

Co-Regulation in Action: Educator Strategies to Support Student Regulation

Purpose & Overview

Self-regulation doesn't happen in isolation. It develops within relationships. Students learn to regulate emotions, attention, and behavior when caring adults provide **co-regulation**: modeling, scaffolding, and supportive presence.

This worksheet gives educators **clear frameworks, practical routines, and ready-to-use scripts** to embed co-regulation in daily practice, supporting students across all tiers.

What is Co-Regulation?

- **Definition:** The process by which adults (and peers) provide **warmth, structure, and modeling** to help students manage their emotions and behaviors.
- **Why it matters:** Self-regulation is a developmental skill. Students who “can’t” regulate often simply *haven’t learned how yet*.
- **Goal:** Move from *co-regulation* → *shared regulation* → *independent regulation*.

The 3 Pillars of Co-Regulation

1. Warmth & Connection

- Build trust through consistent, calm, and affirming interactions.
- Use tone, body language, and proximity to signal safety.

2. Modeling & Teaching

- Narrate your own regulation strategies: *“I’m feeling a little stressed, so I’m taking a deep breath before I start.”*

- Explicitly teach strategies like breathing, positive self-talk, or movement.

3. Scaffolding & Support

- Provide prompts, cues, and tools when students are dysregulated.
 - Fade support as skills increase.
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Tiered Co-Regulation Strategies

Tier 1 (Universal – for All Students)

- Greet students by name at the door.
- Embed brain breaks every 20–30 minutes.
- Use class-wide calming strategies (stretch, mindfulness minute).
- Normalize naming emotions: feelings charts, check-ins.

Tier 2 (Targeted – for Some Students)

- Create calm corners with sensory tools.
- Use co-regulation “buddies” for peer support.
- Practice pre-corrects: *“Remember, if you get frustrated, try your break card.”*
- Offer choices to increase control (two assignments, two workspaces).

Tier 3 (Intensive – for Few Students)

- Individualized co-regulation plan tied to BIP.
- One-on-one regulation coaching with adult.
- Use co-created scripts for escalations.

- Partner with counselor/psych for ongoing skill-building.

Practical Scripts for Educators

When a Student is Escalating:

- “I can see this is really hard right now. Let’s take a pause together.”
- “You don’t have to do this alone. I’ll stay with you until you’re ready.”
- “Let’s pick one of your strategies—want to try breathing or a quick walk?”

When a Student is Calming:

- “You used your break card—that worked well. How do you feel now?”
- “Thanks for letting me know you needed space. That’s a great choice.”

When Modeling Regulation:

- “I’m frustrated because the computer isn’t working. I’m going to take two deep breaths before I try again.”
- “Sometimes I need to make a plan—watch me write down the steps.”

Classroom Routines that Build Co-Regulation

- **Morning check-in:** Students mark how they’re feeling (visual chart, journal, digital tool).
- **Regulation stations:** Areas with calming strategies available for all students.
- **Modeling moments:** Teachers narrate their own coping throughout the day.

- **Closing circle:** End-of-day reflection to practice expressing emotions safely.
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Co-Regulation Tools Menu (Student-Friendly)

- Breathing cards or visuals
- Fidgets or sensory objects
- Movement breaks (walk, stretch, jump)
- Positive self-talk scripts
- Visual timers or countdowns
- Break cards
- Drawing/writing options

Case Scenario

Scenario: A 4th grader with ADHD begins shouting when asked to transition from preferred activity.

- **Traditional Response:** Teacher issues consequence for “noncompliance.”
 - **Co-Regulation Response:** Teacher calmly approaches:
 - “I know switching is tough. Let’s take 3 breaths together, then we’ll move. Do you want to bring your drawing to finish later?”
 - Student regulates with support → transition successful.
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Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	Fix
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Expecting independence too soon	Remember: co-regulation is a developmental scaffold.
Using punitive tone or language	Stay calm, model regulation, and use neutral voice.
Limiting co-reg only to Tier 3 students	Normalize it for all students to reduce stigma.
Skipping reflection after an escalation	Build in “repair time” to strengthen skills and trust.

Educator Reflection Questions

- *Do I model my own regulation strategies aloud for students?*
 - *Do students have access to tools/routines for calming?*
 - *How does my tone and body language signal safety during escalations?*
 - *Am I reinforcing co-regulation across Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3?*
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Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

- Pick one class-wide co-regulation routine (e.g., 1-minute mindful breathing after recess).
- Introduce and practice it with students.
- Reinforce success by naming it: *“We just calmed our bodies together—now we’re ready to learn.”*