

Self-Reg Parenting

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What is
SELF-REG?

*And why is my
child's school
doing it?*



**YOUR CHILD'S
BRAIN ON STRESS**

**IMPROVE YOUR
CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR
(without discipline)**

and more!





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WRITTEN BY JOHN HOFFMAN

Something important is happening in Canadian schools.

It's called Self-Reg, and it's not just the latest education fad. Self-Reg is the brainchild of Dr. Stuart Shanker, one of Canada's leaders in child development and education. It is a new way of thinking about children's behaviour, emotions, and learning. Self-Reg is about managing stress: understanding how stress affects individual kids, reducing stress when possible, and helping kids recover from stress.

"When a child's stress levels are too high, the brain and body's systems for thinking and recovering energy are compromised," Shanker explains. "The child's energy is being used up to deal with the stress. That might leave him more impulsive or withdrawn and with less energy to focus on his school work."

Educators are seeing a growing number of over-stressed children. They are looking for new tools to help them, and that is where Self-Reg comes in.

Self-Reg in Action

A Self-Reg strategy helps adults understand and reduce children's stress — and their own!

Cathy Lethbridge, principal of Huron Park Public School in Midland, Ontario, has been using Self-Reg for several years. The first thing you see when you walk in the front door of her school are two stationary bikes, and maybe a couple of children pedaling them. When you walk through the halls you'll see "self-regulation stations," with pictures on the walls of physical activities kids can do. "Physical activity can help children feel less stressed. It's particularly helpful for the more fidgety students who find it hard to sit still. They do some physical activity and then they are ready to go back to class and work," Lethbridge explains.

In most Huron Park classrooms, some rows of lights are turned off and all the chairs have balls called Hushh-ups™ on the bottoms of the legs to reduce the noise of shifting chairs. "Not all children are stressed by artificial light and background noise," Lethbridge says, "but we've found that reducing light and classroom noise seems to help all children — and the staff too!"

And if you ever get one of those "calls from the principal" about your child's behaviour, you'd hear Lethbridge use the word "stress" in the conversation. "We're always working with parents

to figure out how stress may be affecting children's behaviour," she says. "When we do that, parents are less likely to be defensive, and it's easier to work together to solve the problem."

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DR. STUART SHANKER

These are just a few of the things Lethbridge and her staff are doing to reduce students' stress. "We're still working on it," she says. "We have a lot to learn, but we have found that Self-Reg has made a huge difference in children's behaviour and learning in our school." §



Full issue

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