

Reflective Family Nervous System Profile™

An Interactive Reflective Tool for Exploring Poly-Regulation & Relational Ecology

Purpose & Practice: Sparing you from isolated behavioral strategies, this tool shifts focus to the relational and physiological ecology of your entire home system. Co-regulation is not merely dyadic. In family systems, regulation often occurs through polyadic co-regulation, in which multiple nervous systems simultaneously influence and are influenced by one another. You are the expert on your family's experience. Use this reflective tool to observe, track, and align your family's somatic environment, identifying the regulatory baseline and the ripples of activation that cascade through your shared regulatory field.

1. Mapping Your Relational Regulatory Field

Your home is an interconnected regulatory field where multiple nervous systems are continuously sensing, responding, adapting, and influencing one another in real-time. The regulatory state of one person is deeply embedded within the states of others. Use these fillable sections to map your baseline.

A. The Relational Baseline (Settled Harmony)

Describe the atmosphere in your home when your family system is experiencing mutual safety and connection. How does the physical and sensory environment feel? What are the subtle physical signals that multiple bodies are settled, open, and relationally available?

B. The Regulatory Cascade (Stress Spikes)

Nervous system states are contagious and cascade rapidly through the family field. When one family member reaches their limit, how does that activation or collapse ripple outward? Who absorbs or matches the distress first? What happens to the overall volume, movement, and physical space in the house?

C. Environmental & Physical Anchors

The physical layout, soundscape, lighting, and pacing of daily transitions act as active players in your regulatory field. What physical characteristics of your home (e.g., noisy hallways, rushed mornings, soothing natural light) consistently settle or dysregulate the collective system?

2. The Sibling System as a Regulatory Lab

Shifting Sibling Conflict from a Threat to an Opportunity for Co-Regulation

The Sibling Laboratory: Sibling relationships are not merely a source of family dysregulation; they represent a critical developmental laboratory. Through repeated sibling interactions, children develop the capacity to set boundaries, practice perspective-taking, handle frustration, and negotiate repair and reconciliation. The goal is not a conflict-free family, but rather helping children move from being caught in a regulatory collision toward remaining connected while having different needs and feelings.

Applying the RELATE Sibling Lens Tool

When conflict erupts, instead of playing referee or imposing quick, surface-level 'fairness' (which demands that everyone receives the same treatment, rather than what is appropriate for them), pause and slow down. Walk through the three core branches of the RELATE Sibling Lens:

1. What is Happening BETWEEN Them? • What started the interaction? • Is this escalated play, competition, territory protection, or a bid for connection? • What shifted the boundary from manageable to overwhelming?	2. What is Happening INSIDE Each Child? • Who is hyperaroused/activated? • Who is hypoaroused/shut down/withdrawing? • Who has lost access to language or problem-solving right now?	3. What is Happening INSIDE Me? • Which child's distress activates me more? • Am I rushing to judge or determine who is 'right' to force my own calm? • Am I bringing childhood sibling stories here?
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Active Sibling Collision Reflection

Recall a frequent sibling regulatory collision in your home. Use the RELATE lens above to untangle the physiological reality beneath the behavior. What somatic needs are colliding?

My Somatic Counter-Transference

When your children collide, what somatic signals do you experience first (e.g., jaw tightening, holding breath, muscle tension)? How does your own childhood history of sibling dynamics impact your impulse to intervene?

Moving from Collision to Connection

How can you shift your role in this collision from an 'arbitrator of blame' to a 'co-regulating third nervous system' that interrupts escalation and lends safety to both children simultaneously?

3. Sibling Equity: Differentiated Responsiveness

Sibling equity isn't always identical treatment. One child might need physical space or help finding words, while another needs a firm boundary or autonomy. Use this matrix to compare and track the unique, differentiated regulatory needs of each child during a collision. Select the pathways that apply and note details.

Child A Notes / Specific Focus	Select	Pathway / Regulatory Need	Select	Child B Notes / Specific Focus
	☐	Physical Space & Containment	☐	
	☐	Reassurance & Close Presence	☐	
	☐	Sensory Break & Solitude	☐	
	☐	Help Finding Words & Validation	☐	
	☐	Firm, Protective Boundaries	☐	
	☐	High-Arousal Physical Outlets	☐	
	☐	Autonomy & Independent Choice	☐	
	☐	Repair & Reconciliation Support	☐	

Differentiated Sibling Equity Reflection

Reflect on the mapped needs of your children above. How has treating sibling equity as 'the exact same treatment' unintentionally escalated their regulatory collisions? Under what conditions can you comfortably offer differentiated care?

The Sibling Reflection: 'Two Truths' Practice

A foundational practice for navigating sibling collisions is 'Two Truths'. It teaches parents to hold two conflicting realities simultaneously, which shifts the adult away from deciding who is the 'good child' versus 'bad child' and instead honors the somatic experience of both.

Example 1: 'Your brother wanted the truck AND you wanted the truck.'	Example 2: 'You are incredibly angry AND I will not let you hit.'
Example 3: 'She hurt your feelings AND she may not have intended to hurt you.'	Example 4: 'You both need me right now AND you need different things from me.'

My Custom 'Two Truths' Statements

Draft 2 custom 'Two Truths' statements that you can pre-prepare and speak during their next regulatory crash. Focus on bridging boundaries and internal states with systemic warmth.

4. Systemic Cascades & Reflective Intervention

Tracking the Flow of Arousal and Activating Shared Relational Pathways

The Family Regulation Map: When a conflict or stress spike occurs, it is helpful to map the flow of activation rather than viewing behavior as isolated. The parent's response is never neutral; it enters the regulatory field as either a stabilizing force or an accidental source of activation. Use this form to analyze the anatomy of a recent family stress event.

A. BEFORE THE EVENT	B. DURING THE EVENT	C. THE INTERVENTION	D. THE AFTERMATH
Who was already activated, overstimulated, or vulnerable?	How did activation or stress move? Who matched whom?	Did the adult's response reduce or increase activation?	Who recovered first? Was there repair and reconciliation?

5. 'Whose Need Is This?' Systemic Filter

When a challenging system collision occurs, ask yourself the signature reflective question: **'Whose need is this?'** This moves caregivers away from thinking a child is defiant and helps identify specific, actionable support targets across multiple spheres. Check the areas active during the event:

☐ My Child's Need: Transition support, sensory safety, predictable rhythm, or physical release?	☐ My Need: Predictability, quiet, keeping a timeline, or managing my own sensory limits?
☐ Sibling's Need: Safe territory, validation of fairness, parent's protective attention?	☐ Environmental Need: Addressing morning rush, clutter, high noise, or tight space?
☐ Relationship Need: Repair after a rupture, reconnection, undivided close attention?	☐ Collective System Need: Collective pacing, group physical transitions, shared outdoor nature outings?

Synthesized Action Target

Based on the checkboxes selected above, synthesize a tailored support plan. Instead of simply trying to force a child's compliance, what environment, relationship, or pacing adjustments can be made?

The Reflective Coaching Framework: SENSE (What is in my body?) → NOTICE (What changes my state?) → NAME (What helps/hinders?) → EXPLORE (Under what conditions?) → CHOOSE (What to try?) → CONNECT (How does this affect my child?)