

HOW TO CO-REGULATE WITH A CHILD



STOP

REDUCE DEMANDS

When a child is overwhelmed, their thinking brain is not fully working. Take away instructions, questions, and pressure until they settle.



SHOW SAFETY WITH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Soft posture. Relaxed shoulders. Slow movements. Your body shows the child that they are safe.



HELP THEIR BREATHING MATCH YOURS

Model slow, steady breaths. Children often copy slow breathing when they see it.



NAME THE STATE, NOT THE BEHAVIOUR

Say things like: "You are feeling overwhelmed." or "This feels too much for your body." This helps them feel understood and not judged.



WAIT FOR THEIR BODY TO CALM BEFORE TALKING

Do not teach or correct the child while they are upset. Once settled, talk through what happened in simple steps.



BUILD COPING SKILLS WHEN CALM

When the child is calm, teach simple breathing, taking breaks, moving their body, and asking for help. Co regulation comes first, and self regulation grows with time and practice.



USE A CALM, STEADY VOICE

Speak slowly and simply. Your pace helps guide their pace. Short sentences work best.



STAY CLOSE, BUT NOT TOO CLOSE

Some children want you close. Others need space but want you to stay nearby. Follow their cues.

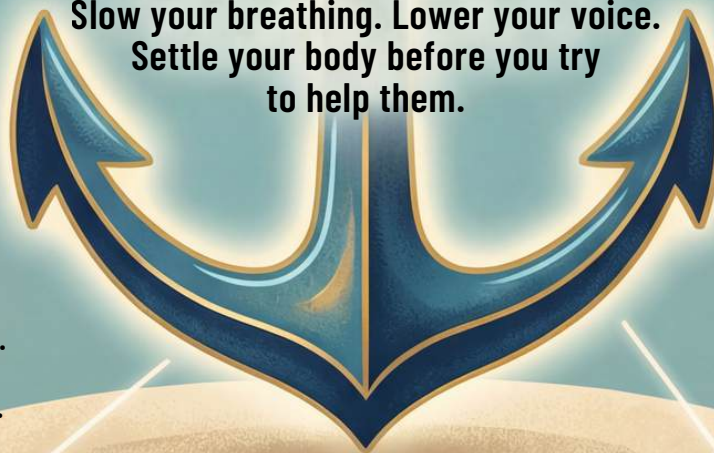


OFFER COMFORT THEY CAN ACCEPT

Comfort can be a blanket, a quiet space, a favourite object, or a hug if they choose it. Comfort helps the child's brain calm down.

YOU ARE THE ANCHOR. REGULATE YOURSELF FIRST.

Children borrow the adult's calm. Slow your breathing. Lower your voice. Settle your body before you try to help them.



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About this Resource

This downloadable PDF is a simple one page guide that explains how to support a child during a period of emotional overwhelm. It uses clear visuals of waves and an anchor to show adults how to co regulate with children, young people or teens when feelings rise and behaviour becomes hard to manage. It is designed for use at home, in school settings, and in counselling, therapy or social work sessions.

The guide sets out calm and practical steps that help an adult steady the situation. It encourages slowing your own breathing, lowering demands, keeping your voice steady and giving the child space while staying close enough for them to feel safe. It also explains why naming the feeling, rather than the behaviour, can help children settle more quickly. Once the child is calm, the guide suggests simple follow up ideas such as gentle reflection or teaching coping skills like breathing exercises or small movement breaks.

This printable resource suits parents, carers, teachers, ELSA style practitioners, child therapists, psychologists and social workers who need a clear reminder of how to support children and young people with strong emotions, anxiety and emotional dysregulation. It can be placed in classrooms, therapy rooms or family homes as a quick point of reference for anyone helping a child regain a sense of safety and control.

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