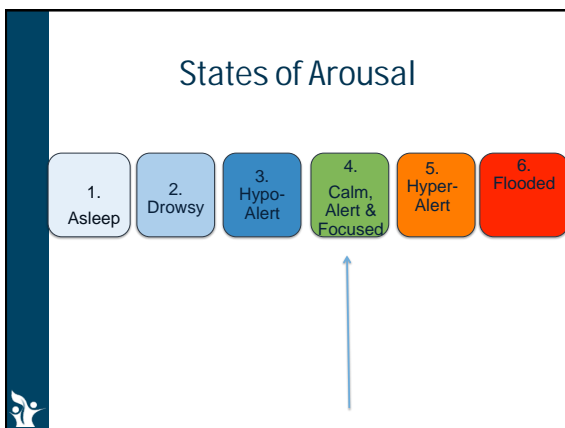
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### Why is Self-Reg Important?

- Directly related to success in learning, academic performance, social interaction, and overall health
- Restore feelings of self-efficacy
- Helps us to effectively engage with others
- Better quality of life
- Moves us from survival brain to learning brain
- Enhances our well-being
- Build/strengthen our relationships
- Better predictor of academic success than IQ
- Correlates highly with longevity and happiness

**HOMEOSTASIS=HAPPINESS ☺**

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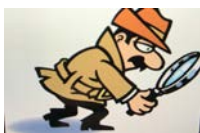
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### The Challenge

“ One of the biggest challenges we face in education and child care is that a certain amount of stress is normal and positive. What’s important is reducing the stressors that are NOT helping the child.” (Shanker)

We need to become “stress detectives” through the power of observation.



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### 5 Domains of Possible Stressors

- Biological** → Noises, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise, lack of sleep, junk food
- Emotion** → Strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)
- Cognitive** → Difficulty processing certain kinds of information
- Social** → Difficulty picking up on social cues or understanding effect of behaviour on others
- Prosocial** → Difficulty coping with other people’s stress; sense of injustice (misinterpreting stress behaviour as misbehaviour)

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### The Domains of Self-Reg

Self-Reg looks at the stresses that arise in 5 core domains of experience:



Each of these domains has its own unique stressors, but they are all interlocked in such a way that stress in any one domain can exacerbate stress-reactivity in another.

When one is caught in a **stress-cycle**, stressors have a **multiplying effect** on each other. This can lead to problems in behaviour, mood, attention, and health.

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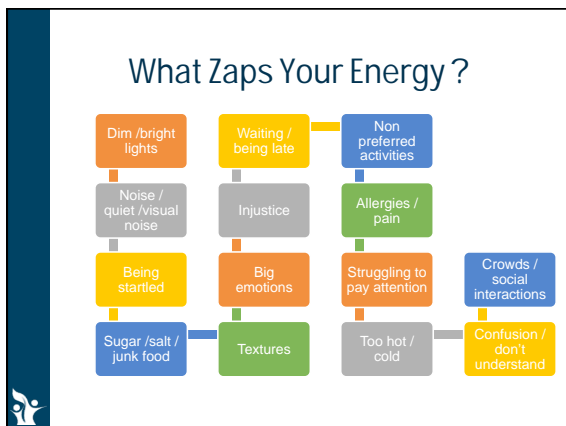
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### Hidden Stressors

*Hidden stressors are things that cause the child to burn energy without her realizing that this is happening. And the world of children and teens today is filled with such hidden stressors.*  
 -Dr. Stuart Shanker

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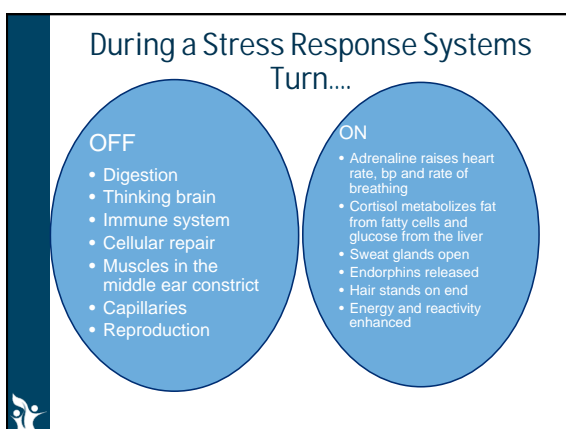
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### Signs of Excessive Stress



**Stress Responses:**

- Instantly go from **0** to **10!**
- *Disproportionate* reaction to stressors!
- *Volatile* reaction– always ready to attack!
- *Hard to calm* – once the alarm is triggered!

The body is overwhelmed by stress!

“Our stress thermostats can be easily overloaded. If we first calm our limbic alarm, we can bring the pre-frontal cortex back online.” (Shanker)

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### Misbehaviour Vs. Stress Behaviour

Misbehaviour

The key to *misbehaviour* is that the child *could* have acted differently; that she was aware that she shouldn't have done something, and was perfectly capable of acting differently. **Prefrontal cortex (blue brain)** is “running the show”:

Stress Behaviour

The key to *stress behaviour* is that the child is *not* fully aware of what she is doing, or why; she has *limited* capacity to act differently. **Limbic system (red brain)** is “running the show”

Stress behaviour is caused by too a high stress-load.

➤ The big challenge in doing Self-Reg is figuring out why the child's stress is so high.

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### Understanding Stress Behaviour

- A child who is chronically hyperaroused is going to show it
- Children do not like being in this state any more than we do!
- We're not trying to change the behaviour (we want children to eventually do this for themselves)
- We're trying to understand: Why this child? Why now?

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### Self-Reg vs. Self-Control

The practice of Self-Reg draws a fundamental distinction between self-regulation and self-control.

<p>Self-regulation seeks to identify and reduce the causes of problems in mood, thought, and behaviour.</p>  <p>Self-regulation is always searching for hidden stressors.</p>	<p>Self-control seeks to inhibit or manage such problems only when they arise.</p>  <p>Self-control looks only at surface behaviours.</p>
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**Self-Regulation comes first. It makes Self-Control possible.**

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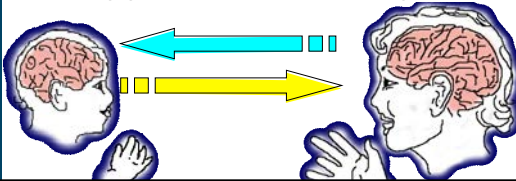
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### How Do We Learn to Self-Regulate?

- Your ability to self-regulate is rooted in both your biology and environment (Shanker)
- As a child, you learned to SR by the **regulated** adults in the environment (co-regulation)
- Calm/Engaged Interactions Lead to Co-Regulation



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### Still Face Experiment



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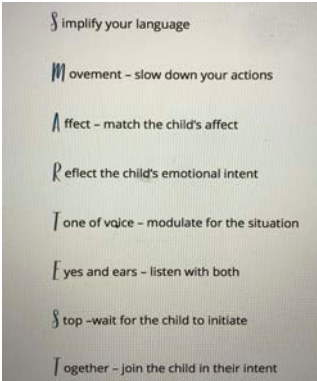
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- Simplify your language
- Movement – slow down your actions
- Affect – match the child's affect
- Reflect the child's emotional intent
- Tone of voice – modulate for the situation
- Eyes and ears – listen with both
- Stop – wait for the child to initiate
- Together – join the child in their intent

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Adult Influence on Child's Regulation



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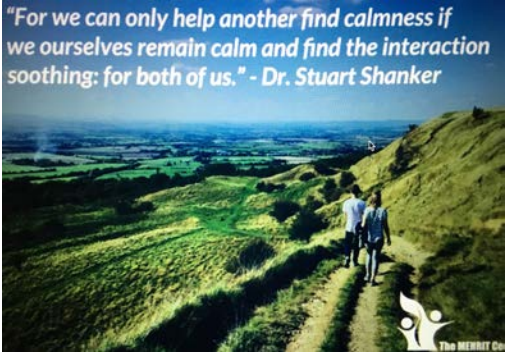
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*"For we can only help another find calmness if we ourselves remain calm and find the interaction soothing: for both of us." - Dr. Stuart Shanker*



The MERRILL Co

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### How YOU can support Co/self-regulation in young children

- Careful and ongoing observation
- Being a co-regulatory play partner
- Offering a wide array of supports in the classroom
- Introducing it as part of the discussion for all young children
- Use an inquiry based model for learning



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### Observation

- Pay close attention to what interests the child (which area of the room does (s)he seem to stay the longest in)
- What toys/activities is (s)he playing with?
- Is the child playing alone or with other children?
- Is it a busy or quite area of the room?
- Notice any change in the child's activity level as time goes on?



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### Co-Regulatory Play Partner

- Acknowledge the child's idea, preferences, and emotion
- Join in on the child's play idea
- Use natural rich affect (facial expression, tone of voice, gestures) that matches the context of the interaction
- Establish a well-paced reciprocal interaction



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## Begin with Micro-Environments



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## The Shanker Method™: 5 Steps

- 1 Read and **Reframe** the Behaviour
- 2 **Recognize** the Stressors
- 3 **Reduce** the Stress
- 4 **Reflect**: Develop Stress Awareness
- 5 **Respond**: Develop Personal Strategies to Promote Restoration and Resilience

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### Step 1: Reframe the Behaviour



Hit the Pause Button: Why? Why Now?



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### Step 2: Recognize the Stressors

- Which domains are being impacted? Hidden Apparent?
- Do the stressors consistently “trip” the child’s limbic system? In all contexts?
- Usually begins with the biological domain but quickly impacts the others
- Consider, sleep, diet, exercise, technology use, friendships, ...etc.



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### Step 3: Reduce (or Remove) the Stress

- Involves turning off the alarm
- When the stress response is activated, our first order of business is to calm the brain
- We provide safety and security to help the crisis pass
- Then - and only then - can we help the child to learn
- Suggestions:** Begin with the environment and YOUR approach/ interaction (remaining calm)



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### Step 4: Reflect on our Stress Awareness

- Show kids what stress “looks like” and “feels like” (Have them draw it out)
- Show kids what calm feels like
- Quiet is not the same as “calm”
- Is child able to identify calm within him/herself and others?
- For younger children, teach what “calm” feels like through dramatic play (puppets, dolls, figurines)



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### Step 5: Step 5: Respond— Develop Strategies to Promote Restoration and Resilience

- Understand that strategies to restore energy and cope with stressors is unique for each person
- Identify the practices that are restorative to personal energy
- Identify existing adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies to respond to excessive stress
- Build your own tool-box of self-reg strategies (and help another do the same!) to promote restoration and resilience



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### More Calming Activities

- Deep Breathing Techniques: [http://www.morethanmedication.ca/en/stress\\_lessons/insiders?parents](http://www.morethanmedication.ca/en/stress_lessons/insiders?parents)
- Draw it out
- Music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4D8ezH0iXh8>
- Social Stories: Problem Solving Element
- Growth Mindset: “I Can Project”
- Motion: Rocking, walking, dancing, using swings
- Play dough, Colouring, Hands in warm water
- Watching a calming video: Living Art DVD collection (visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlrBecB746c>)
- Sensory comfort objects (visit: <http://ww1.sensorycomfort.com/>)



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### How do we NURTURE the Nature of a Child?

- Room to express individual emotions
- Room for quiet introspection
- Room for personal and collaborative problem solving opportunities
- Room to think differently, to imagine, to invent and try out different ways of doing things
- Room to develop relationships in our programs and homes!
- A lot of co-regulation at first!

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### Self-Regulation in YOUR environment

It Begins with the Relational Experiences Among These 3 Key Groups

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### Self-Regulation in Practice— Moving from.....To

•Imitation.....	Engagement
•Peer Modeling.....	Authentic/Natural Friendships
•Sitting for long periods .....	Learning “In Motion”
•Whole Group Snack/Story ...	Smaller clusters of children
•Structured.....	More flexible; Following the Child’s Lead; Inquiry Based Model
•Literacy/Numeracy steers .....	Self Regulation Steers our Learning our learning
•Directing Parents.....	Facilitating/Empowering them to recognize their many gifts

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### Importance of Parenting Style

- Parents play an integral role in the transition from home to school; Home visits—Let’s Bring them back!
- Listen carefully to the narrative that parents share—they often provide us with clues/insights as to why the child might be in distress
- Authoritative**: Warm and Responsive, Clear Rules, High Expectations, Supportive, Value Independence
- Authoritarian**: Unresponsive, Strict Rules, High Expectations, Expect Obedience
- Permissive**: Warm and Responsive, Few or No Rules, Indulgent, Lenient




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### The New 4 R's

- Regulation**—begins with Co-Regulation and then Self-Regulation
- Reflection**—we can teach kids to reflect through questioning
- Relationships**—stimulate growth and learning; In studies looking at mental health, well-being, physiological health, longevity, happiness— number one factor in all those studies relationships
- Resilience**—human capacity to face, overcome, be strengthened and even transformed by adversities in life (ability to bounce back)




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### How Does Learning Happen and New Kindergarten Document

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<b>HDLH</b></li> </ul> <p>Well Being (1 of 4 foundations) Well-being addresses the importance of physical and mental health and wellness. It incorporates capacities such as self- care, sense of self, and self-regulation skills. See pgs. 30-36</p> 	<p><b>Kindergarten</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Self-regulation and well-being (1 of 4 frames)</li> <li>-their own thinking and feelings, and their recognition of and respect for differences in the thinking and feelings of others;</li> <li>-regulating their emotions, adapting to distractions, and assessing consequences of actions in a way that enables them to engage in learning;</li> <li>-their physical and mental health and wellness.</li> </ul> <p>See pgs. 54-62 <u>Am I correcting, directing or connecting?</u></p>
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### Self-Reg Begins With ME and Moves to WE

- We all play an integral role in the social, emotional and cognitive development of the child
- Important for US to remain regulated (our children depend on it)
- Understand our own energy/tension levels (so that we can stay calmly focused and alert too!)
- We want kids to be mindful of their self-regulatory states and we need this for ourselves too




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### On the Path to Self-Regulation...

- A cup of teamwork!
- Have a “loose” schedule
- Team Building Exercises (Professional Learning Communities among Parent Workers)
- Consider writing out “case studies” of problematic situations/challenges and brainstorm possible solutions as a T.E.A.M (Together Everyone Achieves More)
- Find an outlet to “recharge your batteries”
- Ongoing communication and relationship building with parents
- Engage in ongoing professional development ☺




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Available here:  
<https://self-reg.ca/self-reg-song/>



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Thank you!

A Special Thanks to Jennifer Snell and her Team for organizing this event!

Questions?



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A Little Surprise: Co-Regulation in Action! 😊



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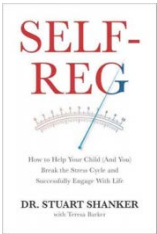
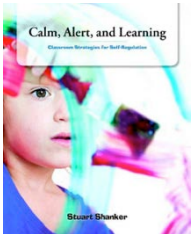
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## Books by Dr. Stuart Shanker

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## For Further Information:

- [www.self-reg.ca](http://www.self-reg.ca)
- General Inquiries - [info@self-reg.ca](mailto:info@self-reg.ca)
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