

# QA5 – BEHAVIOUR NORMALISATION PROCEDURE

## INFORMATION

“Self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage your behaviour and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you” (Raising Children Network, 2019). Building and maintaining the ability to self-regulate is critical for an individual’s long-term health, wellbeing and overall success in life (Murray, Rosanbalm, Christopoulos, & Hamoudi, 2015; as quoted by Rosanbalm & Murray, 2017). We learn to self-regulate through our relationships and environments, and this process is called ‘co-regulation’.

Our educators understand that during the first five years of life children require intensive and intentional support to manage, understand and respond to their emotions and experiences, and this procedure outlines the range of co-regulation strategies we use to support children and assist with guiding their behaviour.

Considering the method as a whole, we must begin our work by preparing the child for the forms of social life, and we must attract his attention to these forms” (121). Lessons which help children learn these social strategies are taught so they can navigate friendships and collaborations with others that can benefit them throughout their life.

"Social grace, inner discipline and joy. These are the birthright of the human being who has been allowed to develop essential human qualities."

## RESPONSIBILITIES

All educators, staff, families, volunteers and visitors are expected to comply with this procedure.

## PROCEDURE

### SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation involves being able to:

- regulate how we react to emotions like frustration or excitement
- calm ourselves down after something exciting or upsetting
- focus on a task
- refocus our attention on a new task
- control our impulses
- learn behaviours that help us get along with other people

We can only learn these skills and abilities through relationships with caring, supportive caregivers that take place in stable, warm and responsive environments, and when this occurs it is called ‘co-regulation’.

## CO-REGULATION STRATEGIES

Strategies we use to develop strong, caring relationships that will support children to build and develop their self-regulation skills include:

- Establishing a positive and collaborative partnership with families.
- Learning about each child, their temperament and needs from the family and from focused interactions with the child.
- Communicating with families about how we are supporting children, why we use the strategies we use, and how we can work together.
- Using a range of positive and supportive communication methods with children depending on the child and the situation. For example, we consider our tone of voice and body language when communicating and change these depending on the situation and the child. We are also aware of and consider children's body language when we are working to understand what they are trying to communicate to us.
- Modelling positive, considerate actions and communications.
- Reflecting on, and where needed, adapting the environment and routine to support the needs of children. For example, some children are very sensitive to light or noise, so this would be adapted. Or some children may require a specific routine to support their transition to the centre in the morning and we will work with the child and parents to implement this.
- Offering choices and supporting children's agency. Examples of how this is achieved include allowing children to choose what and how much they eat at lunch, when they eat morning and afternoon tea, and for older children, whether they engage in restful activities or sleep.
- We follow the child's lead wherever possible, and step into a leading role when needed. This is important as children need the security of knowing that there are limits, and that there are adults who will set reasonable boundaries for them, helping them to organise their feelings and responses when needed.
- Positively acknowledging considerate and cooperative behaviour and communications.
- Helping children deal with conflict in a constructive way.
- Supporting children to name their emotions. One of the ways we do this is through verbally acknowledging the emotion we believe the child is experiencing. For example, a child may be very upset that their parent has left; instead of trying to distract the child, the educator uses this as an opportunity to assist the child in recognising their feelings and developing language that expresses that feeling. The educator might say "I think that you are feeling sad right now because Daddy left, would that be right? I understand it is hard when Daddy leaves; it is ok to be sad".
- We use 'Emotion coaching' to acknowledge and validate children's feelings, assist them with recognising their feelings, and determine effective responses. For example, an educator might observe Louie take Sarah's shovel out of her hand in the sandpit and start playing with it. Sarah becomes very upset and pushes Louie; both children start crying. The educator first offers comfort to both children, and then once they are calmer, might say "Sarah, I think you are upset and also angry because Louie took your shovel from you while you were playing with it, is that right?" (responses and engagement will vary depending on developmental stage, but emotion coaching is valuable at all stages). "I can understand that that would make you upset, but it is important that we find a more helpful way to show that we are angry, we can't show it by pushing someone. Maybe next time you feel angry you could use your words, or you could come and see if an adult could help you". The educator also supports Louie by saying "Louie, is it right that you are upset because Sarah pushed you? I can see why you would be upset by that. Louie, it isn't nice to be pushed. It is important that we use our words when we want a toy someone else has".

- Co-creating calm and quiet spaces with children that they can access whenever they need to.
- Understanding and reflecting on our own capacity for self-regulation, especially when working to support children during a stressful or challenging experience.
- Understanding that self-regulation develops gradually; we therefore have realistic and appropriate expectations based on each individual child's needs and developmental stage.
- Whenever possible putting ourselves in the child's shoes.
- Being available to children when they need support.
- Critically reflecting with colleagues about children's needs and determining relevant and focused actions to support each child.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- Depending on their needs and life circumstances, children may need extra support with building their self-regulation skills.
- If, through events at the centre, educators believe that a child requires additional support, they will take focused observations of the child, and critically reflect on the situation, taking into account the environment, group size and composition, routines and expectations, as well as what may be occurring in the child's life outside of the centre. The *Behaviour Support Plan* is a useful and supportive tool for educators and families to use to get a full and clear picture of the situation and plan thoughtful and relevant actions to assist the child.
- Educators will collaboratively work with families and, with family approval, external support agencies, to best support and meet children's needs.
- In collaboration with families and support agencies, support plans may be developed and adapted as needed to best support the child.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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