

CO-REGULATION RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

REGULATE → CO-REGULATE → RELATE → REASON → TALK ABOUT IT

1 REGULATE MYSELF FIRST



Goal: Get yourself regulated enough to respond intentionally instead of reacting.

PAUSE & RESET

- Pause.
- Take a breath.
- Feel your feet on the floor.
- Unclench your jaw.
- Drop your shoulders.
- Do a quick stretch.

GROUND YOURSELF (5-4-3-2-1)

- 3 things I can see
- 2 things I can hear
- 1 thing I can feel
- Take 5 slow deep breaths.

USE REGULATION TOOLS

- Rock or sway gently.
- March on the spot.
- Self-applied pressure (crossed-arm squeeze or self-hug).
- Stretch a resistance band.
- Hold something cold.
- Sip water.
- Ask another adult to step in if needed.

REMEMBER



Your calm nervous system is often the most powerful co-regulation tool available.

2 CO-REGULATE

FIRST ASSESS:

- Will they let me physically touch them?
- Will they let me stay close?
- Do they need me to regulate from a distance?



MATCH WHERE THEY ARE AT.

A. IF THEY WILL ALLOW PHYSICAL TOUCH

DEEP PRESSURE & CONNECTION

- Deep pressure hug
- Arm squeezes
- Leg squeezes
- Rub their back
- Hold and rock back and forth
- Sit shoulder-to-shoulder
- Massage hands
- Isometrics
 - Let them push hands against yours
 - Let them push feet against your hands
 - Wall pushes
 - Push against a pillow together
 - Towel tug-of-war
 - Resistance band pulls

DEEP PRESSURE USING OBJECTS

- Weighted lap pad
- Weighted stuffed toy
- Heavy blanket
- Rolled towel pressed against chest or legs
- Sitting between firm pillows
- Foam roller pressure
- Carrying something heavy
- Resistance band exercises



B. IF THEY WILL LET YOU STAY CLOSE BUT NOT TOUCH

MATCH & SLOW

Meet their nervous system where it is and gradually slow things down.

- Tap yourself at their breathing pace, then gradually slow your tapping.
- Clap in a steady rhythm and gradually slow it down.
- Rock or sway beside them.
- March in place beside them, then gradually slow down.

BREATHING-BASED REGULATION (MODEL, DON'T DEMAND)

- Slow Breaths
- Box Breathing
- Finger Tracing Breaths
- Blow Bubbles
- Pretend fingers are candles and blow them out
- Use a candle-blowing app
- Blow a pinwheel
- Fog up a mirror
- Smell something scented and take slow breaths

SELF-APPLIED PRESSURE (MODEL)



SELF MESSAGE (MODEL)

Gently massage your arms, hands, or legs.

C. IF YOU NEED TO STAND BACK

FOCUS ON REGULATING YOURSELF & BEING A CALM, SAFE PRESENCE.

- Depth breaths
- Slow swaying
- Gentle rocking
- Self-massage arms or legs
- Crossed-arm squeeze
- Self-hug
- Slow pacing
- Calm posture

USE MINDFUL OBSERVATIONS (INSTEAD OF QUESTIONS)

"I see your fists are tight."

"Your body is not feeling calm right now."

REDUCE DEMANDS

- Fewer words
- Slower voice
- Less eye contact if they prefer
- Give space
- Stay available



3 RELATE (VALIDATION)



Dr. Bruce Perry's framework: Regulate → Relate → Reason
Once regulation is starting to happen, try validation.

EXAMPLES

- "That makes sense."
- "I'd be upset too."
- "I can see why you're frustrated."
- "You're having a tough time right now."

WATCH HOW IT LANDS

✓ VALIDATION HELPS:

- Stay with it.
- Continue connecting.

→ IF THEY ESCALATE:

- Go back to regulating and co-regulating.

4 REASON

ONLY MOVE HERE WHEN THEY SEEM READY.



YOU MIGHT:

- Reflect on what happened.
- Problem-solve together.
- Explore other options for next time.
- Discuss repair.

IF REASONING DOESN'T LAND

Do not push through. Go back to:

- 1 Regulating
- 2 Co-regulating
- 3 Relating

Reasoning only works when the thinking brain is available.

5 TALK ABOUT IT



WHEN THEY ARE CALM AND RECEPTIVE:

Now is the time for:

- ✓ Making amends
- ✓ Repair
- ✓ Consequences
- ✓ Teaching
- ✓ Problem-solving
- ✓ Planning for next time

MODEL ACCOUNTABILITY

If needed:

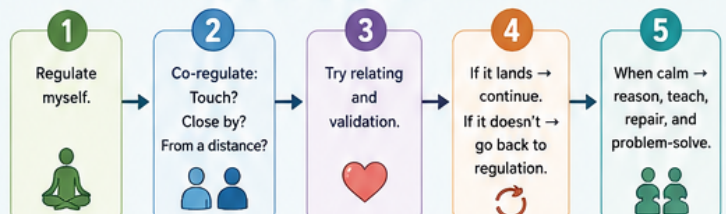
- Own your mistakes.
- Repair the relationship.
- Apologize.

EXAMPLE:

"I wish I'd handled that differently. I'm sorry for raising my voice."



QUICK DECISION TREE



★ If a step isn't working, move back down the ladder rather than pushing forward.