

HOW TO CO-REGULATE WITH A CHILD



STOP

REDUCE DEMANDS

When a child is overwhelmed, their thinking brain is not fully working. Take away instructions, questions, and pressure until they settle.



SHOW SAFETY WITH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Soft posture. Relaxed shoulders. Slow movements. Your body shows the child that they are safe.



HELP THEIR BREATHING MATCH YOURS

Model slow, steady breaths. Children often copy slow breathing when they see it.

CHILD'S DISTRESS



USE A CALM, STEADY VOICE

Speak slowly and simply. Your pace helps guide their pace. Short sentences work best.



STAY CLOSE, BUT NOT TOO CLOSE

Some children want you close. Others need space but want you to stay nearby. Follow their cues.



OFFER COMFORT THEY CAN ACCEPT

Comfort can be a blanket, a quiet space, a favourite object, or a hug if they choose it. Comfort helps the child's brain calm down.

YOU ARE THE ANCHOR. REGULATE YOURSELF FIRST.

Children borrow the adult's calm. Slow your breathing. Lower your voice. Settle your body before you try to help them.



NAME THE STATE, NOT THE BEHAVIOUR

Say things like: "You are feeling overwhelmed." or "This feels too much for your body." This helps them feel understood and not judged.



WAIT FOR THEIR BODY TO CALM BEFORE TALKING

Do not teach or correct the child while they are upset. Once settled, talk through what happened in simple steps.



BUILD COPING SKILLS WHEN CALM

When the child is calm, teach simple breathing, taking breaks, moving their body, and asking for help. Co regulation comes first, and self regulation grows with time and practice.