

Games to teach self regulation

Calm me



As part of our new Early Adopters framework, one of the new Early Learning Goals is 'self regulation'. This is the ability of children to understand their emotions and how they respond or act to these emotions.

It is a skill that has to be taught – we learn **self regulation** through our experiences. We are not born with it! Children need help with **self regulation**. For example, sometimes their reaction to a feeling of anger, may be to have a tantrum or to hurt others – so we teach Self -regulation in order to help children learn how to begin to control their actions.

These are a few simple games you can try that will help to teach self-regulation at home:

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1. Play 'traffic lights' (similar to 'Grandma's Footsteps/ Mr. Wolf') Children stand behind a line. One person (the traffic controller) stands opposite with their back turned. This person shouts 'green' and children walk towards him/ her. When he shouts 'red' he turns round and they must stop – anyone moving has to go back to the start. The winner is the first to get to the controller and then they become the 'controller' and shout out 'red' or 'green'.

Skills: this helps support bodily control and impulse reactions, as well as gross motor skills
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2. This game is musical statues or 'freeze' children dance to the music and must 'freeze' when the music stops.

Skills: Again, this teaches the skill of listening and controlling their urges to do something – in a fun way! When they can do this for fun, they can begin to apply the control they have to other situations.
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3. You will need an object such as a ball or a cuddly toy. The idea is that you try and carry the object between you – only using hands/ hips/ elbows or heads etc. How far can you get without dropping it?

Skills: teamwork, being close to someone controlling movements
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4. This is better played outside! Blow some bubbles and at first allow the children to pop them. When they have all gone, blow some more, but this time they must sit down and let them fall around them – even if one lands on their nose! When you say 'pop' they can pop them again! Praise them for not popping the bubbles.

Skills: explain that the feeling of really really wanting to do something, but holding back is called 'self control'. This is also about resisting temptation – explain that this is like having a bowl of sweets and not eating all of them in one go – we all know this is hard! This shows them how you can link real life situations to the game and talk through what they are doing.
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5. Another game for outside, although can be adapted for inside games (such as playing with play doh, or building with lego). The children listen to the instructions '**ready steady, GO!**' before they run around, or start to build etc. Do it several times. After a few games, change '**go!**' to another '**g**' word such as '**ready steady GREEN!**' or '**ready steady GORILLA!**' However, the children must **NOT** start to run, or play until you have said **GO!** A little bit like playing '**Simon Says**'

Skills: resisting temptation, listening, self control

These games are really easy to play and if you do them several times a week, then your child will begin to understand **self regulation** and start to have more control on their actions! Try it and see!