

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN THE CLASSROOM



Emotional regulation is the ability to understand, manage and respond to our emotions in ways that are safe and acceptable.

Helping pupils understand, manage and express their emotions in healthy, safe ways.



REMEMBER

Pupils don't need to be calm before they can learn. They need support to feel calm so their brain can learn and think clearly.



WHAT DYSREGULATION MIGHT LOOK LIKE



EMOTIONAL

- Big mood swings
- Overwhelmed
- Sad or tearful
- Irritable or angry
- Worry or fear



BEHAVIOURAL

- Outbursts
- Refusing work
- Avoiding tasks
- Interrupting
- Restless or fidgety



PHYSICAL

- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Tiredness
- Shallow breathing
- Muscle tension



THINKING

- Racing thoughts
- Can't concentrate
- Negative self-talk
- Memory difficulties
- Overthinking



SOCIAL

- Withdrawing
- Finding conflict
- Struggling in groups
- Needing constant reassurance
- Difficulty coping with change

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?



Emotions are messages, not misbehaviour. They can be triggered by:

- Stress or anxiety
- Overwhelm
- Sensory overload
- Change or loss
- Past experiences
- Unmet needs

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES THAT HELP



CREATE SAFETY

Build trusting relationships and predictable routines to help pupils feel secure.



VALIDATE FEELINGS

Acknowledge how they feel. "I can see this is hard for you" helps them feel understood.



TEACH AND MODEL

Explicitly teach emotional vocabulary and coping strategies. Model calm, regulated responses.



GIVE SPACE AND TIME

Allow time to calm before problem-solving or asking them to talk.



OFFER CHOICE

Small choices help pupils feel more in control and reduce overwhelm.



USE CALMING TOOLS

Breathing exercises, fidget tools, visual timetables, comfort objects and safe spaces can help.



BREAK IT DOWN

Break tasks into smaller steps. This reduces pressure and supports focus.



PRAISE REGULATION

Notice and praise effort to manage emotions, not just outcomes.



CONNECT BEFORE YOU CORRECT

Regulate, relate, then reason. Connection comes before correction.



FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

Build confidence by noticing what they are doing well.



WHAT TO AVOID

- ✗ Telling them to "calm down" without support
- ✗ Punishment or shouting
- ✗ Ignoring or minimising feelings
- ✗ Comparing pupils to others
- ✗ Expecting instant change
- ✗ Focusing only on behaviour, not the cause



Our response teaches pupils how to respond to big feelings.

QUICK CLASSROOM CHECKLIST

- ☐ Do I have predictable routines in place?
- ☐ Do pupils know how to name their feelings?
- ☐ Are calming strategies visible and accessible?
- ☐ Do I model calm responses under pressure?
- ☐ Have I created a safe space or calming corner?
- ☐ Do I build in movement and brain breaks?
- ☐ Do I celebrate small steps of progress?
- ☐ Do I offer choices where possible?
- ☐ Do I connect with pupils daily?

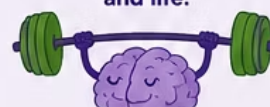


Small, consistent steps lead to big changes.



KEY TAKEAWAY

When we help pupils regulate their emotions, we help them build the skills they need for learning, friendship and life.



Teach it. Model it.
Support it. Celebrate it.



You don't need to have all the answers. You just need to show up, stay calm and support them through it.



Together we build stronger minds, stronger futures.

