

Social and Emotional Development.

LLHDC Webinar Part 1.

Page 1,

I would like to thank you for accessing this learning material. Child Development encompasses many different domains of growth. For this webinar we are going to focus on Social and Emotional Development. The current era we are living through has caused unfathomable change and distress. As educators, parents and even community members we all have a role to play in supporting children.

Resiliency and how we build resiliency needs to be our focus,

Page 2

To best understand how we support resiliency the following topics will be discussed,

- What is social and emotional development and why is it important?
- Self-Reg and the role of Stress as described by the Self-Reg Institute
- What “How does learning happen” Ontario’s pedagogy for the early years teaches us (child, Family, Educator)
- Strategies to support social and emotional development

Page 3

For quite awhile now advocates for life long health and well-being have been pointing fingers at the incredible role of early life experiences. Acknowledging that children are already fully capable human beings and not merely “human’s in training” is crucial. Seeing a child as competent of knowing their own wants and needs sets the tone for a child centred emergent curriculum. We want to build kids up rather than tear them down.

Page 4

Behaviour management techniques we reject include:

-shaming. (shaming is any comment or action that causes embarrassment, or effects a child's self-esteem)

-punishment vs discipline (While **punishment** focuses on making a child suffer for breaking the rules, **discipline** is about teaching him how to make a better choice next time.)

, -planned ignoring in combination with positive reinforcement (We may say “ignore the behavior”, but in reality, we end up ignoring the child's needs and their efforts to communicate. Ignoring is in direct opposition to our calling, which is to connect and form a secure attachment. Planned ignoring in particular, and by definition, is a form of punishment

-degrading comments such as “children are to be seen and not heard”, or “you have to earn my respect”, these comments imprint a societal view for the child. A view they will take into the world and manifest. Degrading comments also affect self-esteem and children's views of themselves and others.

Finally we reject **emotionally unresponsive consequences** such as time outs. Like planned ignoring, the classic definition of a time out does not support the child's emotional needs in that moment, nor does it support attachment.

Page 5

There is a major difference between a cooperative and well behaved child and a silent obedient child.

Page 6

All children should push boundaries, explore social expectations, show emotion...all emotions, and express their wants and needs. Through their interactions with caring and competent adults they gain the ability to use language to communicate how they feel and to gain help without “melting down”, as well as an understanding of what emotions are appropriate for a particular setting.

Page 7

So what does science tell us? Harvard Institute for the Developing child published a working paper titled, “children's emotional development is built into the architecture of their brains.” The first two paragraphs of the paper state, and I quote,

From birth, children rapidly develop their abilities to experience and express different emotions, as well as their capacity to cope with and manage a variety of feelings. The development of these capabilities occurs at the same time as a wide range of highly visible skills in mobility (motor control), thinking (cognition), and communication (language).

Yet, emotional development often receives relatively less recognition as a core emerging capacity in the early childhood years. The foundations of social competence that are developed in the first five years are linked to emotional well-being and affect a child's later ability to functionally adapt in school and to form successful relationships throughout life.

Here's a short video showing how neural pathways form in the developing brain.

(press play to play video)

Page 8

With an understanding of how neural pathways are formed let's have a look at the Shanker Method, Self Reg brain map.

Blue Brain-the Neocortex. When this part of the brain is in control thinking and self-awareness are dominant. This is the brain state that allows for calm communication and reasoning.

Red Brain- the Limbic system. This is a beautiful part of the brain. It's the epitome of ying and yang. The limbic system allows us to feel emotions. Through our limbic system we feel love, happiness and empathy, our limbic system also allows us to feel anger, sadness, fear and shame. When this part of the brain is in control however, children are in an emotionally reactive state and are not able to process their environment cognitively. Red brain is a state that requires immediate and purposeful action to support the child. We'll come back to what this support looks like in a minute.

The ideal brain state is balance between blue brain and red brain. We want children to make decisions using both logic and emotion. That's what makes us human after all. Our ability to think and feel at the same time.

Brown Brain-the reptilian brain. In evolutionary theory this part of the brain is where it all started. This part of the brain controls our survival mechanisms. When this part of the brain is in control there is little to no thought or emotion involved.

Page 9

What is self-reg all about? I would like to quote Dr. Stuart Shanker's 4 points to describe self-regulation

1. Self-Reg is based on the original, psychophysiological definition of self- regulation, which refers to how we respond to stress— whether in a manner that promotes or constricts recovery and growth.

2. Self-regulation is fundamentally different from self-control: it seeks to reduce troublesome impulses, not to inhibit them. (this ties in well with my previous statement. There is a major difference between a well-behaved child and a compliant child. Compliance has little to no autonomy and is not a long term solution)
3. Self-regulation is about understanding, not “monitoring and managing” emotions, thoughts and behaviour: in ourselves and others.
4. We all self-regulate, though sometimes in ways that are maladaptive: i.e., that lead to even greater stress down the road. An adult example of maladaptive self-regulation is self-medicating with alcohol to “drown” emotions. Sure at the time you feel happy or numb, but in the long term using alcohol to feel better has very negative consequences.

Page 10

What is self-reg? Let’s watch a short video which explains the 5 steps of Stuart Self Reg. (press play)

Page 11

Let’s review:

The practice of Shanker Self-Reg® helps people understand and respond to others (and themselves) by considering self-regulation across five interrelated domains—biological, emotion, cognitive, social, and prosocial—using The Shanker Method®:

1. **REFRAME** the behavior. recognize the difference between misbehaviour and stress behaviour
2. **RECOGNIZE** the stressors (across the five domains).
3. **REDUCE** the stress. In situations where you cannot reduce the actual stressor you can reduce the stress felt by the child by practicing possible situations through pretend play. (examples could include doctors office, new friends, a visitor, hair salon, or even an outing)
4. **REFLECT**: enhance stress awareness. Being stress aware is knowing how our bodies feel when we are calm, and knowing how our bodies feel when we are stressed.
5. **RESPOND**: develop personalized strategies to promote resilience and restoration. (we are going to end this webinar with a list of potential strategies)

Page 12

Moving on, I know many of you are likely asking yourselves what is the difference between misbehaviour and stress behaviour and how can you tell the difference?

Misbehaviour:

The key to misbehaviour is that the child could have acted differently: that she was aware that she shouldn't have done something, and was perfectly capable of acting differently.

Stress Behaviour

The key to stress behaviour is that the child is not fully aware of what she is doing, or why: she has limited capacity to act differently.

Stress behaviour is caused by too high a stress-load. The big challenge in doing Self-Reg is figuring out why the child's stress is so high.

Page 13

What are the 5 primary domains of stress?

Biological—noises, crowds, too much visual stimulation, not enough exercise

Emotional—strong emotions, both positive (over-excited) & negative (anger, fear)

Cognitive—difficulty processing certain kinds of information

Social—difficulty picking up on social cues, or understanding the effect of his behaviour on others

Prosocial—Difficulty coping with other peoples' stress

Page 14

Now that we have a basic understanding of self-regulation Let's listen again to Dr Stuart Shanker. I'm going to pause him a few times while he speaks to interject with things we are and are not doing in the home child care environment.

pause: 3:14, I'm going to pause him here for a minute. One note we can take from the Marshmallow test is the foundation these 30% of children have. We have come a long way especially in recent years concerning the types of curriculum we provide and the outcomes we are suggesting. I listened to another speaker recently Dr. Lilian Katz. I'm going to link her "what should children be learning" speech in the webinar notes. Her speech is about an hour long. But her wisdom and experience deserve admiration. I encourage you to watch it when you have some time.

Her speech uses an analogy she took from her husband who was a structural engineer and relates it to early childhood development.

He listed 4 important principles to follow when designing a building,

The first principle, Before you can build a building, you need to know everything you can about the soil and subsoil structure your are building on. This is perfect for child development because there are biological, cognitive and emotional aspects individual to each child. When we know how these aspects affect the child before they walk into

our programs we are able to adapt our environment and reframe their behaviour. By doing these things we are better able to meet their individual needs.

The second thing we need to know before designing a building is what type of building we are trying to build. Will it be tall, or fancy, or short or long. etc. In the early years, our goal is to “build” strong, independent adults who are capable of lifelong success in all areas of their lives. Knowing this we look at the third principle.

What types of forces will the building need to withstand? This is relevant for us, as we look at important influences that will affect children in their day-to-day lives. Both now and in the future. Influences such as technology, television, structured school settings, social and cultural expectations...and so on.

The fourth and final principle is a “home run point” if I’ve ever heard one. Her husband stated, if you don’t build the foundation properly it can be very dangerous and expensive to repair. This corresponds beautifully with the immense capacity we hold as early years educators to support young children.

Too often early years programs are looked at as a solution to a problem. The problem being, parents need to work and they need a safe place to put their child while they are working. Rather than early years programs being an investment for a healthy and successful generation of people.

Now back to Dr. Stuart Shanker. reminder, we left off with the Marshmallow test, the results of which showed 30% of children being able to wait the 15 minutes and 70% for whatever reason not being able to wait. (press play)

(Pause video @ 6:50 after Dr. Shanker mentions negative emotions being a drain).

We’re going to pause here again and refer back to that list of behaviour management techniques we reject. Time outs, shaming, planned ignoring, and punishment all have the same thing in common. They utilize negative reinforcement hoping for a positive result. As we know without a doubt. In math you cannot add a negative number to a negative number and have the sum be a positive number. It is factually impossible. What Dr. Shanker is describing follows the same principle but for children’s social and emotional energy. We cannot use negative reinforcement techniques or ignore negative environmental stressors and expect children to make positive choices.

Okay let’s listen again, (press play)

Page 15

Quote worth repeating: “Guess what happens with you regulate children and help them develop skills to self-regulate? You unleash their potential.

There is no such thing as a bad kid, a stupid kid or a lazy kid. But if we do the wrong things we will turn him into a bad, stupid, lazy kid.”

Page 16

Putting this knowledge into practice. All of this information is great in theory. But how do we put it into practice?

The first step might surprise you a little.

Page 17

We need to practice self-reg ourselves first. If we are not in a calm state, we cannot manifest calm in anyone else. There are children who test our patience. Being aware of your physiological responses is important. If you notice that you are becoming tense or irritated take the time to fuel your calm. Take deep breaths, name your emotion to yourself. There is science that suggests simply naming your anger, frustration, sadness etc reduces its power over you and moves you out of red brain and back to a more balanced state.

In the moment it's important to “fuel our calm” but there are things we can do in our daily lives to support our ability to remain calm. Conveniently these suggestions work for both adults and children.

Page 18

Daily practices to “fuel our calm” include (but are not limited to)

1. Eating a healthy and well balanced diet. By opposition eating a diet high in processed foods, refined sugars, and caffeine depletes our body's energy. Food can be seen as a maladaptive self-regulator. For example: consuming foods high in refined sugar or caffeine to give us “energy” when we're tired is a very short term solution. Shortly after consuming these foods our bodies will crash and we'll be even more tired than we were before. Alternatively if we fuel our bodies with healthy balanced meals and snacks we will have long term energy without the crash.
2. Sleep! This is not breaking news. Sleep is one of the most important things we do for our bodies and our minds. Sleep cannot be thought of as a piggy bank either. Our bodies need enough sleep every night. Even one night of restless or missed sleep will have negative consequences on our ability to self-regulate the following day. We will have less patience, be more irritable and we will feel sluggish throughout the day.
3. Exercise. Getting physical activity into your daily life is not just something one does to lose weight. Movement is important for not only physical health but mental well-being. Research studies for depression have shown improved symptoms when exercise is included as part of the health plan. Feel good hormones are released

when we exercise and have effects that last long after we stop moving. Double benefit, exercise helps with getting a good nights rest and digestive processes.

4. Build strong prosocial relationships. We are a social species. We need other people. But we need other people who “fill our cups.” Connect daily with the people in your life who make you feel happy, loved and important. If you have people in your life who are draining, who cause you stress and anxiety see if there is a way to fix the relationship. If the relationship continues to be negative it’s in your best interest to distance yourself where possible to create room for your prosocial relationships.

Page 19

View Relationships as the foundation for everything else. I’m going to quote an excerpt from How Does Learning Happen? An introduction for Home Child care providers.

The way we view others influences how we interact with them. How Does Learning Happen? Promotes a shared view of children, families, and educators – and the relationships between them – that will help shape all aspects of your home child care program.

Specifically:

- When you see children as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential, you value and build on their strengths and abilities.
- When you see families as experts who know their children better than anyone else and have important information to share, you value and engage them in a meaningful way.
- When you see yourself as a competent caregiver and educator, and as someone rich in experience, you are responsive and nurturing. This view of yourself, along with what you learn through relationships with children, families, and others in the community, allows you too create engaging experiences and environments.

Page 20

Now that we’ve discussed why social and emotional development is important, the basics of self-regulation, the idea of “fuelling our own calm,” and the importance of relationships. Let’s outline the step-by-step framework.

Page 21

So where is the step-by-step framework? Social and emotional develop, with an emphasis on self-regulation is an individual journey. Every child is different and what works for one child won’t necessarily work for another child. To make things more interesting what works for one child one day may not work for that child the next day!

The best and most beneficial thing you can do is be actively engaged in your daily programming. Observe the children in your program, act as a co-learner during opportunities of free play, monitor the environment. Additionally document with as much detail when unwanted behaviours present. Be a stress detective to see if there is a common theme for the child. Additionally, open and respectful communication with parents is key. Knowing if there is a source of stress at home will help to reframe the behaviour and hopefully redirect a situation before it escalates for the child.

Step 5 of Shanker Self-Reg is to “respond” this is where we develop coping strategies to support self-regulation.

Examples of self-regulation strategies include but are not limited to:

- **Manage your own stress.** As stated before you cannot fuel calm in someone else if you are not calm. Get your own needs met so that you can support children and be a positive role model.
- **Keep the end goal in mind.** The end goal is not to simply decrease children’s challenging behaviour. We want to teach skills. When children learn how to cope with stress, their behaviour will improve. You will notice that they can handle changes in their environment better and respond to stress more calmly.
- **Develop realistic expectations.** Assess children’s skills to determine where they need support. Remember that younger children have less developed brains and are less able to regulate themselves. Demand from children as much as they are able to handle, keeping in mind that success leads to more success. Expect setbacks to learning and growth.
- **Stay calm and model self-regulation.** Remember that when children are reacting in the moment, they are in survival mode. Their red brain and brown brain are in full swing. Do not try to talk to them because they cannot respond to logic or reason. Instead, stay calm, show empathy, help them become self-aware, and guide them through sensory experiences and calming strategies.
- **Be supportive and encouraging.** Help children feel cared about, valued, and understood as they learn to regulate. Show genuine interest and engage with them as a coach and mentor.
- **Ensure that children’s resource pool for regulation is regularly replenished.** Sleep, a balanced diet, and regular exercise are essential. Help children plan for activities they enjoy and in which they do well.
- **Reduce unnecessary demands.** Review children’s routines to make sure they are not overloaded. Days which are too busy will increase stress and decrease children’s energy levels to regulate.
- **Provide structure and consistency.** Let children know what to expect and what is expected of them (e.g., routines, clear rules, proactive planning). Predictability helps to decrease stress. If something new will be happening in your program, discuss and prepare children before it happens.

- **Collaborate and make learning about regulation fun.** Be creative when helping children develop, practice, and adopt coping strategies toward regulation. Listen to their ideas. Talk about ‘learning to regulate’ in ways they can understand. For example, if children like science, present this task to them as an experiment. If they like spy games, present it as a mission.

Page 24

- **Teach children about their brains.** Help them understand the idea of red, blue and brown brain and relating to how they are feeling.
- **Expand their vocabulary.** Talk to children about their feelings. Naming emotions and how they affect them.
- **Enhance their self-awareness to help them self-monitor.** Help children rate their emotions and energy reserve on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Help them identify strategies to calm and regulate.
- **Help them develop a toolbox of coping strategies to use when dysregulated.** The idea is to help children stop in the moment - stay calm and think - and not act on their big emotions.
 - Mental break (e.g., book, music, coloring, creativity, hobbies, games)
 - Physical break (e.g., dance, sports, walk, stretch)
 - Spiritual break (e.g., yoga, meditation, mantra)
 - Sensory experience (e.g., sound, smell, touch, movement)
 - Grounding activity (e.g., deep breathing, slow counting, visual imagery)
 - Positive self-talk (e.g., affirmations)
 - Social support (e.g., ask for help)
- **Help children identify opportunities to practice their skills.** Start by practicing in moments of calm. Once mastered, they will be more able to apply these skills during increasingly challenging situations. A really good example of practicing is done through pretend play. If a child is going to the doctors to get a needle, an invitation to play can be setup to explore this process. Children inherently have a fear of the unknown. Practicing helps to remove the “unknown”.
- **Give immediate and specific feedback.** Focus on effort over result. Reframe failures as opportunities for learning and growth. Make a plan for how to handle the next challenge.
- **Use rewards, positive reinforcement, and praise.** Rewards can include common everyday privileges (be the leader, pick where to sit at the table, pick an activity, 1:1 story time etc.) or special privileges (screen time: if appropriate, new toy, etc.). Help motivate children to learn and practice regulation. Celebrate small successes.
- **Hold back from punishing dysregulated behaviour.** Instead, use it as a starting point to understand where children need support. Remember that punishment will not teach children the skills they need to regulate.

Page 25

Self-regulation is a skill that needs to be supported in children because it is key to their overall success and happiness. Children who can cope with stress, anger, disappointment, and frustration are more able to do well in school, with friends, and at home. Remember that the more children practice regulating themselves, the easier it will become for them to cope with and adapt to change. As an early years educator you have a tremendous responsibility to ensure you are supporting prosocial and emotional development. After all we are laying the foundation, and as Dr Lillian Katz so accurately said, “if you don’t build the foundation properly it can be very dangerous and expensive to repair.”

Page 26

Citations: Are available in the webinar notes. You can access this document by visiting www.littlelambs hdc.com and visiting the training page.

What’s next: We are going to follow up this webinar with a short questionnaire. The link can be found in your email. Once received a Certificate of Completion will be sent to you. This webinar qualifies as 1.5 hours of professional development time.

Have Questions or need support? if you have tried every strategy you can think of and you're feeling defeated. There is a chance that the behaviour is related to a biological stressor or is otherwise beyond our scope, requiring additional support. We have access in Hastings County to mental health professionals, Resource Consultants and other services. Reminder parental permission is required to access these services.

Citations:

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004). Children's Emotional Development Is Built into the Architecture of Their Brains: Working Paper No. 2. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

S. Shanker.(no date) *Self-Reg the Basics*. The Merit Centre., Retrieved from: https://self-reg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Infosheets_Self-Reg_the_Basics.pdf

S. Shanker.(no date) *The Early Years*. The Merit Centre., Retrieved from: https://self-reg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Infosheet_The_Early_Years.pdf

S. Shanker.(no date) *Self-Regulation 10 Lessons Learned*. The Merit Centre., Retrieved from: https://self-reg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Infosheet_10_Lessons_Learned.pdf

Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning. (2007). *Early learning for every child today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings*. Toronto: Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning. (2014). *An Introduction to How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years-For Home Child Care Providers.*, Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HomeChildCareEn.pdf>

Cynthia Yoo. (ND). *How to Support Self-Regulation Difficulties in Children*. Foothills Academy. Retrieved from: <https://www.foothillsacademy.org/community-services/parent-education/parent-articles/self-regulation-difficulties>

Dr. L.Katz (Nov 20, 2012) *What Should Children Be Learning*. YouTube video, retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/aiZW0jlngc8>