

Incorporating Sensory Strategies for Self-Regulation

Strategy	Tip	Why It Works
Provide Sensory Tools	Offer items like fidget toys, chewable necklaces, or weighted blankets.	Supports sensory needs and helps students self-soothe.
Create Sensory Breaks	Schedule 5–10 minute breaks with sensory-friendly activities like jumping or squeezing.	Prevents sensory overload and helps reset focus.
Use Noise-Canceling Headphones	Allow students to wear headphones during noisy activities.	Reduces auditory overstimulation and anxiety.
Incorporate Movement Stations	Set up areas with activities like balance boards or beanbag toss games.	Helps regulate sensory input and promotes physical activity.
Introduce Deep Pressure Techniques	Provide tools like compression vests or allow students to use weighted lap pads.	Deep pressure input has a calming effect on the nervous system.
Offer Quiet Spaces	Create a calming area with low lighting and minimal distractions.	Provides a retreat for students to regain control of their emotions.
Use Textured Materials	Provide tactile objects like sandpaper, fabric swatches, or slime.	Engages the sense of touch and helps students refocus.
Play Calming Music	Use soft, instrumental music during activities.	Creates a soothing atmosphere and reduces stress.
Utilize Visual Timers	Use timers with visual cues to indicate time left for activities.	Helps students anticipate transitions and manage expectations.
Rotate Sensory Options	Offer a variety of sensory tools and activities throughout the week.	Prevents boredom and ensures all sensory needs are met.

Using Visual Supports to Teach Self-Regulation

Strategy	Tip	Why It Works
Use Emotion Charts	Display charts showing faces or icons representing various emotions.	Helps students identify and label their feelings.
Create a 'How I Feel' Wheel	Provide a wheel with emotions and calming strategies.	Guides students in choosing a response when dysregulated.
Display Steps for Calming Down	Use posters with steps like 'Breathe, Count to 10, Take a Break.'	Simplifies the process and makes it easy to follow.
Introduce First-Then Boards	Show 'First [Task], Then [Reward]' with pictures or icons.	Encourages task completion and motivates students to self-regulate.
Provide Visual Reminders	Use cards or posters with phrases like 'Use kind words' or 'Take deep breaths.'	Offers non-verbal prompts to support appropriate behavior.
Create Personal Emotion Charts	Allow students to customize their own emotion charts.	Personalization increases ownership and usage.
Use Timers for Transitions	Provide visual timers to indicate how long an activity will last.	Helps students prepare for changes and reduces anxiety about transitions.
Display Positive Affirmations	Post affirmations like 'I am calm and in control.'	Reinforces positive self-talk and promotes a growth mindset.
Incorporate Picture Stories	Use visual narratives to teach scenarios requiring self-regulation.	Offers clear examples of how to handle challenging situations.
Provide Daily Checklists	Create visual checklists for routines like morning tasks or clean-up time.	Encourages independence and structured behavior.

Creating a Self-Regulation-Friendly Classroom Environment

Strategy	Tip	Why It Works
Set Up a Calm Corner	Designate an area with calming tools like weighted blankets, noise-cancelling headphones.	Provides students with a space to self-regulate when overwhelmed.
Establish Predictable Routines	Use consistent schedules and transitions throughout the day.	Reduces anxiety and helps students anticipate what's next.
Limit Overstimulating Environments	Avoid bright lights, loud noises, or busy decorations in the classroom.	Creates a sensory-friendly space conducive to self-regulation.
Use Visual Schedules	Provide clear visual cues for daily activities.	Helps students stay focused and reduces uncertainty.
Teach and Display Classroom Rules	Create simple, positively phrased rules with visuals (e.g., 'Use kind words').	Sets clear expectations and supports self-regulation through structure.
Provide Flexible Seating Options	Offer wobble chairs, beanbags, or standing desks for students with sensory needs.	Encourages movement while maintaining engagement.
Introduce Signal Systems	Use non-verbal cues like color cards or hand signals to request breaks.	Allows students to communicate their needs discreetly and effectively.
Schedule Movement Breaks	Incorporate short, guided breaks like stretching or yoga between lessons.	Prevents overstimulation and supports emotional regulation.
Display Emotional Support Tools	Make resources like emotion charts or calming visuals accessible in the classroom.	Encourages independent use of self-regulation tools.
Celebrate Self-Regulation Successes	Recognize and praise moments when students use self-regulation skills effectively.	Reinforces positive behavior and motivates ongoing practice.

Teaching Coping Strategies for Emotional Regulation

Strategy	Tip	Why It Works
Introduce Breathing Exercises	Teach simple techniques like box breathing (inhale, hold, exhale, hold for 4 seconds each).	Helps calm the nervous system and reduce stress.
Create a Calm-Down Kit	Provide tools like fidget toys, stress balls, or calming visuals in a portable kit.	Gives students accessible resources for managing emotions.
Teach Counting Techniques	Encourage counting to 10 or backwards from 10 when upset.	Distracts from stressors and allows time to regain control.
Practice Visualization	Guide students to imagine a calm, safe place when they feel overwhelmed.	Redirects focus and promotes relaxation.
Role-Play Coping Scenarios	Act out situations where students practice using coping strategies.	Builds confidence and reinforces appropriate responses.
Use Positive Affirmations	Teach students to repeat calming phrases like 'I can handle this.'	Encourages positive self-talk and reduces negative thoughts.
Introduce Movement Breaks	Incorporate activities like stretching, yoga, or walking.	Releases pent-up energy and improves emotional regulation.
Use Ice Cube or Cold Water Therapy	Offer a cold compress or ice cube to hold when emotions escalate.	Physical sensations can ground students and interrupt emotional overload.
Teach Progressive Relaxation	Guide students to tense and relax muscles from head to toe.	Reduces physical tension and increases awareness of relaxation techniques.
Reinforce Success	Praise students when they use coping strategies effectively.	Encourages consistent use and builds confidence in their ability to self-regulate.