

# The Self-Reg Journey of

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Family Education Resource Network

Education Engagement Empowerment  
A not for profit organization

*And The Family Education Resource Network (Fern): Holistically Supporting The Learning Needs Of Children And Families  
Using The Self-Reg Framework*

## Why Self-Reg

"We were on a journey with FERN-moving away from behavioural systems and top-down approaches. After reading about Dr. Stuart Shanker's Self-Reg we never looked at behaviours in the same way. Recognizing the increase in anxieties, young children who were being suspended because of lack of self-regulation, and stress in families, the Self-Reg framework was a gift. We needed to understand behaviour from the body up and understand where to aim our intervention using the Self-Reg framework."

## Big Picture

"At FERN our common goal was to become Self-Reg invested which challenged us to deeply commit to practice Self-Reg. It has become a way of life that which brings us all together."

"We wanted FERN to be a secure base and safe self-reg haven for parents, families and children. We wanted to remove barriers and create a place where in times of stress, distress, dysregulation children and families would feel supported and allowed to rest in our care"

## Process at this Point

"We began by introducing the process and learning journey as a marathon, not a sprint. Understanding the interdependence of staff and families. The whole team committed to incorporating Self-Reg practices into our context for every child, family and for self."

"Reframed staff and leadership, understanding our influence on our culture and community and the need to support calm, attuned dynamics to support self-regulation"

In order to meet our goals at FERN we did the following:

- Participated in professional learning through TMC, parents and staff attended workshops, connected with TMC Facebook community
- Made use of blogs and articles on the TMC site for group reflection
- Modeled the process in relationships and environment
- Shared learning with families during our drop-in times, parent resource library, the Self-Reg Parent Group, and developed graphics and tools which support Self-Reg learning
- Changed our language and used reflective questioning
- Increased our awareness of the widespread impact of stress on ALL in our community
- Reframed assessment and targets, using the Thayer Matrix and Self-Reg 5 Domains framework during intake and ongoing review of children
- Use the Thayer Matrix for ourselves, increasing our awareness of stress, energy and tension

- We prioritized relational and setting safety for all: recognized the protective function of having a safe, consistent, reflective space when working

"We recognized early that we all have stressors and triggers and "prickles" which can present within our work context, therefore we must prioritize wellbeing and self-care. We continue to model learning in our setting, encourage collaboration, transparency, appreciation and respect, facilitating a space where reframing and curiosity is encouraged. This is most important as feelings of helplessness, powerlessness within our context are common."

## Hope!

"Listening to our students reflect about our space and community- we hear engaged, caring students, where friendships, acceptance and empathy is growing."

"When we understand behaviours within a holistic brain/body framework, we understand the differences between focusing on compliance and building the capacity for self-regulation."

"It is important to keep Self-Reg alive: we have built in practices and changed our setting, mindsets and interactions to reflect this!"

## Challenges

At FERN the staff take a reflective approach to their Self-Reg practice. In bringing Self-Reg to the organization they had several concerns:

- Are we ready for our clients?
- What were the barriers to coregulation and how do we mediate them?
- How are we defining self-regulation?
- Will historical beliefs and biases interfere with the Self-Reg process? Are we on autopilot or are we intentional and self-aware?
- How do we collaborate with systems that lean towards models of "self-control" that believe that children can self-regulate behaviours/emotions, when in reality they can't... yet.
- Are we a Haven? Can we be a Self-Reg provider for families, parents and children?

## Fond Memory

Realizing that "Self-Reg is about staff wellness and self care."

Looking back to 2016 and thinking that we were practicing the 5 steps- what a difference a few years brings to self-awareness and deep mindful work.

Realizing that the Self-Reg process includes "the need to normalize many experiences, anxiety, worries - and help soothe families, parents, children rather than 'fixing' and being 'outcome' focused."