

What is emotional regulation?

Emotional regulation refers to the process of how children process and understand the emotions they experience and how they express their feelings. It is the ability that allows a child to modulate themselves in an emotional or stressful situation.

Who can help my child to develop emotional regulation?

A child's ability to regulate their emotions may be linked to many skills and Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists all play a role in ensuring the foundation skills are in place for emotional regulation.

A Psychologist may assist by:

- Examining behaviour patterns and emotional responses to look for patterns in how a child responds to emotions and events
- Working with families to create a plan in how to respond to a child's behaviour
- Working with families to teach emotional understanding and identify strategies that may assist a child in regulating their emotion
- Assisting families in identifying other difficulties that make it challenging for a child to regulate themselves including the impact of trauma and anxiety.

An Occupational Therapist may assist by:

- Completing a sensory profile with a family to identify a child's sensory preferences and determine their impact on emotional regulation.
- Working with families to help them consider their child's sensory needs (that can contribute to emotional outbursts) and develop strategies with parents to help them meet their child's sensory needs
- Working with families to develop a child's understanding of what their body feels like when they feel emotions and developing a plan in how to manage changes in emotions through programs like 'Zones of Regulation'
- Working with schools to develop sensory strategies to assist a child in managing the demands of a classroom and assisting in their regulation across the school day

A Speech Pathologist may assist by:

- Assessing a child's language skills to ensure they understand language concepts linked to emotional regulation including understanding basic emotions, recognising emotions in facial expressions, and linking events to feelings.

How can Out Loud help my child with emotional regulation?

Out Loud provides Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy supports only. When considering emotional regulation as a goal, they may ask families to also access Psychology supports.

A child requires support from all adults in their life to assist them in integrating the concepts and strategies into everyday life. When working with your child on their self and emotional regulation goals, it is expected that you will be in the sessions and learning the strategies and language they are teaching so that you can use the same language at home and practice the strategies regularly.

Your child's therapist may also provide you with specific activities to try, resources to use, and online learning or video clips to watch. These things are designed to help you and your child to practice learning in different environments.

Children below the age of 7 require co-regulation as they do not yet have the cognitive ability to self-regulate. For children under the age of 7, supporting emotional regulation will be done through supporting parents with strategies they can use with their child rather than 1:1 sessions. Parent coaching on strategies for co-regulation may also be the best approach for children who have significant language and cognitive deficits.

While our team may consider 1:1 sessions without a parent present for children over 7, the family will need to understand all elements of the therapy approach, and will need to ensure they implement strategies and complete home practice activities. Parents will need to attend regular check in sessions with the therapist (with or without their child present) to discuss the effectiveness of strategies and problem solve challenges.

Once your child has a basic understanding of the strategies, your therapist may talk to you about your child participating in a group session that is designed to provide an environment where they can practice their skills and engage with peers learning the same things.

Our team will work with a family on emotional regulation goals for a maximum of six months. If there is little or no progress shown in this time, the therapist will then talk to you about barriers to achievement and may recommend psychology services to address their needs.

Why do I need Psychology support for emotional regulation if I am accessing Out Loud?

Psychologists play a pivotal role in developing emotional regulation, particularly when a child has:

- significant anxiety
- experienced a trauma or situations that impact their emotional well being
- established behaviour patterns that need specific behaviour plans to address a shift in behaviour.

Out Loud's team does not have specialist training in these areas and the support of a Psychologist is required in these areas before we can consider other supports.

Our therapists will work with you to identify what elements they can support you in and where Psychology support is required. We can help you with this by discussing your NDIS budget, providing contact information for local psychologists, and supporting you to contact Psychology services.