PART 3 | The Adult as the Regulation Anchor

Adult posture, presence, relational safety, and awareness of our own nervous system.

My regulation signals

Individual self-check • Suggested time: 10 minutes

Identify what happens in your body, voice, and thinking when you begin to feel activated.

1. My earliest physical signs are…

2. My common triggers in school are…

3. A small action that helps me return to a steadier state is…

See the '**Educator Trigger Inventory**' and the '**Educator Somatic Toolkit**' below for inspiration.

Educator Trigger Inventory

SELF-REFLECTION & REGULATION TOOL

> **Objective:** Identifying our personal professional triggers allows us to move from reactive stress to intentional co-regulation. Check the items below that consistently push your nervous system toward dysregulation, then complete the brief action strategy below

1. ENVIRONMENTAL & SITUATIONAL TRIGGERS

Sensory Load

- [ ] High vocal volume / piercing screams
- [ ] **Multiple overlapping noises (toys, music, voices)**
- [ ] Visual clutter / unorganized spaces
- [ ] Sustained high-energy chaos in close spaces

Transitions & Logistics

- [ ] Delays or pacing hitches during room changes
- [ ] Cleaning up major/repetitive messes
- [ ] Staff scheduling adjustments / sudden coverage changes
- [ ] Unpredictable routine interruptions

2. BEHAVIORAL & RELATIONAL TRIGGERS

Student Behaviors

- [ ] Active defiance or direct refusal ("No!")
- [ ] Physical dysregulation (hitting, throwing, biting)
- [ ] **Emotional withdrawal / total shut down**
- [ ] Chronic attention-seeking / constant interruption

Adult & Team Dynamics

- [ ] Misaligned co-educator responses or styles
- [ ] High-stress drop-off/pick-up parent interactions
- [ ] Feeling unseen, unvalidated, or unsupported
- [ ] Lack of clear communication within the team

3. PERSONALIZED MICRO-PLAN

My Top 2 Triggers:

Identify the two specific situations above that compromise your capacity to co-regulate most quickly.

Early Warning Signs (My Internal Body Signals):

How do I know I'm hitting my limit? (e.g., shallow breathing, tight shoulders, rushed pacing, tone changes)

Proactive Reset Strategy:

What is one realistic micro-action I can take in the moment to anchor myself? (e.g., 3 deep breaths, changing physical position, a brief grounding phrase, tapping in a teammate)

EDUCATOR SOMATIC TOOLKIT

CORE TOOLS FOR ADULT SELF-REGULATION

> **The Co-Regulation Premise:** A dysregulated educator cannot regulate a dysregulated child. When a classroom trigger occurs, use one of these three core strategies to intentionally stabilize your own nervous system, anchor your presence, and restore operational calm.

1. CORE REGULATION STRATEGIES

1. GROUNDING

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

A direct sensory anchor. Pause and silently identify:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can physically feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

> Brings your focus away from the chaotic atmosphere and back into the present space.

2. BODY SCAN

Rapid Tension Check

A quick top-to-bottom internal evaluation you can do while standing

- **Jaw:** Unclench teeth & release tongue
- **earoulders:** Drop down away from
- **Hands:** Unclench fists, soften fingers
- **Feet:** Feel weight press into the floor

> Releases the physical micro-bracing signals that unconsciously communicate anger or panic to children.

3. BOX BREATHING

Tactical 4x4 Rhythm

A simple, rhythmic cycle to reset your autonomic nervous system:

- **Inhale**through your nose for 4s
- **Hold**your breath at the top for 4s
- **Exhale**through your mouth for 4s
- **Hold**empty at the bottom for 4s

> Physically lowers your heart rate and clears adrenaline spikes during overwhelming interactions.

2. PERSONAL APPLICATION WORKSHEET

What type of regulation strategies work best for you?

Reflect on past stressful moments. Do you respond better to sensory grounding, physical tension release (body scan), or deep breath control? Why?

My In-the-Moment Action Prompt:

Write down a 1-sentence micro-cue or specific technique choice you commit to using when you feel your internal tension level rising this term.

■ ■ INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: SELF-OBSERVATION MATRIX

Imagine watching yourself teach (or reflect on video footage). Record objective observations of what students perceive:

Expression Domain	Your Self-Observation Notes
My Voice (Tone, pitch, speed, volume) *[Notes: Pitch spikes, rapid pace, warm resonance...]*	
My Pace (Hurried, slow, calm, urgent) *[Notes: Rushing, pausing, breathing space, urgent...]*	
My Facial Expressions (Neutral, warm, tense, frowning) *[Notes: Tight jaw, micro-smiles, flat, reassuring...]*	
My Physical Presence (Proximity, distance, stance) *[Notes: Towering, leaning, crouching, open chest...]*	
CORE REFLECTION: Would I feel emotionally safe learning from me? *[Reflect deeply here...]*	

Posture over technique

Pairs / role-play • Suggested time: 12 minutes



Practice responding to “Leave me alone!” first with a hurried, reactive tone and then with calm authority, space, and attunement.

1. What changed in tone, pace, distance, facial expression, or words?

2. How can we respect student autonomy while maintaining safety?

3. What phrase feels authentic to me?

Tag out without abandoning

Small-group planning • *Suggested time: 10 minutes*

Discuss how colleagues can support each other when an adult is becoming dysregulated.

1. What early signals tell me I should ask for help?

2. What brief handoff language protects the student's dignity?

3. How can we reconnect after a colleague steps in?