Self-regulation and Early Childhood Development

Dr. Stuart Shanker
Self-Control vs. Self-Regulation

S-C is an ancient paradigm

We need to exert a "mental effort" to inhibit impulses

The "stronger" a child's mental muscle the better the child's outcomes

We "strengthen" this mental muscle through punishment and reward
Video to Watch

Marshmallow test
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ
Children who Wait

- More likely to go to college
- Score higher on “life satisfaction” scores
- Less likely to get in trouble with law
- Less likely to engage in risky behaviors
- Fewer health problems, mental/physical
- Score higher on “life satisfaction” scores
- More likely to go to college
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But...

We can manipulate how a child does on the task

Stress them out beforehand, they do worse

Rest them up beforehand, they do better
Marshmallow Task is a Stress-test

Child left alone with nothing to do but stare at a marshmallow

No idea how long he's waiting

Like isolation chamber for astronauts
What is Self-Regulation?

- How effectively and efficiently a child deals with stressors and then recovers.
- Ever time a child has a stressor the brain responds with processes that consume energy.
- This is followed by restorative processes to recover from this energy expenditure.
The Evolution-Designed Brain

- Reptilian Brain
- Limbic System
- Neocortex
Video to Watch

Emerson - Mommy's Nose is Scary
Turning off the Alarm
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duTwUXB_1i4
Systems That Get “Turned On”

- Adrenaline raises heart rate, blood pressure and rate of breathing
- Cortisol metabolizes fat from fatty cells and glucose from liver
- Hair stands on end
- Alertness and reactivity enhanced
- Sweat glands open
- Endorphins released

Alertness and reactivity enhanced
Systems That Get “Turned Off”

- Digestion
- Reproduction
- Capillaries
- Muscles in the middle ear constrict
- Cellular Repair
- Immune System
- PFC
Stress

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Phobias
- Cognitive problems
- Obesity
- Heart disease
- Auto-immune
- Gastro-intestinal
- Sleep
- High Blood Pressure
- High Blood Pressure
Stressors interact and exacerbate Stress-reactivity escalates Effect on stress thresholds

ALWAYS NEED TO ADDRESS ALL FIVE DOMAINS
“Stress Cycle”: A Hierarchical Concept

Stress cycles occur in families (parent-child, b/w spouses), a class, school, community, a business organization.

Even a nation or b/w nations.

The key to breaking a stress cycle, whatever the level, lies in Self-Reg.
THE SELF-REGULATION FRAMEWORK

There are **5 Domains** in the Self-Reg Framework.

The Self-Reg framework is **not a program** — it is a **practical paradigm** through which parents and teachers can better understand a child or student and others.
5 Self-Reg Domains: Stressors

**Biological**
Noises, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise, lack of sleep, junk food

**Emotion**
Strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)

**Cognitive**
Difficulty processing certain kinds of information

**Social**
Difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding effect of behaviour on others

**Prosocial**
Difficulty coping with other people’s stress; sense of injustice (may include misinterpreting stress behavior as misbehavior)
Reframe the behavior
Misbehaviour vs. Stress Behaviour

The key to misbehaviour is that the child could have acted differently; that she was aware that she shouldn’t have done something, and was perfectly capable of acting differently.

The key to stress behaviour is that the child is not fully aware of what she is doing, or why: she has limited capacity to act differently.

Stress behaviour is caused by too a high stress-load.

➢ The big challenge in doing Self-Reg is figuring out why the child’s stress is so high.
Recognize the stressors (across the five domains)
Reduce the stress
Reflect: Enhance stress awareness
Respond: Develop personalized strategies to promote resilience and restoration
“no such thing as a bad kid”

-Stuart Shanker
Books by Dr. Stuart Shanker

**SELF-REG**
How to Help Your Child (And You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage With Life

**Calm, Alert, and Learning**
Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation
Contact Info

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Free Online Resources
www.self-reg.ca

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To support your initiative or capacity building

Three webinar-based 6 part mini-courses
- The Self-Reg Framework 101
- The Shanker Method 101
- Radar

Reduce stress, restore energy and learn about Self-Reg for 30 day. Classroom, school-wide and mentoring options available.

2016 Webinar series:
- The Epidemic of Epidemics
- Cog Corner
- The Reflective Parent

www.self-reg.ca
TMC Offerings

To support your initiative or capacity building

Our Foundations Program is a four-course designed and delivered by Dr. Stuart Shanker, which leads to a certification in Shanker-Self Reg.

Self-Reg Portal Plus is our online community for people interested in exploring Shanker Self-Reg.

The Self-Reg Parent Portal is a moderated online community for parents interested in exploring The Shanker Method.

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