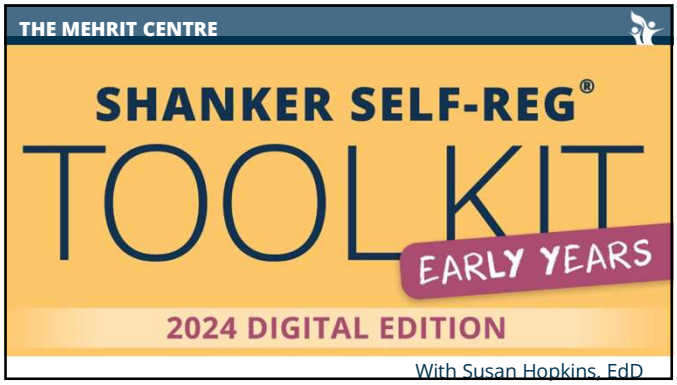
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SHANKER SELF-REG®
TOOL KIT
EARLY YEARS
2024 DIGITAL EDITION
With Susan Hopkins, EdD

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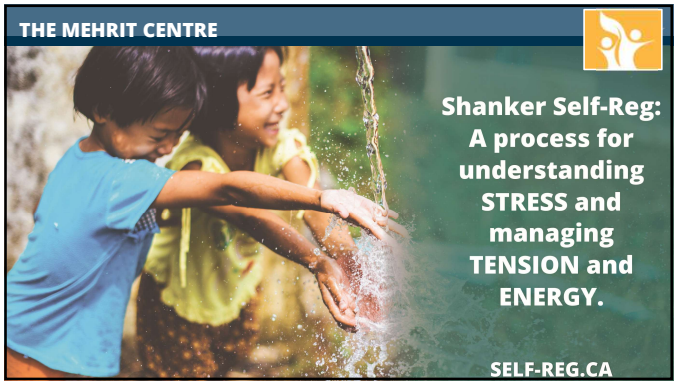
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Shanker Self-Reg: A process for understanding STRESS and managing TENSION and ENERGY.
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2

Self-Reg Is NOT....
x Self-Reg is NOT a program.
x Self-Reg is NOT:
▪ A behaviour management program
▪ An accountability, motivation or learning skills program
▪ A social skills program
▪ A social-emotional learning program.
▪ Self-Reg is NOT a mindfulness program
x Self-Reg is NOT a segregated room for certain children.
x Self-Reg is NOT a room where you go to calm down.
x Self-Reg is NOT a series of lessons, lectures, skills or strategies
Self-Reg Is....
✓ A 5-practice process for understanding stress and managing energy & tension across five domains: biological, emotion, cognitive, social, prosocial
✓ A way of understanding the roots of...
▪ Behaviour
▪ Motivation and Resilience
▪ Personal and interpersonal wellbeing
✓ Mindfulness – Lived Self-Reg is mindful self-regulation
✓ Inclusive of all children and adults
✓ Inseparable from relationships, wellbeing, equity, and resilience

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**SEEDS**
Self-Reg is an area of interest to you and your organization.

**SUNRISE**
Self-Reg is developing in some areas of your organization's work.

**QUILT**
Self-Reg is infused in many areas of your organization's work that you are linking together.

**HAVEN**
Self-Reg is part of your foundational framework through which all else is framed.

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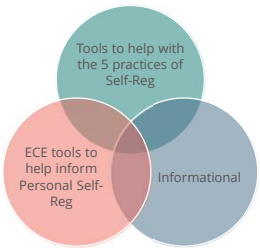
## Three Kinds of Content in the Toolkit

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## 1. Self-Reg Tool Kit: 5 Practice Tools

Tools to help with the 5 practices of Self-Reg when considering:

- a child's behaviours / needs
- the learning environment
- dealing with challenges
- engaging with parents/caregivers

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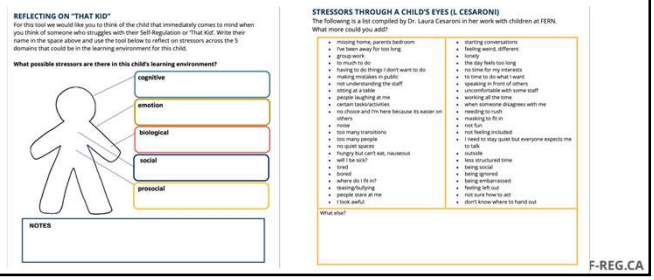
## 1. 5-Practice Tools – Group Level

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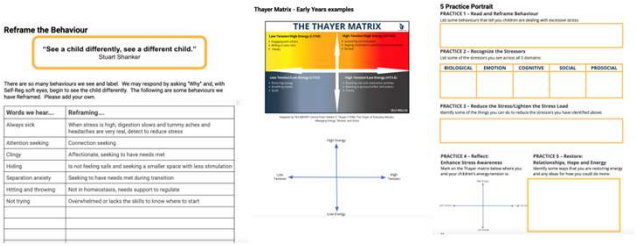
## 1. 5-Practice Tools – Individual Level

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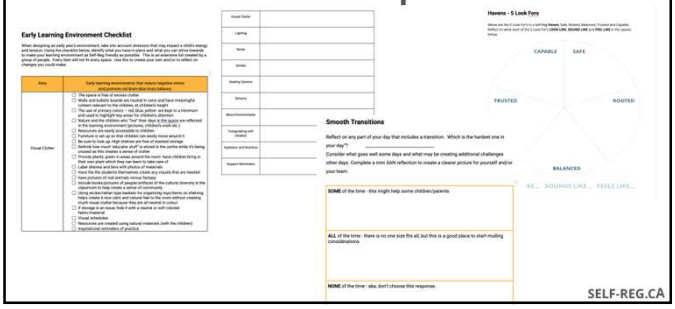
## 1. 5-Practice Tools – Group Level

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## 2. Self-Reg Toolkit: Informational Tools

Includes information about:

- the role of a Self-Reg ECE
- Self-Reg science snippets
- summaries of key ideas from ECEs
- examples of how tools in use (real life)

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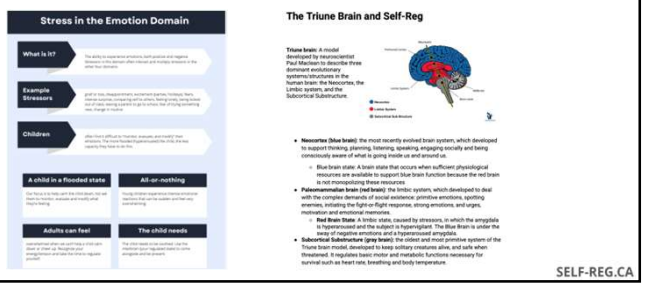
## 2. Informational Tools - About

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## 2. Informational Tools Exemplars

**SACK**

Stop, Add, Change and Keep can be helpful when we consider challenges. Here is one example from Laura Cesaroni. Use SACK to support your early years challenges.

**Challenge: Transition from parent to childcare in the morning.**

| **Stop:** what could we stop doing? | **Add:** what could we start doing? |
|---|---|
| • sneaking out<br>• canceling work and taking sick days at the last moment<br>• leaving the child alone in the room to calm down | • hugging/touch right before and in the morning; close hugs/touches will help the need to cling<br>• movement (for example, the child can help you pack your work bag, bring it out to the car, bring garbage to the curb, plan how to get to care<br>• low sound in home in morning<br>• novelty (a note, a small token, small change) to activate dopamine in brain |
| **Change:** what could we change in our approach? | **Keep:** what is working that you would suggest we keep doing? |
| • morning ritual<br>• change the phrase *"You don't need to be this way, you know I need to go to work"* to *"I know how hard this feels. I can see how much this hurts."*<br>• lower self to child level with lots of caring nonverbals<br>• these seconds of care, without rushing will build memory of calm, soothing parent rather than a rushed/moving away parent | • the nightly ritual of care and connections as a family unit<br>• family dinners wherever possible<br>• good sleep |

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## 2. Informational Tools - Exemplars

**5 Practice Self-Reg Portrait - Group Example (K Westbrook)**

**PRACTICE 1 – Read and Reframe Behaviour**

- List some behaviours or choices that you or another have made in the past that may have been viewed as "misbehavior"
- For each of those behaviours, reframe them. *"I think this was/is stress behaviour and here is how I know…"*

| "MISBEHAVIOUR" | REFRAME<br>*"I think this was/is stress behaviour and here is how I know…"* |
|---|---|
| Acting passive aggressively | *"I think this was stress behaviour because the individual felt upset and angry about something they were asked to do and did not feel comfortable expressing their needs directly."* |
| Scapegoating and deflecting blame/not taking responsibility or accountability by: "Throwing someone else under the bus" | *"I think this was stress behaviour because the individual fears not being liked and wanted to avoid conflict with another colleague."* |
| Not completing tasks as directed | *"I think this was stress behaviour because the individual felt overwhelmed or unclear about the instructions."* |
| Gossiping | *"I think this was a stress behaviour because the individual felt insecure about their own performance at work and they had conflict with another colleague which led to using gossip as an unhelpful coping strategy."* |
| Arriving at work chronically late (15-30 minutes) | *"I think this was a stress behaviour because the individual feels stressed about the tasks awaiting them. The stress and their activities to cope with stress presents challenges with prioritizing tasks and managing time to arrive punctually".* |

**PRACTICE 3 – Reduce the Stress/Lighten the Stress Load**

- Take the stressors you identified in Practice 2 and begin reflecting on ways you could reduce them

Stressor: (biological) loud voices

How I can ***Reduce*** it: divide the children into smaller groups, utilize other spaces (outside)

Stressor: (biological) speech impediment

How I can ***Reduce*** it: be nearby to where the child is wanting to play so that the adult can act as interpreter. Both giving the words as well as supporting the other child to understand

Stressor: (emotion) being uncomfortable around so many people

How I can ***Reduce*** it: child selected play based learning, smaller groups, more options

Stressor: (emotion) over-excitement

How I can ***Reduce*** it: be nearby to the child to help as you see them start to escalate, create boundaries, upstream focus synchrony activities like singing and movement, ensuring child gets to move lots

Stressor: (emotion) strong emotional expression

How I can ***Reduce*** it: co-regulation - lend your calm, find ways to practice mindfulness (sphere breathing, yoga, candle breathing), provide positive words, "Let's try again"

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## 2. Informational Tools - Exemplars

**PRACTICE 4 – Reflect: Enhance Stress Awareness**

- Listening to our bodies is a critical step in understanding our stress. Our bodies can tell us whether we are calm or not. We need to recognize these feelings.
  - List some of the embodied sensations that you experience when calm, focused and alert.
  - List some of embodied signs that you are not calm, focused and alert.

| When I am **calm** I feel… | When I am **not** calm I feel… |
|---|---|
| o Present in the moment<br>o Muscles are relaxed<br>o Breathing is from belly<br>o I am focused<br>o I am patient<br>o Listen attentively<br>o Maintain eye contact<br>o Check in genuinely on others<br>o Have an even tone of voice | o Distracted<br>o Tight/tense jaw and shoulders<br>o Difficulty focusing/concentrating<br>o Breathing is from chest and shorter/sometimes hold breath<br>o Increased heart rate<br>o Listen to respond rather than to understand<br>o Listen attentively<br>o Restless/fidgety |
| Signs the group is calm:<br>• Positive and free flowing engagement<br>• Chatter<br>• Even tone of voice<br>• Smiling<br>• Talking about personal lives<br>• Focused attention<br>• Focused work time<br>• Idea formulations<br>• Efficient decision-making<br>• Delight in one another<br>• Attentive listening<br>• Collaboration<br>• Productivity | Signs the group is not calm:<br>• Silence<br>• Lack of eye contact<br>• Difficulty making decisions and completing tasks<br>• Fidgeting/restlessness<br>• Inability to focus - Jump from topic to topic<br>• Irritability – short responses<br>• Decreased productivity<br>• Missed deadlines |

**Ideas for Recognizing Stress (K Westbrook)**

- Kaitie developed a set of Look Fors across the domains for specific examples. Add your own as you consider what you see in your circumstance. What other specific examples could you consider?

| Challenging Situation or Chronic Stress | Children during Holidays |
|---|---|
| **BIOLOGICAL**<br>• Disturbed sleep or changes in sleep patterns as a result of the situation<br>• Physical tension or discomfort<br>• Appetite changes<br>• Health issues due to stress<br>• Sensory overload during emotional moments | **BIOLOGICAL**<br>• Irregular sleep patterns<br>• Changes in diet/nutrition<br>• Overstimulation (sensory overload)<br>• Disruptions to routine<br>• Physical fatigue |
| **EMOTION**<br>• Worry, grief and sorrow<br>• Shock,disbelief, anger or frustration<br>• Anxiety and fear about safety<br>• Separation anxiety<br>• Emotional numbness | **EMOTION**<br>• Excitement<br>• Anxiety due to unfamiliar situations<br>• Feelings of being overwhelmed<br>• Joy<br>• Frustration due to high expectations |
| **COGNITIVE**<br>• Hypervigilance and difficulty concentrating<br>• Memory challenges related to the tragic event<br>• Cognitive distortions and negative thought patterns<br>• Overwhelmed by emotional distress | **COGNITIVE**<br>• Overwhelmed by new experiences<br>• Difficulty focusing on tasks<br>• Performance - Concerts/Recitals/Tests<br>• Confusion due to changes in routine<br>• Increased decision fatigue<br>• Memory challenges |
| **SOCIAL**<br>• Changes in social dynamics<br>• Increased sensitivity to social interactions<br>• Isolation or withdrawal from social activities<br>• Changes in relationships with people | **SOCIAL**<br>• Social pressure to conform<br>• Feeling left out of activities<br>• Overstimulation in crowded social situations<br>• Changes in social dynamics<br>• Comparison with peers |
| **PROSOCIAL**<br>• Guilt<br>• Moral dilemmas<br>• Others Crying<br>• Empathy/Sympathy<br>• Feeling Unprepared | **PROSOCIAL**<br>• Jealousy<br>• Limbic reactions of others<br>• Sharing<br>• Giving a gift<br>• Waiting your turn |

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## 3. Self-Reg Tool Kit: Personal Self-Reg

ECE tools to help inform Personal Self-Reg

- ECEs have stress too!

**Permissions**

As we consider our tension and energy, what can we do to help ourselves and each other?

Your top three permissions to grant yourself:

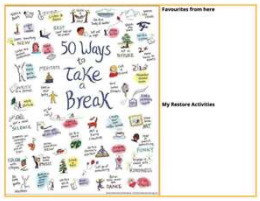
1.
2.
3.

Your top three permissions to grant child(ren) in your care:

1.
2.
3.

**50 WAYS TO TAKE A BREAK**

How do you support yourself and those in your care to find their Red Brain/Blue Brain balance through restoration. What are some of your strategies?




Favourites from here

My Restore Activities

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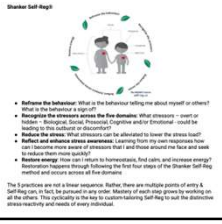
## 3. Personal Self-Reg Tools

**Interbrain in Early Childhood Education**



- **Reframe the behaviour:** What is the behaviour telling me about myself or others? What is the behaviour a sign of?
- **Recognize the stressors across the five domains:** What stressors – overt or hidden – Biological, Social, Prosocial, Cognitive and/or Emotional - could be leading to this outburst or discomfort?
- **Reduce the stress:** What stressors can be alleviated to lower the stress load?
- **Reflect and enhance stress awareness:** Learning from my own responses how can I become more aware of stressors that I and those around me face and seek to reduce them more quickly?
- **Restore energy:** How can I return to homeostasis, find calm, and increase energy? Restoration happens through following the first four steps of the Shanker Self-Reg method and occurs across all five domains

The 5 practices are not a linear sequence. Rather, there are multiple points of entry & Self-Reg can, in fact, be pursued in any order. Mastery of each step grows by working on all the others. This cyclicality is the key to custom-tailoring Self-Reg to suit the distinctive stress-reactivity and needs of every individual.

**Self-Reg Rubric**

| | I am learning about … | With help, I can … | On my own, I … | In my everyday life, I … |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Practice 1: Reframe the Behaviour** (Is it misbehaviour or stress behaviour?) | my brain, my brain-body states what stress is, and how it impacts my learning, behaviour, mood, relationships and/or energy levels | spot signs of excessive stress in both myself and others | read and reframe behaviour within myself when reflecting on a situation, independently recognizing the connection to the brain-body states I experienced | reframe misbehavior as (stress) behaviour and consider brain-body states, both in myself and others, both retrospectively and occasionally in the moment |
| **Practice 2: Recognize the Stressors** (Why and why now?) | examples of stressors in five domains: biological, emotion, cognitive, social, and prosocial | spot some significant stressors – including hidden ones - that affect my learning, behaviour, mood, relationships and/or energy levels | identify many stressors in all 5 domains that are impacting my learning, behaviour, mood, relationships and/or energy levels | am curious about the 'why' and 'why now' beneath my stress behaviours and figure out stressors that I can reduce or remove. I read the signs of stress behaviour in others |
| **Practice 3: Reduce the Stress Load and the Stress Response** (How can I lighten the stress backpack?) | ways to lessen stress in all 5 domains (can be reduced or removed) and calm my body and mind's stress response | figure out ways to decrease or remove specific stressors that add to my own stress load, stress load, impacting learning, behavior, mood, relationships, and energy levels | spot stressors and cut down on some in various parts of my life to lower my stress. I use some of the strategies that really help calm my body and mind from stress | am always stress detecting. I use my own ways to make my body and mind less stressed I am always working on reducing or getting rid of things that stress me in all areas, affecting how I learn, act, feel, and have energy |
| **Practice 4: Restore energy, focus, empathy, relationships and hope** | the difference between restoration and inner calm, as well as understanding the connection between a calm body of the brain and the higher levels of energy and tension | describe how my energy and restoration levels relate to my learning, behaviour, mood, and relationships | identify my restoration state and the impact it has on my learning, behaviour, mood and/or relationships | recognize when my restoration state is mismatched with the moment or task at hand and take action to shift my state into one better aligned in the moment and/or over time |
| **Practice 5: Restore + energy, focus, empathy, relationships and hope** | ways that people replenish their energy reserves and balance in all five domains of Self-Reg | find genuinely restorative ways to refill my tank when it's low. I'm starting to recognize when I'm unbalanced in any of the 5 domains and how to address it | recharge my energy when it's low and I am unbalanced. I am working towards a healthy lifestyle that sustains my well-being | prioritize and guard my time for daily restoration, enhancing my life and supporting my overall well-being |

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info@self-reg.ca

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