



Examples of a *Strong Adult Posture* at Tier 1



Tier 1 universal practices

Proactive, preventative practices that create safe, predictable, and inclusive learning environments for all.



1



Providing a caring leadership posture (warm, confident, taking the lead, taking responsibility, setting clear limits, being consistent with expectations while remaining flexible, being calm and grounded before responding).

2



Intentionally building relationships without befriending students (they need that natural healthy hierarchy to feel safe and taken care of).

3



Approaching students with authenticity, curiosity and interest, rather than with judgment.

4



Relying on the key elements to effect change: structures, routines, etc. (these are preventive/proactive at Tier 1 and establish a predictable foundation).

5



Conveying explicitly what is expected of them (with the help of visuals if needed) and establishing coherent and concrete limits and boundaries (without getting upset if the student's push back).

6



Speaking clearly, giving information and instructions in a concise and clear manner (they may get lost in lengthy explanations)

7



Managing the circumstances and the environment rather than trying to directly control student behaviour (relying on **co-regulation** and **de-escalation strategies** if needed).

8



Adjusting when things don't go as planned (making it look like as if it was your plan all along) and ensuring to have a backup plan as an alternative solution.

9



Honouring the student's personal space and providing enough time for them to assimilate and complete the task at their own pace.

10



Actively engaging the student in communicating their needs and where they are at in their emotional regulation process.

11



Being mindful that the adult expectations may vary depending on the student's profile, maturity level and individual differences.



A strong adult posture is grounded in **connection, consistency, and compassion**.

It's not about perfect responses, but about a **purposeful presence**.



SAFETY
Create physical and emotional safety.



RELATIONSHIP
Build trusting relationships and a sense of belonging.



STRUCTURE
Use predictable routines and clear expectations.



REGULATION
Support co-regulation and self-regulation.



BELONGING
Foster inclusion, respect and connection for all.



Examples of a *Strong Adult Posture* at Tier 2

Tier 2 targeted practices

Intentional, responsive strategies for students who need some extra support to feel safe, regulated and successful.



1  **Understanding** that when a student at **Tier 2** is overwhelmed emotionally, which results in behavioural manifestations, the first step and priority of the adult should be to re-establish a sense of **safety for the student** (whether by managing the circumstances and environment, or by **co-regulating** with the student).

2  **Relying on the key elements to effect change:** structures, routines, predictability, respite, movement, being preventive/proactive, etc., including adapted scheduling if needed (these are **essential at Tier 2**).

3  Being careful with **applying pressure** towards a task accomplishment, which could be triggering the student.

4  Being **calm and grounded** before responding to an upset student, and not taking their behaviour personally.

5  Being mindful about displaying **neutral/gentle** facial expressions, a non-threatening stance, a stable voice volume, tone, speech rate, or talking too much.

6  When a student is upset, **waiting until a more appropriate time** to address the situation (when the student has returned to a regulated state and is open and receptive) – Relying on **co-regulation**, as well as **de-escalation strategies**, if needed, to defuse the situation.

7  **Conveying to other students** that you are aware the student in question is upset, that you are handling the situation, and they can focus on their own task at hand.

8  Actively engaging the student in **communicating their needs** and where they are at in their emotional regulation process, while understanding students at **Tier 2** may require **co-regulation support** to do so.

9  **'Bridging'** by making the **relationship** (not the behaviour) the bottom line and restoring the connection following any fallouts.

10  **Reassuring** the student that you are there for them and they can always come to you for help.



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*It's not about perfect responses, but about a **purposeful presence**.*



SAFETY



RELATIONSHIP



STRUCTURE



REGULATION



Examples of a *Strong Adult Posture* at Tier 3



Tier 3 individualized practices

Intensive, individualized practices that prioritize **safety, connection, and collaboration** to meet complex needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



SAFETY FIRST
Always prioritize safety for all.



RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN
Connection is the foundation.



NEURODEVELOPMENTAL LENS
Understand behaviour as communication.



COLLABORATIVE
Work together for consistent support.



STRENGTHS BASED
Focus on abilities, build on strengths.

- 1  **Understanding** that when a student at Tier 3 is triggered and dysregulated, they are not receptive to our interventions in the moment (must focus on establishing safety for all first).
- 2  **Relying on the key elements** to effect change: structures, routines, predictability, respite, movement, being preventive/proactive, etc., including adapted scheduling if needed (these are **non-negotiable** at Tier 3).
- 3  **Being familiar** with the student's profile, needs and triggers to avoid unnecessary blowouts.
- 4  **Not being alienated** by their behaviour and keeping the posture of a nurturing provider.
- 5  **Being neutral, steady, and grounded** when intervening and keeping the students' wellbeing in mind.
- 6  **Backing away from conventional discipline** (in attempt to negatively punish or forcefully control the behaviour) and ultimatums, which may trigger the student further.
- 7  **Relying on co-regulation**, as well as **de-escalation strategies** if needed to defuse the situation. Keeping a safe and respectful distance that feels comfortable for the student (being attuned to the student's non-verbal shifts in facial expressions and demeanour).

- 8  **Ensuring** that all staff working with the student are on the same page concerning the student's profile, needs, triggers, and support measures in place (making the time to co-create a **Student Action Plan/Safety Plan** in order to share best practices and to increase a more coherent approach).
- 9  **Ensuring that the designated adults** familiar with the student's case are the ones who are intervening with them when the situation has escalated.
- 10  **Relying on the power of teamwork** to share the weight and responsibilities (this will help adults keep their posture intact).
- 11  **Implementing the safety plan** when needed. All students need to feel safe and taken care of.
- 12  **Conveying to other students** that you are aware the student in question is upset, that you are handling the situation, and they can focus on their own task at hand.
- 13  **Actively engaging the student** in communicating their needs (keep in mind they may not be self-aware or available to do so) and where they are at in their emotional regulation process, while understanding students at Tier 3 rely on ongoing **co-regulation support**.
- 14  **'Bridging'** by making the relationship (not the behaviour) the bottom line and restoring the connection following any fallouts.
- 15  **Reassuring** the student that you are there for them and they can always come to you for help.



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SAFETY
Create physical and emotional safety.



PREDICTABILITY
Use routines, structure, and predictability.



REGULATION
Support co-regulation and self-regulation.



CONNECTION
Build trusting relationships.



TEAMWORK
Share the weight. Support one another.



PLANNING
Plan ahead. Implement safety plans.



BELONGING
Foster inclusion, respect and dignity.

WHAT DOES CO-REGULATION LOOK LIKE DURING A LESSON?

A Teacher's At-a-Glance Guide



Co-regulation is not something we “stop teaching” to do. It is how we teach. Every interaction either increases or decreases students’ capacity to engage, think, and learn.



WHAT STUDENTS MAY BE EXPERIENCING 	• Anxiety about the day • Difficulty transitioning • Social concerns • Fatigue • Sensory overload • Uncertainty about expectations	• Fear of making mistakes • Cognitive overload • Embarrassment • Frustration • Confusion • Self-doubt	• Overwhelm • Perfectionism • Avoidance • Difficulty initiating tasks • Executive functioning challenges	• Social anxiety • Conflict • Fear of rejection • Unequal participation • Frustration	• Test anxiety • Fear of failure • Perfectionism • Comparison with peers	• Difficulty shifting tasks • Anxiety about change • Disappointment • Sensory overload	• Need for belonging • Uncertainty about progress • Emotional residue from the day • Desire to feel successful
WHAT THE EDUCATOR CAN DO 	• Greet students warmly by name • Make eye contact • Display agenda and expectations • Share the plan • Use calming routines • Offer brief movement • Normalize feelings	• Speak calmly and at an appropriate pace • Pause for processing • Check for understanding • Model mistakes • Think aloud • Normalize uncertainty • Invite questions	• Break tasks into steps • Provide visual checklists • Offer quiet encouragement • Help students organize • Reinforce effort • Notice early signs of frustration	• Establish norms • Assign meaningful roles • Model respectful disagreement • Coach conflict resolution • Reinforce listening • Ensure every voice is heard	• Clearly explain expectations • Allow time and breaks • Normalize mistakes • Emphasize growth • Maintain a calm environment	• Provide countdowns • Use visual schedules • Give advance warnings • Create routines • Incorporate movement • Use consistent cues	• Celebrate effort • Reflect on learning and strategies • Invite student voice • Normalize challenges • End with encouragement • Repair when needed
SAMPLE LANGUAGE THAT HELPS 	“I’m glad you’re here.” “Let’s get ready together.” “You don’t have to be perfect—just begin.” “What do you need to be ready?”	“It’s okay not to know yet.” “Learning means your brain is growing.” “Let’s figure this out together.” “What questions do you have?”	“Let’s start with the first step.” “Show me where you’re stuck.” “You’ve solved difficult problems before.” “Take your time.”	“Let’s hear everyone’s ideas.” “Different perspectives help us learn.” “Can someone build on that idea?” “How can we solve this together?”	“This assessment is information, not a judgment.” “Do your best with what you know today.” “One mistake does not define your ability.”	“In two minutes we’ll switch activities.” “Let’s finish this together.” “Here’s what comes next.”	“What helped you learn today?” “What was challenging?” “What are you proud of?” “What might help tomorrow?”

ACROSS EVERY PHASE, STUDENTS ASK THEMSELVES:

- Am I safe?
- Do I belong?
- Can I do this?
- Will someone help me if I struggle?
- Do I matter here?

EDUCATORS CAN ANSWER THROUGH THEIR POSTURE:

- ✓ You are safe.
- ✓ You belong.
- ✓ We will figure this out together.
- ✓ Mistakes are part of learning.
- ✓ You matter here.



THE CORE PRINCIPLE

Co-regulation is not a pause in teaching. It is the relational process that makes teaching and learning possible. The most effective classrooms are not those in which students never struggle. They are classrooms in which students know that when they struggle, they will encounter calm, attuned, and trustworthy adults who help them remain engaged until they can move forward on their own.



Relationship is the Pathway to Learning.