



## The Lee Wiggins Childcare Centre SELF-REGULATION POLICY

### Basic Concept – Self-regulation

Self-regulation allows children to manage their energy, emotions, behaviour and attention in ways that are acceptable in social situations and that support the achievement of positive goals; this ultimately supports positive relationships, learning, and their overall wellbeing.

Self-regulation allows children to effectively deal with stressors (e.g. noise, light, movement or scary situations) that deplete energy. The depletion of each child's energy reserve in stressful situations is unique to each child (some children will have to work harder than others to perform the same task) (Shanker, 2009, 2010, in press).

Children need the opportunity to explore their environment and discover their capabilities. This involves testing limits and experimenting with social interactions. This experimentation often results in behaviour that adults may find unacceptable because they exceed set rules, or endanger the safety of the child or others. Given that these situations will occur, we have appropriate strategies for enabling children to redirect their behaviour through self-regulation.

### Five Aspects of Self-Regulation

Children's biological temperament and social skills play a factor in how well they can self-regulate. The following five aspects come together to play a significant role in children's ability to self-regulate:

1. **Biology (Temperament)**
2. **Emotion-regulation**
3. **Cognitive factors:**
  - Display effortful control
  - Sustained attention; not easily distracted
  - Attention switching; able to transition between tasks
  - Inhibit impulses
  - Able to deal with frustration, delay, distractions
4. **Social:** able to develop and use socially-desirable behaviours
5. **Moral:** the development of empathy and values (Shanker, 2009, 2010, in press)

### 1. Rationale

"Early years programs play an important role in supporting children's learning, development, health and well-being. Evidence from diverse fields of study tells us that children grow in programs where adults are caring and responsive. Children succeed in programs that focus on active learning through exploration, play, and inquiry" (Ontario, 2014, p. 4).



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For children to become happy and secure members of society, they must learn how to successfully deal with problems in interpersonal relationships. As well as learning self-discipline and inner control, they must also learn positive constructive ways to interact with other people. As noted by Dr. Stuart Shanker, “self-regulation has been identified as a key factor in wellbeing, learning and development”, (Shanker, 2009, 2010, in press).

The role of the educator is to support the child’s sense of being a worthwhile person while providing opportunities for the child to learn appropriate ways to interact socially and with objects. This partnership between the child and the caregiver, vital especially during early childhood, allows for development of flexible self-regulation skills that support change and exploration. Flexible self-regulation stems from the process of internalizing prior patterns observed by the child during caregiver-supported regulation (Goulet, 1998, p. 28).

The goal is to allow children to think out problems rather than to solve problems for them. The problem-solving approach focuses on teaching children morality, over obedience; in teaching morality they become self-disciplined, accountable and considerate. They are able to decide whom to trust and to be influenced by, rather than simply obeying authority, which may come from corrupting sources (Markham, 2014).

The process of problem-solving with children involves having children go through the following process: identify their problems, think of alternatives, predict consequences and make decisions. This process must be geared to the developmental level of the individual child. The development of problem-solving skills can and should be encouraged from a very young age.

To ensure the child’s safety and well-being, and to foster social and emotional development, it is necessary at times to impose limits or to set standards of acceptable behaviour. Adults should be guided by their knowledge and understanding of the child’s growth and development, as well as an understanding of the individual child.

As in all areas of child development, the development of self-control and social skills follows a sequence from birth to adulthood. Within this sequence, infants and toddlers require more adult intervention and closer supervision and guidance. As children grow older they are able to exercise more self-control and have a greater understanding of concepts such as health, safety, and respect for others and property. Therefore, external controls can gradually be removed as children develop a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour.

Standard IV: B.4 from the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice reinforces the expectation of educators to “set goals, make decisions, resolve challenges, decide on developmentally responsive activities and experiences, provide behaviour guidance and work collaboratively in the best interest of the children under their professional supervision” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2016, p. 9).



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### 2. How to Enhance Self-Regulation

In collaboration with the MEHRIT Centre, Dr. Shanker provides resources for guiding self-regulation including the following five-step method:

1. Read the signs of stress and reframe the behaviour.
2. Recognize the stressors.
3. Reduce the stress.
4. Reflect.
5. Respond (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2016, p. 8).

The strategies below can be used alongside the five-step method to ensure that the steps are used effectively:

**Problem Solve:** Understand each child's stressors, to help ensure they stay calm and aware.

**Exercise:** When a child is stressed, exercising their deep muscles is effective.

**Planned Programming:** By using analogies educators can help children understand their own state of arousal and help them learn how to calm down (e.g. car analogy, my engine is running too fast, too slow or just right).

**Play Based Curriculum:** When children are engaged in meaningful experiences (based on their interests), they are focused. This allows the child to define their own thinking and the perspective of others. Through play children communicate their needs and wants, and establish connections between objects, people and ideas (Shanker, 2009, 2010, in press).

### 3. Strategies for Incorporating Self-Regulation into Curriculum

Self-Regulation strategies are effective only within the context of the entire curriculum. Ensuring that all curriculum components are of a high quality encourages self-regulation. Within the components of educators, environment, program, parent involvement, and evaluation there are strategies that can be used to encourage self-regulation. Some strategies are outlined below:

#### **Educators**

- i) Establishing a positive relationship with the children.
- ii) Having reasonable expectations and communicating them to the children.

#### **Environment**

- i) Ensuring health and safety standards are met.
- ii) Appropriate use of space.

#### **Program**

- i) Planned daily routine with limited transition times.
- ii) Variety of developmentally appropriate activities.

#### **Parent Involvement**

- i) On-going information sharing with parents.
- ii) Opportunity for parent meeting and sharing of resources.

#### **Evaluation**

- i) Regular review of guidelines and regulations.
- ii) On-going discussion regarding specific situations.



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