Self-Regulation in Children Birth - Five

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Objectives

• To give an overview of self-regulation from birth through age five

• To provide interventions that build self-regulation in young children

• To provide activities & resource information that repair self-regulation
Definition of Self-Regulation

- The control or organization of behavior

- Active suppression process engaged for the purposes of pursuing a goal

- Involves control over a variety of processes
Definition of Self-Regulation
(Jahromi and Stifter, 2008)

- Emotion regulation
- Behavioral control
- Executive function
Examples of Self-Regulation

- Complies with requests
- Initiates and/or ceases activities
- Modulates intensity, frequency & duration of verbal & motor acts
- Postpones actions
Examples of Self-Regulation

• Generates socially approved behaviors (Boyer, 2009)

• Remembering & following directions

• Remembering class rules

• Persisting on a difficult task
Examples of Self-Regulation

- Planning solutions to a problem

- Stopping impulsive response in favor of adaptive behavior

- Soothability

- Focusing on a task while ignoring distractions
Marshmallow Test

• VIDEO:

• Marshmallow Test:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EjJsPylEOY
Adlerian Lens
(Adler, 1956)

• Alfred Adler 1870-1937; ophthalmologist/GP MD developed psychological interests

• Contemporary of Freud

• Believed behavior is goal directed
Adlerian Lens
(Adler, 1956) (cont.)

• Lifestyle is built on “mistaken beliefs”

• Foundation laid by early interactions with others in the first five years of life

• Social interest
Goals of Misbehavior

- Attention → Connect → Cooperation
- Power → Capable → Self-Reliance
- Revenge → Count → Contribution
- Avoidance → Courage → Resiliency

Fifth Goal of Misbehavior

• May need to add a goal due to current family risk factors:

• Safety → Care → Valued
Cultural Bias
(Bronson, 2000)

Western influence:

• Values independent effort
• Achievement
• Self-reliance
• Personal responsibility
Example

• Goal Directed Behavior

• VIDEO:

Fake Crying; trying to avoid bedtime:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7zxQllsd9E
Effects of Poor Self-Regulation

• Family disruptions

• Expulsion
  (Gilliam and Shahar, 2006)

• School readiness
  (Blair and Diamond, 2008)

• Medication
  (Zito et al., 2000, Stanwood & Levitt, 2004)
Factors in Development of Self-Regulation

• Caregiver fit
• Sensitive, gentle guidance
• Modeling and coaching of language use
• Encouragement of responsibility
  (Dennis, 2006)
• Modeling positive behaviors
Factors in Development of Self-Regulation (cont).

- Positive reinforcement enhancing children’s desire to try new and more challenging tasks
- Language development
- Structured environmental support
Factors in Development of Self-Regulation (cont).

- Ability to shift from external to internal control
- Symbolic play and language use
- Private speech
- Secure Attachment
Secure Attachment

- Available and responsive mothers as a secure base

- Dependable presence
  (Ainsworth, Bell, 1978, Bowlby, 1958)
Infant Attachment

- Repeatedly associated in regulatory development from emotional arousal to cognitive abilities
  (Kochanaska, Philibert, & Barry, 2009)

- Enhances ability to develop self-calming strategies
  (Florez, 2011)
Deterrents to Self-Regulation

• Poverty

• Maternal depression

• Chaotic, over-stimulating or under-stimulating environment

• Physical or sexual abuse

• Difficulties with sleep-wake cycle

(Conway, 2009)
Deterrents to Self-Regulation

• Failing to provide challenging opportunities
• Developmental delays
• Temperament
• Language delays/lack of language experiences
Deterrents to Self-Regulation

• Parental misunderstanding of appropriate developmental expectations
  • Negative, insensitive or unresponsive caregivers who model controlling behavior rather than encouraging limited autonomy
    (McClelland and Cameron, 2011)

• Punishing young children when failing to sustain attention longer than a few minutes or fail to calm themselves quickly when frustrated
  (Florez, 2011)
Deterrents to Self-Regulation

• Use of coercive control
  (Bronson, 2000)

• Absence of positive experiences
  (Gearity, 2009)

• Lack of private speech

• Language delays
  (Qi and Kaiser, 2004)
Support & Interventions

• Good news

• Self-Regulation is a teachable skill

• Self-Regulation serves as a protective factor with low parental warmth or negative parenting
  (McClelland & Cameron, 2011)
Developmental Repair
(Gearity, 2009)

• Co-Regulation

• Repair occurs within relationship context

• Focus on development not behavioral control
Developmental Domains
Relating, Thinking, Feeling, and Acting

• An effective co-regulator:
  • Externally models and reflects words
  • Resists the assumption that children are cognitively aware of their behavioral choices
  • Provides the opportunity for children to become aware of thoughts, feelings, and resultant actions.
Developmental Domains
Relating, Thinking, Feeling, and Acting (cont.)

- Children are understood then gain insight into others
- Understanding emotions results in better management of emotional and behavioral upset
Tools for Co-Regulators
(Gearity, 2009)

• Be quiet
• Breathe slowly
• Eye contact or not
• Verbally match
• Stay in the present
• Appropriate calming touch
Tools for Co-Regulators (cont.)

• Remain physically nearby
• Find distractions to share
  • Shifting attention
  • Repetitive play
  • Physical movement
• Recognize return to less aroused state
  • Admire the accomplishment
  • Positive emotional support
Co-Regulation Approaches
(Vallotton & Ayoud, 2011)

- Encourage young children to talk aloud when solving difficult problems
- Encourage breadth of spoken vocabulary
  - Vocabulary vs. talkativeness
  - “Spoken words are mental tools with which to regulate oneself by exerting control over one’s own thought, emotions, and behavior, and perhaps one’s environment” (p.179).
Emotion Mentors
(Boyer, 2009)

• Help connect behavior to response

• Model, teach, encourage identification of verbal & non-verbal cues.
Emotion Mentors
(Boyer, 2009) (cont.)

• Toddlers
  • Comforting language
  • Gentle movements
  • Gestures of concern
  • Help recognizing negative emotions
  • Help attach feeling with pictorial form
  • Help knowing “why” of anger
  • Help reorganizing escalating anger
  • Use reflective language
Emotion Mentors
(Boyer, 2009) (cont.)

• Four year olds
  • Help recognizing signs of distress
  • Modeling & encouraging acts of kindness
  • Invitations to practice kind behaviors
  • Reflective language
  • Help recognizing escalating anger
  • Model problem solving
  • Verbal recognition of feelings and why of feelings
Emotion Mentors
(Boyer, 2009) (cont.)

• Five and Six year olds
  • Support in distress recognition
  • Encourage taking responsibility for behavior
  • Give opportunities to think about own/others emotions
    • Realize they have emotions
    • Identify varied emotions
    • Learn appropriate emotion expression
    • Talk about how they feel when expressing emotions
Emotion Mentors
(Boyer, 2009) (cont.)

• Five and Six year olds
  • Encourage Social Interest
    • Taking the perspective of another
    • Emotion influence on others
    • Conflict resolution & social problem solving
    • Respect for self, others, & other’s work
Activity Domains
Targeting Self-Regulation (Bobula, 2009)

• Inhibitory Behaviors
• Attention
• Planning, organizing, & creating
Activities

• Games:
  • Red Light, Green Light
  • Duck, Duck, Goose (Grey Duck)
  • Statue Freeze Tag
  • Run & Stop
  • Picture Bingo
  • Simon Says
  • Musical Chairs
Activities

• Songs/Finger Plays
  • The Freeze & Movement Song – Steve & Greg
  • Bear Hunt – Dr. Jean
  • Head & Shoulders, Knees & Toes
  • Where is Thumbkin?
  • Hokey Pokey
  • B-I-N-G-O
Activities

• Fidget Toys
• Constructive
  • Dramatic play – (at least 30-60 minutes)
  • Block building
  • Painting
  • Drawing
Helpful Resources

• http://www.washburn.org/about/WashburnPublishesTrainingManual.html

• http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/index.html

• http://www.developingbrains.org
Summary

• Self-Regulation is a critical developmental process

• Self-Regulation is a teachable/learnable skill

• Utilize the tools, activities, and resources that encourage self-regulatory development
References


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