

## HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP SELF REGULATION

Many of the so-called behaviour problems we see in children happen when they are not able to manage their emotions. One of the major tasks of early childhood is to learn how to identify emotions and to learn strategies for managing these.

However, infants and very young children need help to calm down, they are not able to self soothe. They need their caregivers to be responsive and sensitive. Their little bodies need help to move from a state of upset or high arousal to a state of feeling settled. So, all of the suggestions in Module 4 not only help your baby feel safe and loved, they give your baby's body the opportunity to learn how to become settled.

As children learn to talk and develop more complex thinking processes, they are also able to learn strategies for calming down, staying focused and developing their attention and concentration skills.

There are many ways parents and carers can support the development of these skills. In the following pages we will explore some of the ways you can support the development of key skills that will help children to learn how to play with others, understand rules and turn taking and develop their attention and concentration skills.

Laying the foundations for this happens right from birth – but there are key developmental stages where parents and carers can really help children develop self-regulation. One of the most important first steps is to develop emotion regulation skills. This happens when children are about 4 years of age and we see a big surge in development right up until they are about 8 years old.

As children grow older, they become better at focusing their attention, concentrating for longer periods of time.

The five skills young children need to develop that are key to managing their emotions are:

- Learning emotion words
- Learning ways of calming down
- Learning to focus their attention
- Learning ways of waiting - sometimes called delayed gratification
- Learning ways of controlling impulsive behaviour - sometimes called inhibitory control

## CHILDREN AND SELF REGULATION

### Where are your child's strengths?

If your child is older than 4 years:

Date:

Challenge	Strength
Your child knows at least five emotion words	
Your child knows one strategy for calming down	
Your child can focus their attention for a short time	
Your child will wait for a treat	
Your child will stop doing something when you ask them to stop	