



# REGULATION RESCUE

strategies for managing &  
understanding extreme behaviors

Is it sensory or is it behavior?  
Is it a tantrum or a meltdown?  
How can I prevent meltdowns?  
What can reduce power struggles?  
Does communication matter?  
Is it my parenting?

We cover all this and more inside of your  
guide to all things regulation.

# About Kelly

Kelly Smith, RN, BSN is the Founder of Movement Matters® which is a community dedicated to the support and education of parents and caregivers. Movement Matters® focuses on teaching the science of behavior and self-regulation. They educate and support families in implementing activities they can do at home to build better brains to reduce anxiety, improve self regulation, and decrease behavior challenges. Kelly has experience in pediatric and adult intensive, acute, and ambulatory care. For several years she has worked as a Nurse Researcher in collaboration with agencies such as Dartmouth, UNC-Chapel Hill, UCLA, Social Security Administration, SAMHSA, NIH, NIMH, and the National Council for Community Behavior Healthcare.



Kelly is a south Florida native, and enjoys anything to do with the beach, reading, and photography. She resides with her husband and children in Southwest Florida.

## *From Kelly*

I'm not just a holistic nurse, I am a mom. In my household we have had diagnoses of ADHD, gifted, dyslexia, PANDAS, sensory processing disorder, and anxiety. I am incredibly familiar both professionally and personally with how neurodevelopmental challenges affect children, families, and classrooms.

I spend my days coaching families and educators on how to effectively identify, understand, and implement strategies for children that struggle with sensory processing, behavior disorders, and mental health challenges. I am not someone that just decided to read a few books and share some knowledge based on personal experience. I have worked as a nurse for over 15 years, and in neuropsych research for over 12 years. This is my expertise and my passion.

I'm Kelly Smith, mother, wife, nurse, educator, wrangler of three wild boys, lover of the beach, photography, healing, and lifelong book nerd.

I have coached parents and educators on behavior, mental health, sensory processing, discipline, connection, and the multiple holistic methods to better brains, bodies, and behavior. This is where I'm able to connect with, coach, and support more families than ever before.

# Let's Get Started...

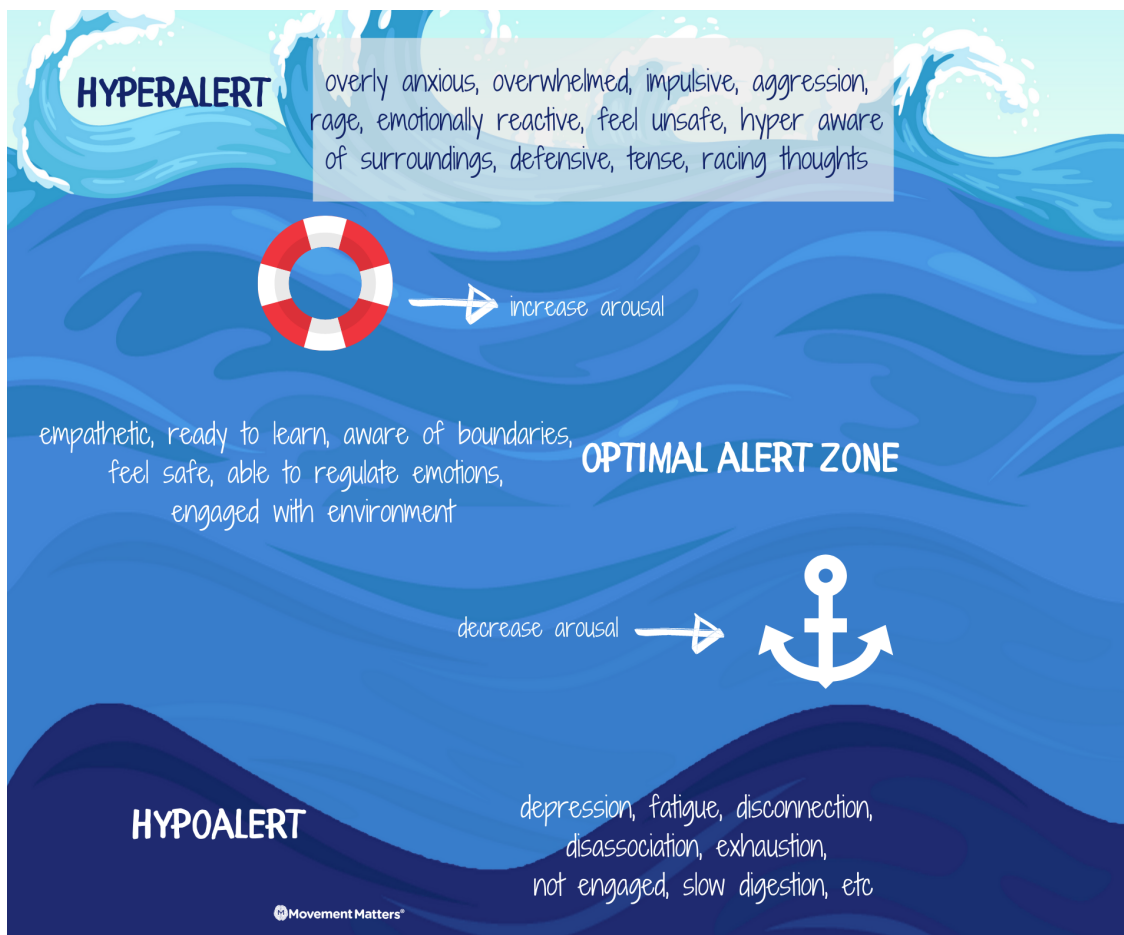
## WHAT IS REGULATION ANYWAY?

REGULATION IS THE ABILITY TO CONTROL ONESELF BY ONESELF. THIS PROCESS BEGINS AT BIRTH AND CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN THROUGHOUT CHILDHOOD. IT INVOLVES EMOTIONS, ATTENTION, FOCUS, SELF-CONTROL, INHIBITION, AND MORE.

It can help to shift your thinking of regulation to states of "alertness". When we look at it from this perspective, you can see where and how your child may begin to shift into the different alert modes. These are alert, hyperalert and hypoalert.

You want a child to spend as much time as possible in the alert processing state. This is the state where they can play, engage socially, eat, sleep, play, and learn in a healthy way. Some children have a more narrow range of alert processing. This means that they may struggle to shift from one emotion to another, or they may show extreme ranges of emotions.

The image below can help you understand regulation. Hyperalert is where you see the most action and movement-like the waves. Alert zone is where most of the sea life lives and thrives. The hypoalert stage is at the bottom of the ocean, this is where there is the least amount of light and energy so you will see behaviors such as depression, disconnection, and fatigue.



what exactly is

# A PROCESSING STATE?

## ***Self-Regulation***

*Self-regulation is directly related to an ability to move through the various states of processing in a controlled manner. At birth the emotional and thinking areas of the brain are not connected, and all experiences, movement, and sensory integration support this development. Helping children regulate helps them build the skills they need for self-regulation.*

## ***Flooded State***

overaroused, unable to calm down, likely to engage in fight/flight/freeze behaviors, unable to think, blood flow decreases in memory, hearing, and thinking areas, will need significant assistance in calming down and returning to an alert processing state

## ***Hyperalert State***

may appear anxious or excited, movements become faster, heart rate and breathing rates increase, can be difficult to transition from one task to another, may require interactive regulation to calm down.

## ***Alert State***

optimal state for learning, engaging, interested in new experiences, socially active, plays with others, able to transition activities with ease

## ***Hypoalert State***

may be underreactive to a new environment, may be detached, disconnected, seem depressed or exhausted

# *What Does Regulation Look Like?*

First of all we will begin with the alert state. An alert state is the state that we hope our children live in the most because in this state they are able to learn, play, engage socially, and connect with the world.

This goes back to that window of processing which we talked about in the very beginning. Some children have a really small window of an alert state. These children will need more interactive regulation (which means they need help from someone else) to help them get back to an alert state from a meltdown. Also, they will need more frequent interactive regulation in order to expand that window so they can remain regulated.

**What do children need to be in an alert processing state?** They need high-quality sleep, they need to feel safe, and they need the ability to move through the states of alertness at a moderate pace (not too fast or too slow), as well as the tools to return to back to an alert processing state.

In order to understand what regulation looks like, it is also important to go over what dysregulation looks like, sounds like, and feels like. You are probably REALLY familiar with dysregulation because that is the most common reason parents pick up my Regulation Rescue guide.

**Dysregulation** is any time that a child is overwhelmed, unable to control impulses, aggressive, anxious, or even unmotivated and exhausted. These are ALL normal behaviors, but what makes dysregulation different is the how often it happens and how intense it can be.

Regulation also includes a child's ability to transition. Transitions can be moving from one activity to another (such as leaving the house to go to school). They also include shifting between moods or emotions. This can look like a child going from happily playing to entirely too excited or aggressive (and this can happen very quickly). Regulation is also involved in attention. This includes the ability to maintain focus, and be able to not be distracted by other things going on in the environment.

Now that you are more familiar with what dysregulation looks like, think about times that your child may struggle with regulation.



# regulation challenges

## child markers for regulation challenges

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> child gets overarousaed by toys              | <input type="checkbox"/> child is constantly touching things                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child is sluggish or slow paced              | <input type="checkbox"/> child turns head away and lacks eye contact        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child is overly active moving constantly     | <input type="checkbox"/> child is easily upset and hard to comfort          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> overactive to sensory stimulation            | <input type="checkbox"/> child needs help to get started with play          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child is sluggish or slow paced              | <input type="checkbox"/> child quickly changes interest                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child is overly active moving constantly     | <input type="checkbox"/> child gets very upset if things don't go their way |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child is overly clingly to caregivers        | <input type="checkbox"/> child's play is very repetitive                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child gets aggressive if limits are enforced | <input type="checkbox"/> child has difficulty sitting still                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> child impulsively changes emotions           | <input type="checkbox"/> child has difficulty engaging in play or work      |
- 

Regulation challenges can be seen in so many different areas. You may see these challenges from birth. An infant that was exposed to birth trauma, medical trauma, prenatal trauma, prematurity, or other issues may be susceptible to regulation challenges.

One of the best things a parent can do is to be attentive, attuned, calm, and interactive with the child. Providing the child with consistent sensitive and responsive ations that are on pace with the child can help support the development of self-regulation.

# Is It A Tantrum or Meltdown?

A meltdown can be frustrating, irritating, embarrassing, and flat out make you feel like you are a bad parent. However, that is not true. If you are reading this guide you absolutely are not a bad parent.

First let's start by quickly talking about the differences in a meltdown and a tantrum. A meltdown is much more intense and lasts longer in duration than a tantrum. So, a tantrum can finish after whatever need is met, but a meltdown continues longer than that.

There can be many reasons why children end up in a meltdown state, but did you know almost all of those can be split into one of two categories... those are sensory or behavior.

Let's talk about how you can tell the difference.

First, a **behavior meltdown is typically a response** to something. Maybe they were told no, maybe they want something that you are not willing to give them, or maybe they are trying to communicate a need and it isn't working. This is a behavior meltdown because it is response to something that is happening. That means that they are trying to get something.

A **sensory meltdown is typically a reaction** to what is going on in the child or the environment. So instead of responding to what is happening they are reacting to it. This can mean that they are struggling to manage the sensory or regulation input that is flooding their system.

This could mean that they have a sensory sensitivity to what is happening. For example, the loud noises are irritating them so much that they lose control. Or, it could also be that their visual system is becoming overwhelmed with so many people too close to them that they cannot handle it. Another possibility is that their sense of interoception, that is how they understand how their body feels is sending off alarm bells in the brain. This could be because they are hungry, tired, need to go to the bathroom, or even that their heart rate or breathing has increased too quickly.

So, while the trigger for the meltdown may be different each type of meltdown can look very similar. In order to understand this further, let's first talk about what the three phases of a meltdown look like.

## TANTRUM vs. MELTDOWN

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related to a need not being met or not getting what they want

related to a physical/environmental trigger leading to overwhelm

can recover once need/want is met

takes much longer to recover

often able to remember why they were so upset

often unaware as to what triggered the behavior

typical during toddler years

can happen throughout lifetime

often related to a specific event occurring before

unrelated to a specific event occurring before

doesn't mean you are a bad parent

doesn't mean you are a bad parent



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# What Does A Meltdown Look Like?

## THE THREE PHASES

MELTDOWNS HAVE THREE DISTINCT PHASES. UNDERSTANDING THESE PHASES CAN HELP WITH PREVENTION AND DE-ESCALATION.

First we have the build-up phase. In this phase you can see the child becoming more hyperalert and they will be moving more and faster, talking louder, clenching their muscles, and overall acting more impulsive. In this phase you have children who have blood pressure increasing, their heart rate is getting quicker, they are getting worked up.

You may see your child move faster, their breathing rate increase, overall you will see an increase in energy in the build-up phase. If you can intervene before they reach the meltdown phase, you can potentially avoid it.

Then, they can quickly move into an emotionally flooded stage and become overwhelmed and then you will see a meltdown.

In the meltdown phase they may be physically kicking/hitting/biting/throwing, screaming, and essentially you will be unable to communicate with them. They may also run away from you and hide, or even destroy things in the home or classroom.

The meltdown phase uses an intense amount of energy, and that energy is not sustainable for an infinite period of time. However, there are stress chemicals that are released during the buildup and the meltdown phase, and these stress chemicals can "take over".

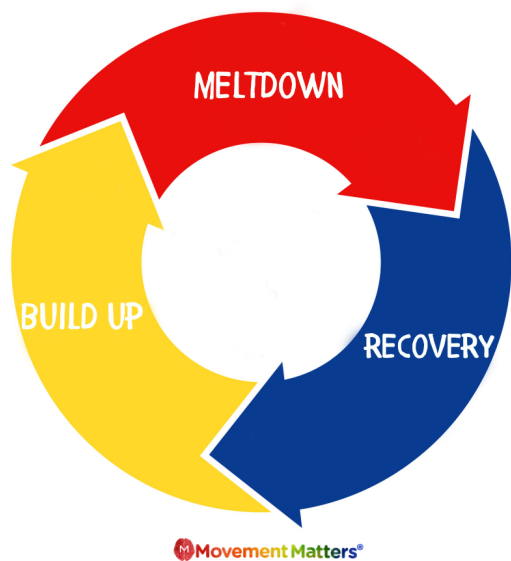
This means that no matter how much you tell a child to "calm" down, he or she may not be able to hear, understand, or do anything to help themselves calm down. These stress chemicals also have a direct impact on how long and intense the meltdown may be.

Following the meltdown phase, you may see the recovery phase. This means that the child may ask what happened, they may be exhausted, they may be lazy and not wanting to move, they may not be interested in playing, eating, or anything else.

Often parents feel frustrated and exasperated because their child had this intense emotional and physical response, but now the child is not sure what triggered it. Some parents may desire to punish the child for this behavior. Let's first explore what is happening inside the body during a meltdown.

## PHASES OF A MELTDOWN

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# What is happening inside the body?

## THE BRAIN

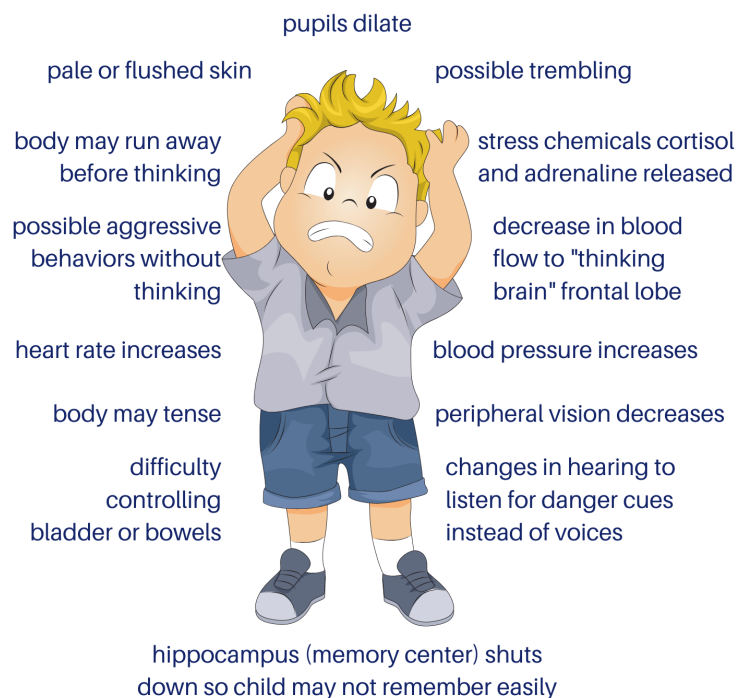
When the fight/flight response is triggered, there are changes that take place in the brain. For example, the blood flow is directed to the major muscles in order to prepare to get away from the trigger. Also, the blood flow to the cognitive or the "thinking" part of the brain is reduced. The hippocampus (which supports memories) also gets less attention because the body is prioritizing safety over thinking.

Overall, when a child is emotionally flooded it may be difficult for them to hear you, think about what you are saying, or remember things they have learned before (such as coping skills). This is because the brain is sending messages to the body which turns on the fight/flight response. It is easy to become frustrated with your child, but understanding that they are truly losing control may help you be empathetic.

## THE BODY

As we first discussed, the brain redirects blood flow. This means that the large muscles will be activated. You may see a child in this state become more physically aggressive, or even run away from you. We call this elopement. In addition, their blood pressure increases, they may be tense, and their vision can narrow as well so seeing things peripherally may be more challenging.

## EMOTIONALLY FLOODED



## STRESS CHEMICALS

When the fight/flight response is triggered there are many chemicals that the body sends out. These chemicals act like messengers and are responsible for many of the effects of stress in the body.

When these chemicals release too often it can be draining to the immune system, the regulation system and can impact sleeping, eating, toileting, and many other activities of daily living. No one can turn these chemical messengers off, so that is why it is so important to first help your child calm down. This may take a very long time depending on how many chemical messengers are in their bloodstream. That is okay.

Understand that your child is not choosing to be in this situation, and their current behaviors are related to biological factors.

# How To De-Escalate A Meltdown

MELTDOWNS CAN BE INCREDIBLY EMBARRASSING, FRUSTRATING AND OVERWHELMING - AND THAT IS JUST FOR THE PARENTS! SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Now that you understand what is going on inside their body, it may be a little bit easier to help your child during a meltdown.

In order to make it easier to remember, I prefer to use the acronym C.A.R.E. This stands for Calm, Attention, Reflect, Engage.

All of these strategies align with brain function. As we discussed before, trying to reason with a child and talk to them during a meltdown is not possible as their brain is unable to engage with you at that time. Using the CARE method can help both the parent and the child.

As we discussed before, trying to reason with a child and talk to them during a meltdown is not possible as their brain is unable to engage with you at that time. Using the CARE method can help both the parent and the child.

**Calm:** First, you need to remain calm in order to help them calm down. You can help them calm down in many ways. This may include redirecting, ensuring safety, letting them safely get emotions out. During this time also remember to continue to calm yourself. In order to help during this phase, it is important to understand your child's preferences and triggers. Knowing these can help you not trigger them again while they are vulnerable. For example, if they are sensitive to touch, they may not want to be touched when calming down.

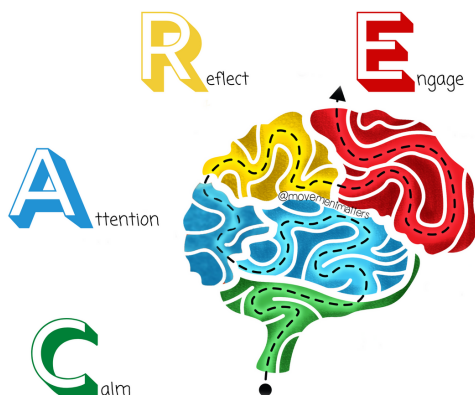
**Attention:** The next step is attention. This means giving your child your full attention. It does not mean giving into demands, but it can look like you sitting next to them, playing music they like, you taking deep breaths so that they can model this, touching them, holding them, whatever attention they need. Bringing your calming energy to the situation can actually change your child's biological response in this situation.

**Reflect:** Once the child has calmed down, and they know you are focused on their needs you can use this time to reflect. You may use language such as "I can see you seem frustrated getting dressed. This can help to build social and emotional skills as well.

**Engage:** At this stage your child is calm once again and willing (and able) to talk with you. This is where you can engage with them and try to figure out what triggered them and what you may do differently in the future. Again, understand your child may not be able to remember or express why they became upset. This is because of the brain processing that takes place during a meltdown.

Brain Based Strategy for  
**CALMING KIDS**

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# Why Communication Matters

## PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION

**COMMUNICATION IS KEY. YOU HEAR THAT SO OFTEN IN PARENTING ADVICE, BUT WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?**

Do you find yourself struggling to communicate with your child? Do you feel that they just won't listen to what you have to say?

If so, stick around and learn about how you can follow a pattern in order to reduce friction in your relationship with your child and others.

We all get frustrated and angry. Remember how earlier we discussed that calming yourself can be one of the hardest parts of parenting? Well so can communicating. However, this specific pattern of communicating helps to reduce the tension and power struggles as well as teach empathy and emotional skills.

Try using the pattern of I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you\_\_\_\_\_because \_\_\_\_\_. What I would like \_\_\_\_\_ and I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_.

This may sound like: I feel anxious when you run away from me because I can't see you. What I would like is for you to hold my hand. I appreciate how excited you are to go to a new place.

Also, it is important to remember that children not only hear the words you say, but your tone and facial expression can also have an effect on them.

Children also have the same desire you do-to be seen and heard. When they express frustration it is important that you do not immediately dismiss their feelings or tell them they are wrong. For example, if your child says "Stop yelling! You always yell at me!", try reflecting their emotions first. So instead of saying "I don't yell!", try "wow, you sound upset". This can help both you and your child not feel as defensive about the situation.



# Why Communication Matters

## AVOIDING POWER STRUGGLES

MY FAVORITE PARENTING ADVICE OF ALL TIME WAS THIS SENTENCE:

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO ATTEND EVERY POWER STRUGGLE YOU ARE INVITED TO.**

Do you find yourself feeling as if you are constantly in an argument with your child? Do you frequently feel as if you are stuck between letting your child "win" or going back on what you said? If so, you may be experiencing an overload of power struggles.

### **What is a power struggle?**

**Quite simply a power struggle is a fight for control.**

This may happen when your child says "I don't like my dinner, I want something else!" You may respond with "you will sit there until you eat your dinner." You have now found yourself in a power struggle.

Now that you understand what a power struggle is, how can you avoid them?

The first step is to slow down (your daily routine and often after school activities). I know in this day and age we often feel pressured and rushed to get things done. However, it is important to remember where children are developmentally. Children are still building the brain processes that allow them to move through transitions quickly and easily.



For example, many children feel overwhelmed when leaving the house to go to school, or even to an event. They may have trouble finding and putting on their shoes. This can happen because their brains get too overwhelmed and they become emotionally flooded. This often leads to a power struggle with "I am not doing \_\_\_\_\_ until you put on your shoes!" This can lead to a refusal by the child to put on the shoes, and here we are in a power struggle. Then you become frustrated that you are late and blame the child as the reason.

Another way to avoid power struggles is to **make a list** ahead of time. If you are going shopping, it is helpful to make a list before you enter the store. Let your child know if it is not on the list, it will not be purchased at this time. However, they may want to put something they see in the store on their "wish list" or birthday list, etc...

Allowing the child to have some type of control can greatly reduce their desire to obtain control through a power struggle.

# Why Communication Matters

## AVOIDING POWER STRUGGLES

Yet another way that you can help avoid power struggles to begin with, is to **give reminders** of times of transitions.

A transition is any time that you are going from one activity to the next, one event to the next, or leaving your home to go somewhere else. Some examples of transitions are leaving your home to go to school, leaving a birthday party to return home, or even leaving play time to go to bed.

Many children struggle with transitions and this is a normal part of development. As parents, we need to understand and be aware of how transitions can be difficult for children.

Giving reminders can help to ease transition power struggles. Letting children know "in 15 minutes we are going to leave" can help them get ready for what is to come.

In addition, **taking some time to prepare for what is coming** can also support easing into transitions. Simple things such as laying out clothing the night before, putting the backpack by the front door, or other simple steps can prevent power struggles.

Once again, it is important to remember that children can become easily emotionally flooded. This makes it difficult for them to think, so a time of transition can feel overwhelming if they can't find an item, feel rushed because they are running late, or even if they have difficulty shifting from one task or emotional state to the other.

Finally, like the first sentence, **you do not have to attend every power struggle you are invited to.**

One of my children will wait until I am putting him down to bed to let me know he is hungry and needs a snack. I have a decision to make. I can refuse the snack and say "no, you had your chance, now you need to go to bed" or I can allow the snack to curb the hunger.

To be honest, I really want to refuse the snack and proceed with bedtime. However, this could cause him to still be hungry and get angry and release those fight/flight chemicals. This would create more of a struggle for bedtime, and it will take longer for him to fall asleep because of the adrenaline in his body. So, instead of getting into a power struggle over a snack, I allow him one healthy snack.

**This isn't "losing" this is helping my child solve a problem.**

This obviously is not appropriate for every occasion, or if the child is continuing to use this excuse as a way to delay bedtime. However, it is important to ask yourself why you are taking a stance, and if you may be able to be more flexible on occasion.





## *What About My Words?*

### **BE SURE TO TASTE YOUR WORDS BEFORE YOU SPIT THEM OUT**

Let's start with the actual goal of discipline.

What is your goal with how you discipline your child? Is it to get them to do what you say? Is it to get them to be perfect? Or is it to help the child be responsible for their choices and learn what works and what does not?

Take a moment and think about what your goal for discipline is for your family. Once you know what your goal is, then think about how you can use your communication and words to get to that place.

To begin, we need to go back to how children can learn self-regulation. Regulation is the foundation of the brain processing systems. In order to learn how they can emotionally regulate, a child needs to be able to fully express his or her emotions. As parents or caregivers you can support this expression in simple ways.

So often in our communication we are trying to calm down the child. We do this because we want to avoid a meltdown. However, we are often communicating without thinking about what they need developmentally in the moment.

Children need to learn to build the brain networks for emotional regulation and executive functioning. In order to do this, they need to fully feel and name the emotions they are experiencing. What you say, and how you say it does matter.

Frequently, parents try to minimize emotions without even realizing they are doing this. When emotions are suppressed, this actually impacts us on a neurobiological level. When we deny how a child feels, it may make them unwilling to trust themselves with emotions. By supporting and encouraging them to express their emotions, you can see a decrease in meltdowns as feelings are not bottled up.

# *Feeling Stoppers vs. Encouragers*

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Feeling stoppers are words or phrases that parents, caregivers, or educators may use that discourage children from sharing their feelings. Examples of feeling stoppers may include actions like: denying, rescuing, minimizing, giving advice, interrupting, lecturing, etc...

Feeling encouragers help children to express what they are feeling. Some examples are: affirmations, asking sensory questions, listening, showing empathy, encouraging problem solving with questions.

## **Instead of:**

- Big kids don't cry
- I'll be right back, you don't need to be sad
- You're hungry again? I just fed you dinner!
- Stop yelling and calm down

## **Try this:**

- You look upset
- It's okay to feel sad, I will miss you too.
- How does your belly feel?
- How can you solve the problem?

Take some time and think about times when you may use feeling stopper statements.

Then think about what you might say instead.



# What About Preventing Meltdowns?

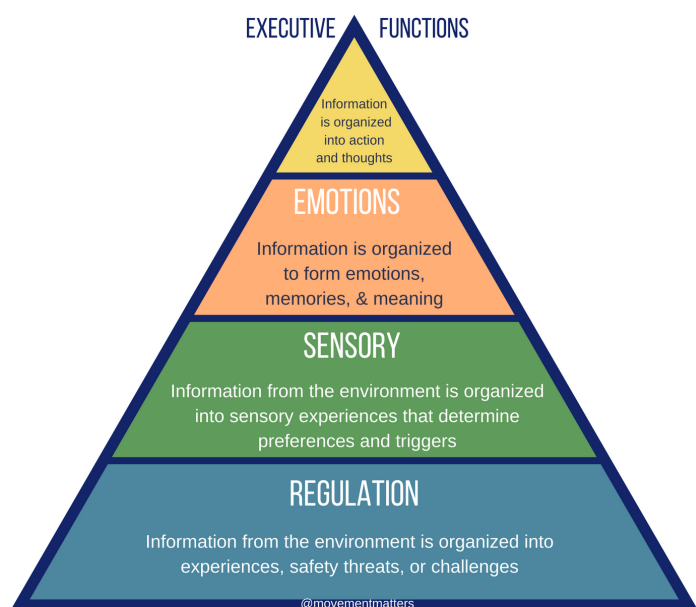
## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We need to start at the beginning...with regulation. The image below shows the brain processing hierarchy. Regulation is the foundation on which sensory processing, emotional processing, and executive functioning skills can be built.

Our ability to regulate begins at birth. Infants cannot regulate themselves, and they depend on parents or caregivers to support their needs using co-regulation.

When we work on regulation skills, we help children (and ourselves) build the strong brain pathways necessary to process sensory information, emotional information, and executive functioning skills like organizing, planning, focus, attention, and cognitive thinking.

**In order to do this we need to shift our thinking from the view that dysregulation is something that needs to be fixed to regulation is something that needs to be built.**



We often work with families who use regulation strategies ONLY when children are upset. Of course, it is a good idea to help children regulate when they are overwhelmed. However, if you work on building those brain networks for regulation every single day-you get stronger brains much faster. It is similar to if you only ate a healthy diet before vacation vs incorporating a healthy diet into your daily lifestyle. The prevention of meltdowns can only happen once a child is able to spend a larger amount of time in the alert processing state.

You may be asking how can I teach regulation skills? We will cover that in just a bit.

# How do I build regulation skills?

Regulation literally begins in the womb through practice breathing patterns and movements. These happen as the foundation of the neurological system is built.

When a baby is born, we are looking at movement and breathing patterns to determine if they need extra support or help to eat or breathe. All babies follow a predictable path for movement patterns. First they lift their heads, then roll, sit-up, crawl, stand, and walk. You may have thought that all of these movements were just to strengthen the body enough to support walking, however they have another job as well.

Did you know that all of these movement patterns work to build the pathways in the brain as well? They do!

Movement, along with sensory exposure and experiences can lay the foundation for regulation.

So what do I do if my child is no longer an infant?

Don't worry, no matter what age or stage in life movement and experiences have been shown to change the brain. This is due to something called neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and grow throughout the lifespan.

Just as you would have a healthy diet of nutritious food, having a healthy diet of breathing, movement, and mindfulness can impact the brain in profound ways. Breathing is something we can do both consciously and unconsciously, so it is a great place to begin. You may have used breathing to calm a meltdown, but did you know regular breathing practice can change the brain functionally and structurally? It can.

## CHILDREN & SELF-REGULATION

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CHILD CAN BEGIN  
TO SELF-REGULATE

CHILD CAN  
IDENTIFY  
WAYS TO  
CALM SELF

CHILD CAN MAKE CONNECTION  
BETWEEN BODY SENSATIONS  
& EMOTIONS

PARENTS USE AND MODEL  
REGULATION STRATEGIES AND  
CHILD CAN IMITATE

PARENTS PROVIDE ATTUNED CARE, &  
STRUCTURED ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT  
FEELING OF SAFETY

INFANTS RELY ENTIRELY ON PARENTS TO  
MEET NEEDS TO SOOTHE

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Movement involves the sensory motor loop and is involved in activating brain areas and systems for learning, sensory processing, executive functioning, and regulation. Children are born with specific movement patterns called primitive reflexes. These are innate movement patterns that help them eat, sleep, move, and process sensory integration. Incorporating primitive reflex movements into your daily routine can be an effective way to support sensory processing and regulation by building strong brain networks.

Mindfulness helps children to learn how to pay attention as well as how to exclude information from the environment that is not important in the moment. Mindfulness can also help children with interoception, that is being aware of their body.

# What About Sensory Processing?

Sensory processing is such a buzz word lately. So let's explain what sensory processing really is, as well as why some children seem to struggle so much more than others.

Sensory processing is the body's ability to process information that is going on in the environment. This not only includes information from our hearing, vision, touch, taste, and smell, but also from three other "senses" called vestibular, interoception, and proprioception. Sensory processing also involves sensory modulation. This is the ability of the brain and body to understand intensity, and length of time. Both of these processes are integrated and are both needed for the sensory processing system.

**What does it mean if a child has "sensory issues"?** If a child struggles with sensory processing it means that their brain struggles to interpret the information in the environment in a typical way.

**How can sensory processing impact behavior?** Sensory processing can impact behavior because the brain may misinterpret sensory information as dangerous or a threat. Another thing that can happen with sensory issues, is that the brain is not sure HOW to process the information. This can lead to unpredictable behaviors, the flight or fight response, aggression, elopement (running away) and more. Sensory processing and regulation are closely connected, so if children are still working to build regulation skills, you may also see challenges with sensory processing.

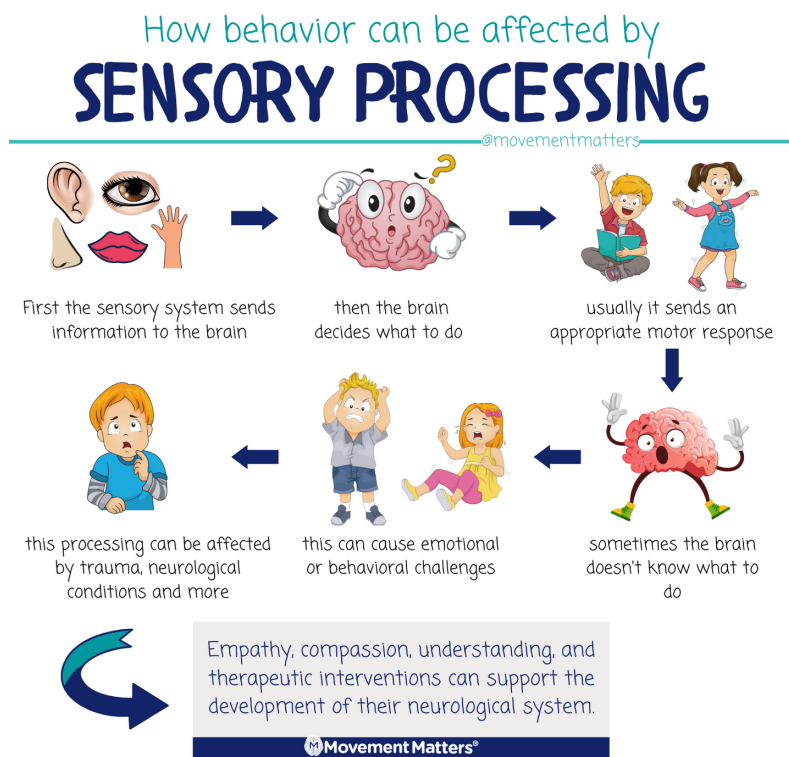
## How do I know if my child has sensory issues?

If you feel your child's behavior challenges may be more intense, frequent, or last longer than other children his or her age—it is best to speak with your healthcare provider. Many sensory issues are also closely connected to regulation challenges.

## What can help?

Building strong brain pathways for sensory information using movement, breathing, and mindfulness can support sensory processing and regulation at the same time. Providing ample time for movement, play, and exploration is critical to building brain pathways.

Specialists such as occupational therapists, behavioral therapists, physical therapists, and more can help with both regulation and sensory processing.



# Is It My Parenting?

**SPOILER ALERT- IT'S NOT.**

So often we feel like our parenting skills are at fault. You may feel that if you had done everything "right" your child would not be struggling. You may have even been told this exact thing from a teacher, caregiver, or even family members.

Just like a child with weak impulse control skills cannot manage themselves if they "try harder" you cannot change your child's biological responses by "trying harder". I like to explain it like this, if a house is on fire you can throw water or foam on the fire. You could also give the fire more oxygen or pour gasoline on it. All of these things can impact the fire and allow it to grow, or help to contain the fire. However, none of these things are the reason the fire began in the first place.

In order to stop the fire from happening again, you need to fix the internal wiring of the brain and body.

**Did you know there are simple, easy, medication free ways that you can help your child change their brain?**

**Are you interested in learning more?**



Regulation skills are built through building strong brain pathways. There are many ways you can help your child build strong brain pathways at home. These activities are not meant to replace therapies, but to help your child build regulation skills.

In order to help more parents, teachers, and caregivers how teach their children self-regulation I created a self-paced course.

Self-Regulation Made Simple is filled with over 30 videos all about the brain, body, and behavior. The course will take you from feeling overwhelmed with where to start with regulation to building a daily routine that incorporates fun regulation building activities. The course also includes downloadable files, and a 30-day get started guide that walks you step by step through self-regulation.

# You are NOT alone!

LEARN MORE

Interested in learning more about **Self-Regulation Made Simple ?**

[Click here to learn more](#)



You are the expert on your child. I can help you also be an expert in self-regulation.

You probably feel like you are doing all the things, yet you are **STILL** struggling with your child's behavior. Maybe you have been to so many therapists, but nothing is working.

Together, we can create a plan.

In this course you will learn all about the brain systems and how they work together and develop. **You will learn specific activities** you can do in order to build regulation skills in yourself and your child. **In short, we teach you the WHY and show you HOW.**

Visit [www.movementmatters.com/sms](http://www.movementmatters.com/sms) to learn more and enroll today!