

# Regulation for Adults



Daniel Educational Services, LLC



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EDUCATIONAL  
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## INTRODUCTION

# Regulation

This resource is supplemental to the professional development Wellbeing for All, a curriculum that focuses not only on the wellbeing of all students, but also on the wellbeing of educators and other adults who support the emotional regulation of children and young adults as well.

For more information:

[DanielEducationalServices.com](http://DanielEducationalServices.com)

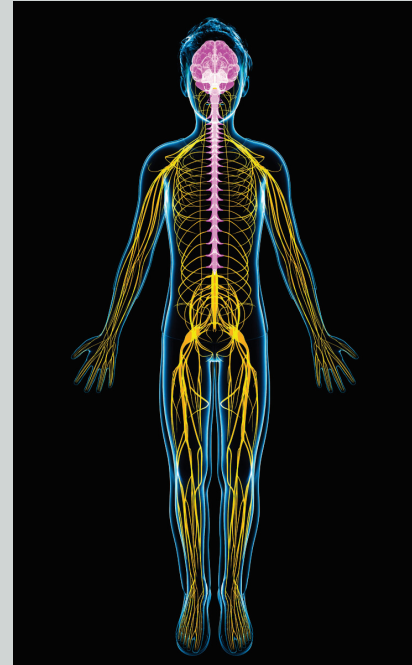


Co-regulation is the first step of the CARER framework for Wellbeing. Co-regulation only occurs when an adult is able to achieve self-regulation. This resources is dedicated to supporting wellbeing.

## INTRODUCTION

# The Science of Stress

Our brains and bodies are wired together through our nervous system. The nervous system takes in information through our senses and relays information back to our brain about our internal and external state of being and needs. The brain then sends messages back to the body to respond. This is happening constantly without our conscious knowledge.



Our lowest parts of the brain receive this information first. These are the parts of our brain that are designed to detect danger and respond to keep us safe. If the lower parts of the brain detect a threat to safety, they will respond before any higher brain thinking structures (in charge of planning, learning, remembering, and logic based decision making) can come into play.

## INTRODUCTION

# The Science of Stress



If we are under stress, lower brain structures will determine our responses. And these responses will be based on maintaining our safety and survival and may cut off access to the parts of our brain that engage in compassion and connection with others or support us in good decision making.

If we experience chronic stress or have a history of childhood trauma or of feeling unsafe, our lower brains can become overactive and perceive stress and danger even where it may not truly exist.



## SENSORY SELF ASSESSMENT

# The Sensory Environment

## Our Eight Senses



Touch/ Temperature



Sight



Sound



Smell



Taste



Movement



Balance and body position



Internal sense  
hunger/ thirst/ pain

One of the primary ways that information is transmitted to our brain is through our 8 senses which perceive our internal and external environment.

Each of us has a unique set of sensory preferences and trigger

Preferences are things that we seek out for regulation. Triggers are things that we avoid.

**WE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE REGULATED IF OUR SENSORY NEEDS ARE MET.**



## SENSORY SELF ASSESSMENT

# Sensory Preferences

**Review the items in each sensory area. Consider whether you seek or avoid this sensory input. You may also be neutral on some items. Notice if these preferences seem to concentrate in one sensory area or across many areas.**

## Touch/Temperature

1. Petting dog/ cat
2. Cold / hot shower
3. Jiggling keys/coins in pocket
4. Playing with/ twisting your hair
5. Fidget toys/ Bubble wrap/rubber bands
6. Lifting something heavy
7. Rub hands on clothes
8. Drag hands along wall while walking
9. Heavy blankets
10. Massage / self-squeeze
11. Tight clothes/ shoes
12. Loose clothes
13. Scratching skin
14. Hugs
15. Something else

## Sight

1. Watching scenery on a drive
2. Watching a fire in a fireplace
3. Dim lighting
4. Watching a fish tank
5. Watching an hourglass or oil & water toy
6. Looking out the window
7. Looking at vacation pictures
8. Social media reminder of past posts
9. Bright lighting
10. Cluttered desk or room
11. Sunrise/ sunset
12. Neatly organized desk or room
13. Brightly colored visuals
14. Simple visuals/black and white
15. Something else

## Sound

1. Listening to slow/ calm music
2. Listening to high energy/ fast music
3. Humming
4. Working in a quiet room
5. Listening to podcast or audiobook
6. Working in a noisy/busy room
7. Singing
8. Talking to yourself out loud
9. Meditation
10. Singing bowl/single chime
11. Multiple sounds/ wind chime
12. Nails on a chalkboard/ squeaking sound
13. Sirens
14. Listening to others talk
15. Something else

## SENSORY SELF ASSESSMENT

# Sensory Preferences

## Smell

1. Essential oils
2. Perfume/ Cologne
3. Cooking/ Baking
4. Strong cleaning products
5. Scented markers
6. Scented candles
7. Air freshener
8. Wearing a mask
9. Cutting the grass
10. Smell flowers/nature
11. Body odor /Sweat
12. Smell of dog or cat
13. Nail polish
14. Scented laundry detergent
15. Something else

## Movement/Balance

1. Stretching
2. Rocking chair/ rocking back on chair
3. Swiveling in chair/ Swinging legs
4. Laying down/ reclining
5. Running/ jogging
6. Rocking/ swaying
7. Tapping toes
8. Bouncing leg while sitting
9. Going for a walk / leaving environment
10. Scrubbing floor/table/ whiteboard
11. Rolling neck
12. Sitting still and staring at fixed point
13. Holding on to something steady (railing for stairs or when up high)
14. Climbing stairs
15. Something else

## Taste

1. Biting: Chew pencil, straw, swizzle stick; chew nails or your lips; chewing clothing
2. Sucking: Milkshake, hard candy, cigarette
3. Crunching: Chew ice, chips, crunchy vegetables
4. Chewing: Popcorn, chewing gum, taffy
5. Breath: Deep breaths, meditation/ yoga whistling; smoking/vaping
6. Cold: Ice, ice cream, cold beverage
7. Hot: Tea, Coffee, warm food or beverage
8. Sour: Eat a pickle, sour candy, lemon
9. Sweet: Sugary food, candy, fruit
10. Spicy: Salsa, spicy food, spiced tea
11. Salty: Chips, olives, salted nuts
12. Licking your lips
13. Putting on lip balm or lipstick
14. Brushing your teeth
15. Something else

## Interoception (high or low)

1. Frequently need to use the bathroom
2. Forget to go to bathroom when busy
3. Drinking water/ beverages all day
4. Forget to drink until feeling dehydrated
5. Always hungry
6. Skip meals frequently
7. Distracted or preoccupied when in pain
8. High pain tolerance
9. Feel itchy or tickles on your skin
10. Able to tolerate tags, tight clothing
11. Notice tension in your muscles
12. Do not notice when muscles are tensed
13. Sensitive to hot or cold temperature
14. Do not change clothing in response to weather (ex. wear shorts in the winter or sweatshirt in the summer)
15. Something else



## SENSORY SELF ASSESSMENT

# Sensory Preferences

1. HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY REGULATE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM WHEN UNDER STRESS?

2. HOW MIGHT YOU INCREASE THE DOSING OF YOUR SENSORY PREFERENCE AREAS WHEN AT WORK TO MAINTAIN REGULATION?

3. HOW MIGHT YOU DECREASE THE SENSORY INPUT THAT YOU WOULD PREFER TO AVOID (OR IS TRIGGERING) TO YOU, ESPECIALLY WHILE AT WORK?

4. WHAT CAN YOU COMMIT TO DOING AT HOME TO MEET THESE SENSORY NEEDS?

## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Touch/ Temperature

## Touch Seeking

### Pressure

**Self massage:** Squeeze the back of your neck and shoulders. Progressively move down your arms and legs.

**Hand massage with lotion:** Put on lotion while massaging your palms and gently pulling each finger.

**Give yourself a hug:** Wrap your arms around yourself and remind yourself that you are loved!

**Heavy work:** Lift something heavy (not so heavy so that you are straining to pick it up) like a couple of large books or reams of copy paper or 5lb weight. Carry them, push them over your head or out in front of you and back.

**Wall push-ups:** Find a bare section of the wall. Stand a few feet away and lean into the wall with your hands spread further than shoulder width apart. Lean in and push yourself back up. Repeat several times.

**Weighted lap pad:** Place a weighted lap pad on your lap while seated. These can be purchased or you can find do it yourself instructions online for making these. You can also put bean bags into a pillow case or just rest something flat and heavy on your lap to give a calming and grounding feel.



## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Touch/ Temperature

## Touch Seeking

### Texture

Find a texture that you enjoy. It might be soft, furry, silky, bumpy or rough.

**Scarves:** Wear a scarf that has a texture that you like.

**Fabric scrap:** Keep a piece of fabric in your pocket to pull out occasionally.

**Clothing:** Select clothing that is made of textures that you like.



### Busy Hands

Keeping our hands occupied can be a way to focus and regulate for many people. Explore what works for you.

**Fidgets:** There are many kinds of fidget available, from fidget rings and bracelets, to spinners and poppers. However ordinary items like rubber bands and paper clips can serve a similar purpose.



**Bubble wrap:** Popping bubble wrap can be stress relieving and regulating.

**Putty/ Play dough:** Kneading putty or play dough can help relieve tension in your hands.

**Sensory bucket:** Have a bucket or tub with marbles, beans, rice, to run your hands through.

**Worry Stone:** Keep a flat, smooth stone in your pocket to rub with your thumb.



## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Touch/ Temperature

## Touch Avoiding

### Pressure

**Stretching:** Avoid sitting for long periods of time. Get up and stretch to extend arms away from body and feel a sense of openness around you. Move your arms straight out and twist at the waist. Notice your personal space bubble around you.



**Clothing:** Choose clothing that is light and loose and does not stick to the body. Cut out any scratchy tags and avoid clothes seams that rub on your skin.

**Boundary Language:** Holding boundaries about your personal space by saying "I just need some personal space right now" or "I'm not really a hugger" can help you feel safe and control closeness and touch from others.



## Temperature Seeking and Avoiding

**Layers:** If you are someone that is always too cold or too hot, plan for that by wearing layers of clothing especially in new environments and locations.

### **Temperature changers:**

- Keeping an electric or handheld **fan** near you.
- Holding **ice** on you wrists or behind you ears.
- Using a small blanket or lap-pad.
- Using hand warmer packs or gloves





## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Sight

## Visually Seeking

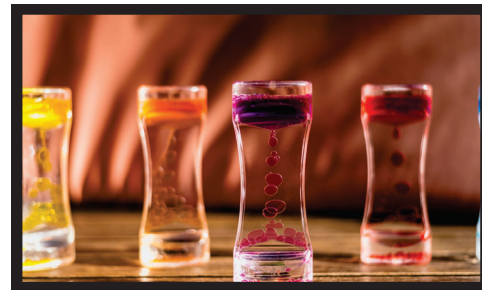
### Visual Images

**Pictures:** Keep pictures of nature scenes, favorite memories, or loved ones around you or as your background image on your computer or phone. Look at them and bring up a positive memory or feeling associated with the image.



**Memes or GIFs:** Save images that make you smile, laugh, or inspire you to look at during the day.

**Oil and Water Objects:** Look at oil and water or colored sand toys. Watch closely as the water or sand changes. Breathe deeply.



**Kaleidoscope** – Look through a kaleidoscope and notice as the colors change when you turn it.

**Videos** – Watch visual images or that:

- use a music visualizer
- have bright colors (for energizing)
- have soft color (for calming)

### Visual Environment

Patterned rug  
Bright paint  
Primary Colors  
Artwork  
Bright lights  
Clear view through windows with natural sunlight coming into the room.



## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Sight

## Visually Avoiding

### Visual Images

Pictures: Keep pictures that are simple one item images to focus on. Look at these when you need a visual break.

Notice when your eyes get tired. Close them and count to 10.

### Reduce light

Turn off lights or use a dimmer switch when possible.

Use lamps and natural light instead of overhead light.

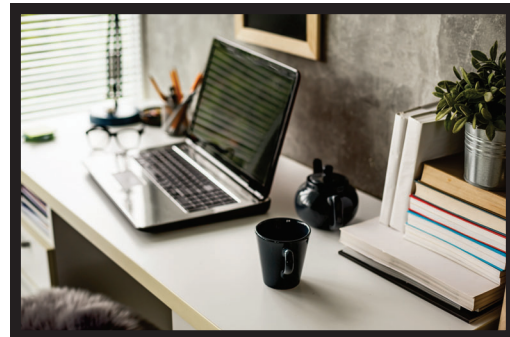
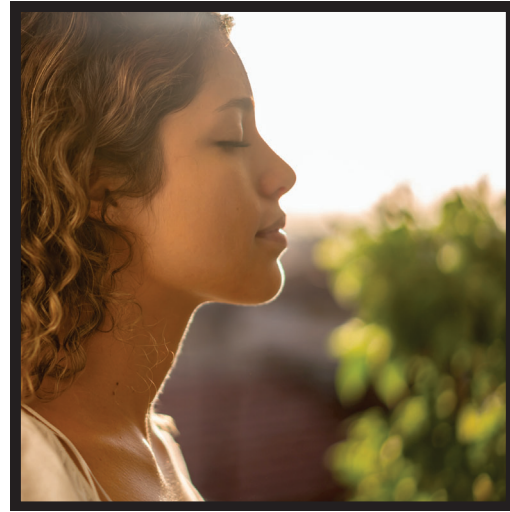
Use blue blocking glasses to lower light from computer and video screens.

### Environment

Reduce clutter in the room

Clean off your desk

Use muted colors and solid colors for decorations.





## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Sound

## Sound Seeking

**Increase the sound in your environment through:**

- Music
- Fan or air conditioner
- Background noise like radio or television
- Noise machine with ocean, traffic, or other sounds.

**Make your own sounds:**

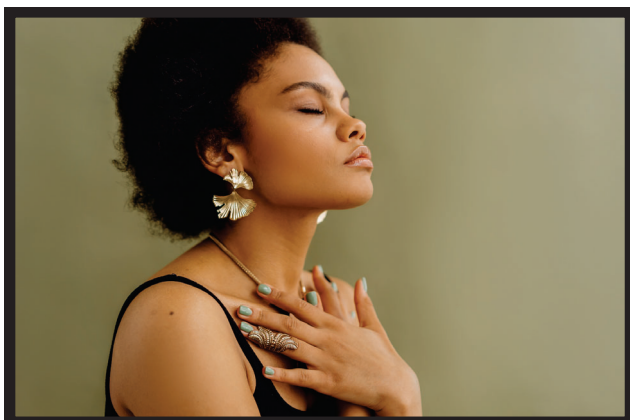
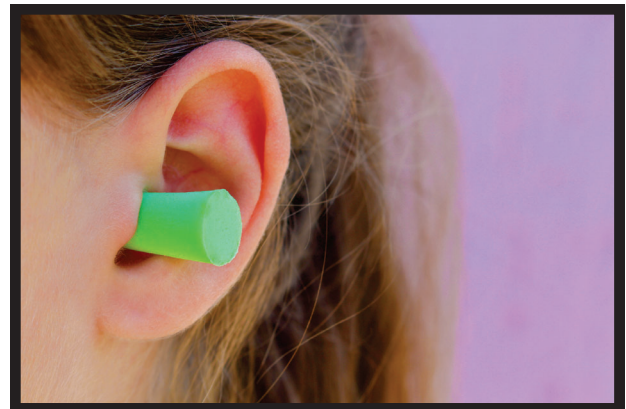
- Singing
- Humming
- Drumming
- Playing an instrument



## Sound Avoiding

**Decrease sound through:**

- Noise cancelling headphone
- Foam ear plugs to muffle sound without completely blocking it
- Quiet time or sound break
- Meditation
- Running water or white noise to override background noises



## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Smell

## Smell Seeking

**Essential Oils:** Scents such as lavender and sandalwood can be calming while mint or citric can be energizing. Put a few drops on your sleeve or wrist. You can then choose to smell it when needed but avoid the diffusing it into the air where scents can be overwhelming for some people.

**Natural Scents:** Keep things like mints, chocolates, dried lemons, or potpourri in your desk to smell as a calmer or energizer.

Fill a spice jar with tea, coffee beans, herbs, or other scents that you enjoy. You can smell through the spice jar holes and then close the cap to contain the smell.

Smell your food or beverages prior to eating or drinking.

Take deep breaths in and out through your nose.

## Smell Avoiding

**Masks:** Use a mask to dampen smells you find overwhelming or unpleasant.

Add a **preferred scent** to the mask to overpower other scents. Do this by storing masks in a bag with preferred scent item (like minty or cinnamon gum) and mask will absorb the scent.

Wear preferred scented lip balm

Breath through your mouth.



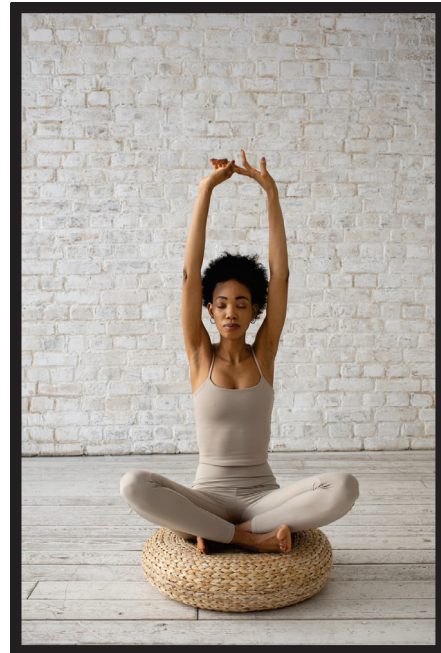
## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Movement/ Balance

## Movement Seeking

### Gross Motor:

- Go for a walk
- Put your arms out and twist at the waist
- Put your hands out in front of you and lift your knees to touch your hands.
- Touch your toes and reach for the ceiling.
- Stand on one leg and count to 5. Switch legs.
- Dancing
- Yoga poses
- Swaying back and forth
- Using a balance board
- Seated squat
- Climbing stairs
- Walk on your tiptoes
- Walk backwards



### Fine Motor:

- Coloring
- Drawing/ doodling
- Clicking a pen cap
- Twiddle thumbs
- Clapping games
- High fives and handshakes

### If seated:

- Swing or wiggle your feet
- Tap your foot
- Stretch your arms placing left hand on right shoulder and then switching your right hand to your left shoulder.
- Rock in a rocking chair
- Use a ball seat
- Therabands



## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Movement/ Balance

## Movement Avoiding

- Stillness
- Meditation
- Deep breathing
- Body scan – Progressively concentrate on each part of your body from your head to your toes. Feel the weight of each and imagine it sinking into the chair or surface that it is resting upon.
- Grounding activities that make you mindful of your surroundings.





## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Taste

## Taste Seeking

**Strong tastes:** Some are calmed or energized by strong flavors. Determine your preferences and add these into your meals or snacks while at work to enhance regulation. If they are scheduled you will be less likely to over-indulge.

- Spices such as hot peppers, onions, garlic, cumin, chili powder
- Cinnamon or mint candy
- Lemons / sour candy
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Salty snacks
- Sweet foods/ fruit



Hot or cold beverages

### Textures:

Chewy- bagels

Soft - bread

Crunchy -Apples, celery, carrots



## Taste avoiding

**Mild tastes:** Seek out plain unseasoned foods such as pasta, rice, or crackers.



## SENSORY BASED STRATEGIES

# Interoception

## High Sensitivity

**Hunger:** If you are sensitive to feeling hungry , make sure that you have small healthy snacks available to you throughout the day to avoid feeling dysregulated.

**Thirst:** Stay hydrated by drinking water throughout the day.

**Pain:** If you are sensitive to pain, care for aches and wounds appropriately. Use lidocaine or pain reliever as needed to manage pain. Seek medical care.

**Bathroom:** Schedule bathroom breaks into your routine to avoid urgent situations.

## Low Sensitivity

**Hunger:** If you are a person who gets too busy to eat during the day, make sure that you have small healthy snacks available to you and set a reminder on phone to keep yourself fueled.

**Thirst:** If you neglect to drink water use a metered water bottle to tell you how much you have been drinking. Set a goal and try to increase it each week.

**Pain:** If you have a low sensitivity to pain, scan your body for pain points and wounds to make sure that you are caring for yourself with compassion.

**Bathroom:** Schedule bathroom breaks into your routine to maintain health.





# Rhythm and Repetition

## Rhythmic beats

Our brains and bodies are regulated through patterned rhythmic sensory input. This may be due to the fact that our earliest brain structures developed in utero to the tune of our mother's heartbeat.

Drumming  
Music  
Tapping  
Singing  
Storytelling  
Spoken word and poetry  
Bouncing a ball  
Running



**Routine:** Regular patterns of activity and routine promote feelings of safety and regulation.

## Dosing

Our brains change in a “use-dependent” way, meaning how we use them is how they grow, develop and organize. Therefore it is not enough to just do these activities in response to stress. We must experience regular input that meets our sensory needs. Then we can build a brain that can stay regulated, even in stressful times.

We recommend 5–8 short “doses” of regulation per day. What can you commit to doing?

# Getting Help

## Signs that you may need more support

Stress and trauma are things that can impact people differently. And compassion fatigue, secondary trauma and burnout are prevalent in educational, helping and caring professions. Here are some signs that you may need to seek additional support from your doctor, mental health professional, clergy or other support person who is trained in this area.

- Sleeping too little or too much
- Using alcohol or other drugs to numb or avoid
- Having unwanted repetitive thoughts
- Having thoughts of suicide or self harm
- Having thoughts of harming others
- Reckless or high risk behavior
- High level of anxiety or panic attacks
- Depressed mood or hopelessness

If you need help, please reach out to someone. You are needed, you are loved and you are enough!



Text HOME to 741 741 to reach a crisis counselor by text  
Call 988 for a suicide and crisis hotline

# About the Author

Sara Daniel, LCW, MSW,  
Founder, Executive Director  
Daniel Educational Services, LLC

**Facilitation and Coaching Areas:**

Trauma Sensitive Schools  
Student Well-being  
Educator Well-being  
Family Education on Stress and Regulation  
Classroom Culture  
Organizational Change  
De-escalation and Regulation  
Early Childhood Education  
Student Support Planning



Sara has been facilitating transformational change through coaching and collaboration with school leadership teams, staff professional development and student specific consultation. She specializes in supporting schools to create successful outcomes for all students including those impacted by trauma and mental health challenges. She has worked with countless school districts and early care education centers nationwide and trained thousands of individuals on Implementing Trauma Sensitive Schools.

Sara is the former Vice President of Education for a large non-profit human services organization and a former administrator for a Milwaukee public charter school. She has been a senior coach and consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Trauma Sensitive School Initiative and is the co-author of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Learning Module Series. Sara is also certified clinician and trainer in Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) and the Neurosequential Model of Education (NME). She was the leader of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Interface Master Trainer Project for the state of Wisconsin (2014-2019), which promotes public education about ACEs and the development of self-healing communities in partnership with Laura Porter and Dr. Robert Anda. Sara is the founder of Daniel Educational Services.