Self-Regulation versus Self-Control

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Big Questions:

What is the relationship between stress, energy, learning, behaviour and self-regulation?

How is self-regulation different from self-control?

How do young children develop self-regulation?

What does Self-Reg look like in early childhood education?
Siena Xaeli
There is no such thing as a bad child.

Dr. Stuart Shanker
The MEHRIT Centre
A child responds intuitively to the change that he senses in you.

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
BEING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR IS EASY. IT'S LIKE RIDING A BIKE EXCEPT THE BIKE IS ON FIRE YOU'RE ON FIRE EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE
Dear Teacher,
I TALK TO EVERYONE so moving my seat WON'T HELP.
Children in Chronic Stress States:

- Seem to be sad a lot or don’t demonstrate any emotion at all
- Develop hair-trigger responses to stress
- See neutral facial expressions and even friendly remarks as threats
- Have problems regulating strong negative emotions
- Demonstrate increase in impulsivity and distractibility
- Have trouble anticipating consequences and evaluating risk
- Are prone to withdrawal or aggression
- Don’t seem to feel empathy or have a sense of right and wrong
Stress – How we respond and recover

- Developmental Disorders
- Internalizing Problems
- Externalizing Problems
- Cognitive Problems
- Risky Behaviour
- Obesity
- Cardiovascular disease
- Autoimmune disorders
- Cancer
- Education Outcomes
Four Signs of Allostatic Overload

- “0-500” reaction in an instant
- Over reaction to situation
- Unusually long time to cool off
- Volatile / Emotional lability
Major issue:

Self-Regulation is MISUNDERSTOOD

447 DIFFERENT definitions....
What is.....
Shanker Self-Reg: 5-step process for understanding STRESS and managing TENSION and ENERGY.
Self-Reg Has 5 Domain of Stress

- biological
- prosocial
- social
- emotion
- cognitive
Stressors: Positive & Negative

Overt Stress ($, taxes, sick children)

Hidden Stress
(Noise, guilt, temperature, anxiety)

Good or Bad Stress?
- Normal Absorption
- Response vs. Reaction
- Internal Stress Cycles
MULTIPLYING EFFECT OF STRESSORS

- Fear, Anxiety, Excitement, Manic Behaviours
- Social Anxiety, Poor Social Skills
- Worry, Distortions, Fixation, Illusions
- Low Energy, High Tension
- Worry, Distortions, Fixation, Illusions
- Low Energy, High Tension
- Social Anxiety, Poor Social Skills
- Fear, Anxiety, Excitement, Manic Behaviours
When Limbic Brakes Kick In
HOW IT LOOKS

HOW IT FEELS
Sugar from a Self-Reg lens: A stressor
Don’t Forget the Hidden Stressors

The world’s quietest room is -9 decibels. It’s so quiet, you can hear your blood flowing in your own body.
### Cognitive Stressors and Memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabin</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Novel</th>
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<tr>
<td>Banana</td>
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<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Radio</td>
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Normal is an illusion. What is normal for the spider is chaos for the fly.

Charles Addams
NEVER
IN THE HISTORY OF CALMING DOWN, HAS ANYONE EVER CALMED DOWN BY BEING TOLD TO CALM DOWN.
IT'S SUPPOSED TO RELIEVE STRESS...
ME BRAIN

WE BRAIN

Mikey

Reptilian Brain
Limbic System
Neocortex

Social Engagement
Fight or Flight
Freeze
Social Engagement
Learning Brain + Immobilization without Fear.
Vagal Circuit Activation”
Parasympathetic – Sympathetic Balance

Mobilization with Fear
Sympathetic nervous system activation
Defensive fight/flight

Immobilization with Fear
Dorsal Vagal Circuit Activation
Defensive Shutdown

Porges Polyvagal Theory
Neuroception
Safety? Danger
Life Threat?
Stressors Have Changed

Maslow’s contemporary hierarchy of needs.
Behavior is Communication That We Can Easily Misinterpret.
The Interbrain: Communication Pathways in Co-regulating Relationships

Such as:
* Sound * Vision * Smell * Touch * Taste
* Proprioception * Shared Emotion
The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving ways.
How do We Develop Self-Regulation?
It's SMARTEST to Co-Regulate

Simplify your language

Movement – slow down your actions

Affect – match the child’s affect

Reflect the child’s emotional intent

Tone of voice – modulate for the situation

Eyes and ears – listen with both

Stop – wait for the child to initiate

Together – join the child in their intent
Red Brain Adult Behaviours

- Yelling
- Humiliating
- Threats (Do XYZ or else ABC)
- Routine chaos
- Losing temper
- Giving it to ‘make it stop’
CALM IS A SUPER POWER
You are the Self-Reg Strategy

Programs are never the problem. They are never the solution. People are always the problem. People are always the solution.
“Gifted to me”
It is essential that we do not confuse self-regulation with self-control. Self-control is about trying to inhibit impulses; self-regulation is about reducing the incidence and intensity of impulses in the first place. Self-regulation is what makes self-control possible, and in most cases, unnecessary.

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
You can’t FIX them, because they’re not broken.
See a child differently, you see a different child.
- Dr. Stuart Shanker
In Japan, broken objects are often repaired with gold. The flaw is seen as a unique piece of the object’s history, which adds to its beauty.

Consider this when you feel broken.
“The well-being of children is inseparable from the well-being of all the critical adults in their lives.”

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
Remember: You are the Strategy

1. Feeling safe doesn’t come from the words we say. Recognize that often there are no magic words. Send oodles of (non-verbal) **cues of safety, love, soft eyes.**

2. **Lend your calm,** not your dysregulation.

3. Allow **“space” for ALL emotions** – they are reactions not choices.

4. Amplify experiences of **positive emotions; it’s not just about coping!**

5. **Your Self-Reg** matters too! Fill up your own tank, put your own mask on first, find the joy in your crucial role in children’s Self-Reg journey.
Continue Your Learning: self-reg.ca
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Grounding living and learning in self-regulation.
Self-Reg in the Early Years
What it is and Why it Matters

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self-reg.ca/eventresources
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Look for strengths, find the laughter, seek joy.</th>
<th>Have soft (er) eyes for all: children, parents, colleagues, self</th>
<th>Prioritize healthy routines and build rituals for wellness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find the reflective pauses: Why and why now?</td>
<td>Gift (to others) time-fors</td>
<td>Scaffold self-regulation: Reg to Co-Reg to Self-Reg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are ever aware of the Self-Control Mindset (shoulda coulda woulda)</td>
<td>Live by values but also model “oops”</td>
<td>Prioritize own restoration and rebalancing</td>
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Build Havens, Change Rivers
SEEDS
Self-Reg is an area of interest

SUNRISE
Self-Reg is developing in area(s) of your work

QUILT
Self-Reg is one of many cores to your organizational systems, structures, and supports for student well-being

HAVEN
A Self-Reg mindset is embedded in school culture; teaching and learning; universal supports; policies; strategic plans; approaches to behavior and all relationships

Four Self-Reg Journeys
Self-Reg: The 5 Step Process

- Recognize Stressors: biological, emotion, cognitive, social, prosocial
- Reframe Behaviour
- Reduce Stress
- Respond: Restoration & Resilience
- Reflect: Awareness of Stress States

Shanker Self-Reg
Self-regulation refers to how effectively we manage the stress in our lives. Every time we experience stress we have to burn energy to keep all our internal systems running efficiently.

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
“Even very young children can actively engage in figuring out why they are in a state that isn’t pleasant or comfortable for them or for you. Stress might be coming from all sorts of things.”

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
Reframe how you see a child.

Self-Reg way of seeing a child based on Blue Brain/Red Brain distinction:

- self-control vs. self-regulation
- misbehaviour vs. stress behaviour
Is it Misbehaviour or Stress Behaviour?

If it’s Misbehaviour:
- Child chose to act a certain way
- Child aware that s/he shouldn’t act that way
- Child could have chosen/acted differently

If it’s Stress Behaviour:
- Child did not *choose* to act a certain way
- Child’s behaviour caused by limbic and sub-limbic processes
- Extremely difficult for the child to control this behaviour

Stress behaviour results from the stress “backpack” outweighing resources.
So often, our automatic response to such behaviours is to lash out at what we see as an irreparable “character defect.”
Recognize when something is a positive stress and when it is a negative stress: for *this* child at *this* moment.

Be able to see when a child is caught in a stress cycle, and why.
“Examples of behaviors to reframe as stress behavior? Restlessness, a negative outlook, emotional volatility, sudden outbursts, heightened impulsivity, low frustration tolerance, aggression, oppositional behaviour, social withdrawal, a lack of empathy.”

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
YOU CAN ONLY KEEP 3

Diet Coke
COFFEE
JEWELRY
NETFLIX
JEANS
DRY SHAMPOO
TEA
MESSY BUN

CHOCOLATE
PAJAMAS
TACOS
LIPSTICK
BOOKS
WINE
LEGGINGS
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>Loud noise, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise, exhaustion, junk food, allergies, headaches, asthma, smells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) &amp; negative (anger, fear)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Difficulty processing certain kinds of information, recognizing patterns,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding effect of behaviour on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial</td>
<td>Difficulty coping with other people’s stress; sense of injustice, empathy is an “expensive” emotion.</td>
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Reduce whatever negative stresses you can and “dial down the tension” with your body language and voice.
“Kids with trauma history don’t need more punishment, and quite frankly they don’t need more stickers.”

Dr. Ross Greene
Reflect: Enhance stress awareness

- Reflect: on the signs that a child is approaching the point of being overstressed, or the signs that you are approaching such a point.
KEEP CALM

...OK NOT THAT CALM
Realize and Respond when a child’s balance is upset across the five domains – biological, emotion, cognitive, social, prosocial

And help the child restore not just in terms of “what to do in the moment,” but also to establish Self-Reg thinking, including self-nurturing, as second nature.
Step 1:
1... Reframe the Behaviour
I read and reframe stress-behaviour in myself and others. When I read stress in myself or others, I reframe what's going on as stress behaviour not misbehaviour.

Step 2:
1... Recognize the Stressors
I am a stress detective. I ask “why” and “why now” to figure out what my personal stressors are that I can reduce or remove to lower my stress. I read the signs of stress behaviour in others and reflect on “why” and “why now”.

Step 3:
1... Reduce the Stress
I take action to lower my stress by reducing and/or removing those personal stressors I figured out are affecting my behaviour, mood and energy levels.

Step 4:
1... Reflect: Enhance Stress-Awareness
I am stress aware; I have awareness of my brain-body energy states and stress response systems, I know what calm feels like, and am aware when I am experiencing dysregulation internally.

Step 5:
1... Respond: Develop Personal Strategies to Promote Restoration and Resilience
I have personal “strategies” that I use to help me cope with and adapt to stressors. I take time to restore not just as part of a daily routine, but also when I notice the signs of my energy dipping low.
Self-Reg is not a program, it’s a process.

1. Adopt a “Self-Reg First” philosophy.

2. Be a safe base. Build a sense of safety for children who show you the signs that they feel unsafe. Safe IS the intervention.

3. Think about the long game for all children. The drip, drip, drip of how children learn Self-Reg through coregulation.

4. Think like a curious compassionate detective: No one size fits or explains all: Why this child, why now? Stress detecting. Trial and error, test out strategies.

5. Have Self-Reg is infused throughout your program: in the rituals and routines; through all relationships; as problems that emerge are worked through; in your pedagogical decisions; in your view of the child and in your view of yourself.
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If we’re able to reframe defiance as a sign of anxiety, it can completely change the way we feel and respond in the face of defiant behaviour.

DR. STUART SHANKER
www.self-reg.ca
“Calm begets calm” should be seen not just in instrumental terms, but as an endless circle.

-Dr. Stuart Shanker
The greater the child’s overall stress-load, the deeper he or she goes into a state of low-energy and high-tension.

DR. STUART SHANKER

www.self-reg.ca
Some Common Behaviors and Emotions by State

• **Social Engagement:**
  - Seeks help and comfort  allows self to rest
  - Trusts will be okay  expresses emotion
  - Take care of vital life tasks

• **Mobilization with Fear**
  - Hyperarousal  heart pounding  insomnia
  - Primal panic  anxiety  fear  terror
  - Body tension  shortness of breath
  - Social withdrawal  evaluative narratives

• **Immobilization with Fear**
  - Numb  extreme fatigue  muscle weakness
  - Memory problems  dizziness  difficulty functioning  lack of appetite
So many of the behaviors we see in children today seem inexplicable until we realize that we are dealing with the effects of excessive stress.

-Dr. Stuart Shanker