Teaching Affect Regulation In Children

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What is Affect Regulation (Mood Management)?
Definition: The ability to manage one's emotional state in a functional way to meet primary need fulfillment

- Needs Met
  - Reduce Stress  Survival
  - Conserve Energy  Survival

Cycle of Affect Regulation

Spectrum of Affect Regulation

Depressed  Normal Adult  Bipolar Adult/Child (rate – frequency can be greater)  Restful/Activitated  Manic
Normal versus abnormal cycle

(Normal) Child stressor → cries to get need met → parents soothes → neurochemical systems develop optimally → parent meets need = I am OK, safe, can get my needs met

(Abnormal) Child stressor → cries to get need met → parent angry/frustrated/absent/depressed → fear state increased → cortisol produced → state regulation problem → I am not OK, safe, I cannot handle this

Cycle Of Affect Regulation

• Starting Point For Ego Development (I am Ok, I can handle this, I can get my needs met)
• Primarily Learned from Attachment Figure
• Initial goal is to: “stretch” out the cycle not eliminate the downs (frequency & duration)

Development, Regulation & Feelings: Connecting The Dots

• Regulatory Systems biochemically develop b/w 6 months in-utero → 16 weeks
• Birth to 1 month → Sensory capacities, distinctions in vision, hearing, taste, touch, temperature, perception of pain
• 2-3 months → color perception, smiles at a face
• 6 months → separation anxiety/attachment formed/forming
• 10-12 months → anger, affection, fear of strangers
• 1.5-3 years → temper tantrums, resentment of new baby, 200 word vocabulary, differentiation of facial expressions of anger, sorrow, joy
• 3-5 years → affectionate towards parents, pleasure in genital manipulation, romantic attachment to opposite sex parent, jealousy of same sex parent, fear of dark, fear of injury, pride in accomplishments

(www.childdevelopmentinfo.com)
Adapting Interventions

- **Adapting Interventions based on Age** – How do we redo or recreate a healthy regulatory cycle with a 14 year old if they are stuck in the 3-5 year range?
- Recognize at approximately what age the child’s behavior reflects their “regulatory age”
- Know Major Developmental Milestones
- Create Unique Intervention to meet need which is palatable with child’s chronological age
- Watch for sarcasm/belittling/condensation
- More Flexibility with RAD

Important ?, points & interventions

- Modeling! How well do you manage your own mood?
- Your dominant negative cognition = your largest trigger
- Separate action from child – right and wrong choice
- Fear Acknowledgement of self and child
- Time is your ally – redo the normal cycle
- Nonverbal behavior (75%) – yours and your child’s
- Bipolar/ADHD or response to chronic stress (developmental trauma)?
- Outside does not equal Inside

More Interventions to Start Regulation (in most cases it starts with US!)

- Art of Reflection
- Choice → “I” action language? Win Win (you give a choice which is more undesirable than what you want them to do)
- Get Yourself Dirty – Discipline vs. Punishment
- Appropriate use of Nonverbal behavior – posture, eye contact, voice tone
- Normalize ALL Feelings – Identify them for the child
Mechanisms of Non-Verbal Behavior

- Eye Contact
- Facial Expression
- Voice Tone
- Posture
- Gestures
- Timing
- Intensity of Response

My Feelings Workbook

“It’s not how you feel but where you feel” - EX: Facial Expression

My Feelings Workbook

Coping Skill Development & Emotional Awareness

- Healing Hand - method of loci
- Internal versus external coping skills
- Anger is a “choice” - No one makes us mad
My Feelings Workbook

- Bridges the gap between thinking and emotional mind
- Gets children out of categorical all-or-nothing emotions
- Equips child with coping skills and discerns between right and wrong choices
- Helps child rate feelings on a scale and learn “where” they feel
- Teaches children different names and groups of feelings as well as how to describe them more vividly

www.myfeelingsworkbook.com

- My Feelings Workbook is a innovative approach to building the emotional awareness and resources of any child.
- It can be used by parents and professionals alike to prepare children to be better able to handle the stressors they will experience in everyday life.
- It is also a fantastic resource to use with children who have emotional and behavioral concerns in school or at home.

Endorsements

“A wonderful lifelong gift for parents to give their children.”
- Peter A Levine, PhD. Author of Trauma Proofing Your Kids: A Parent's Guide for Instilling Confidence, Joy, and Resilience

“I recommend My Feelings Workbook for young children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder such as Asperger’s syndrome. The activities are engaging for each child and will increase their ability to communicate and control emotions. We’ve used it at The Center for Children with Special Needs and it is a great resource for our students and their parents.”
- Dr. Tony Attwood – Author of The Complete Guide to Asperger’s Syndrome

“As an attachment and trauma expert with adoptive and foster families for the past fifteen years, I have come to recognize the importance of emotional regulation on the well-being of our children. My Feelings Workbook is a fantastic resource for teaching children and parents how to regulate and the necessity of mind-body awareness to life until now. What Aaron has pulled together in My Feelings Workbook is a comprehensive and captivating guide for any parent and child who are seeking emotional and behavioral strategies to help them navigate their world. The single and well-presented book is magnificent!”
- Bryan Post – The Post Institute