Little Bloom
education consultant

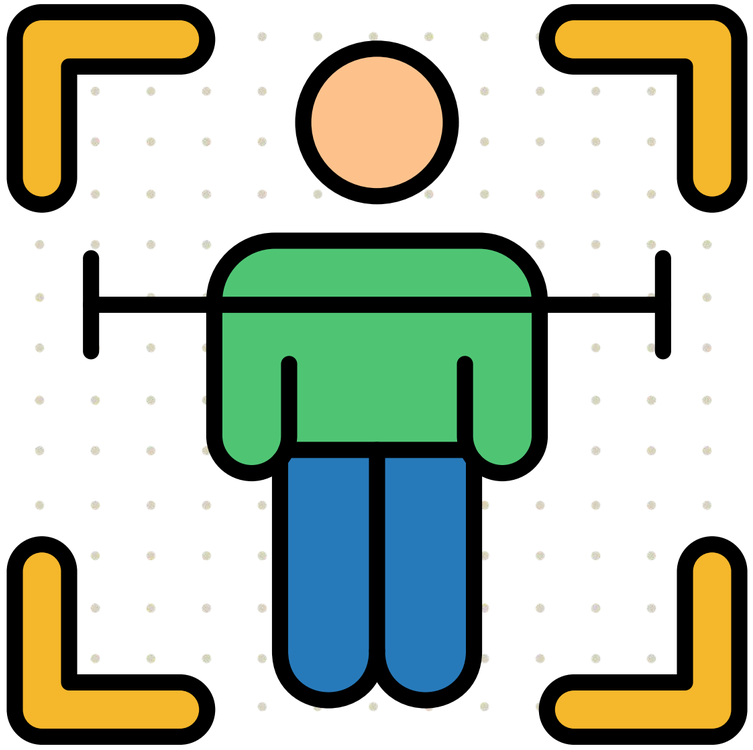
Grounded Educators, Grounded Children

The Role of Educator Regulation in ECEC

ECLD Immersion Experience
March 28, 2026



Body Scan





Artist:
Seantelle Walsh

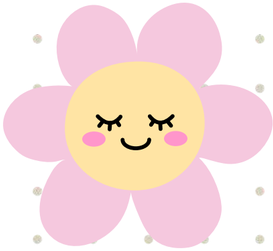
Little Bloom
education consultant



Meet Your Mentor

17+ years in early childhood education
Prindy teacher
ECE mentor + consultant
Practicum supervisor
Sessional university lecturer + tutor
Mama to Lottie (6) + Emmi (1)

What We'll Cover Today



A little bit of me talking at you:

- What regulation really means
- Where we get stuck
- Understanding your window of capacity

A lot of you trying out some strategies:

- Move It, Feel It, Share It, Park It, Play With It

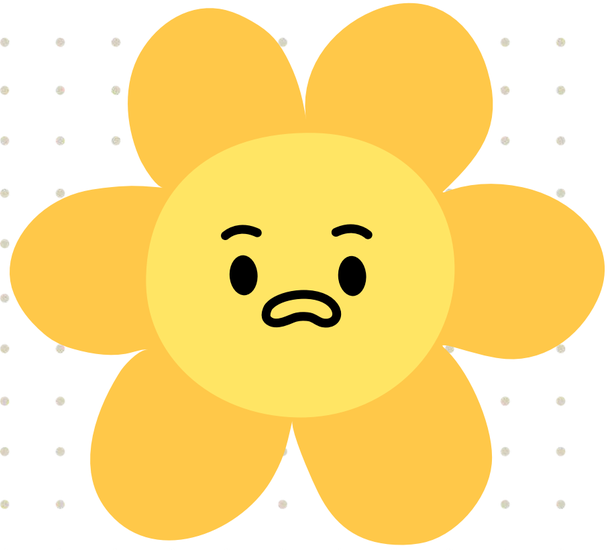
You will receive these slides!

ROLL CALL!



What brought you to this session?

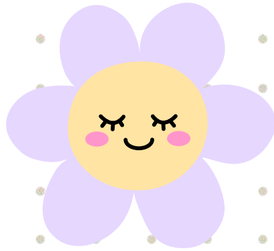
Why does this matter to you?



This session does not constitute medical advice.

There is a difference between feeling triggered v. feeling activated.

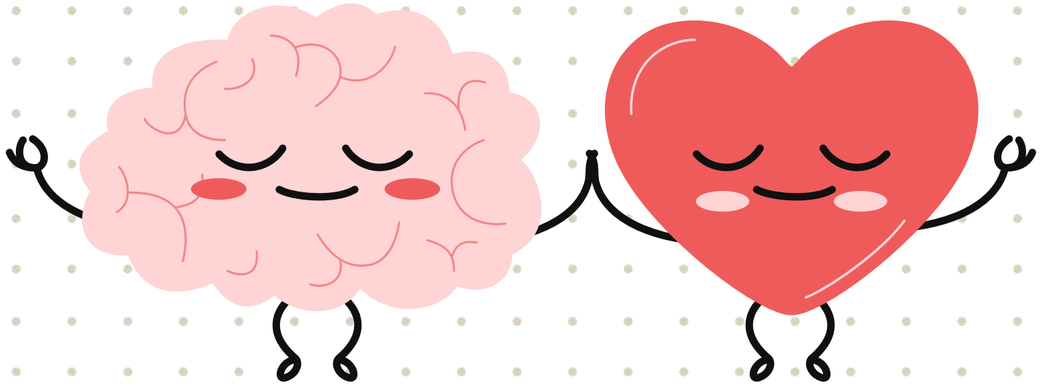
What is Regulation?



The capacity to:

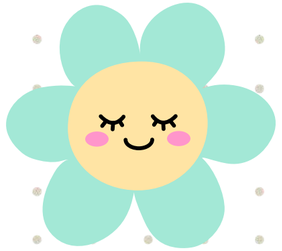
- feel the emotion (and to regulate what we feel and how strongly we feel it)
- stay in a window where connection is still possible
- seek support (when needed)

Our capacity to manage (regulate) what we feel, how strongly we feel it, and how we express it.



It's not about being calm or suppressing your emotions; it's about how you work with your emotions (and your capacity to do so).

Why is Educator Regulation Important?

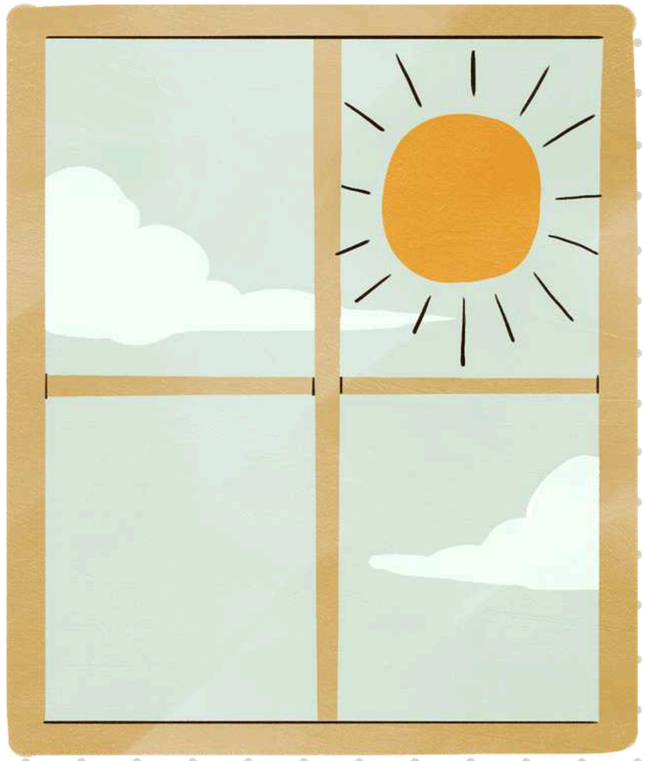


- Stronger relationships with children.
- Greater self efficacy with behaviour support.
- Reduced educator burnout.
- Greater job satisfaction/fulfilment.
- Better equipped to navigate stress and frustration.
- Acts as a buffer against stress for children.
- Cultivates a positive group culture.

(Alazmi & Salem, 2021; Chen et al., 2025; García-Álvarez et al., 2021; Greenier et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2024; Sutton et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2025).

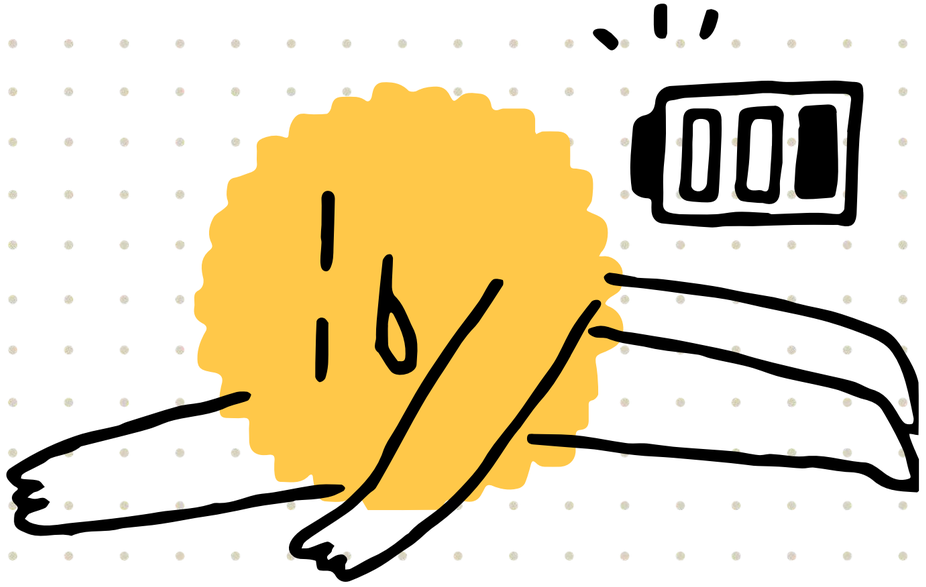
Your Window of Capacity

- Our capacity to navigate stress + emotion.
- It fluctuates.
- We want to both honour our current capacity and build our future capacity.
- “What’s my system carrying right now and what do I need?”



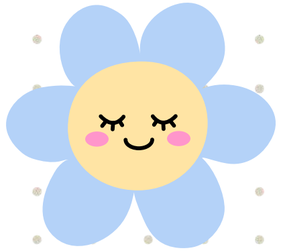


Dysregulation happens when stress, demand, or overwhelm pushes us outside of our window of capacity.



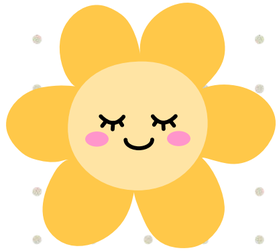
Working with young children can be HARD.

Where Do We Get Stuck?



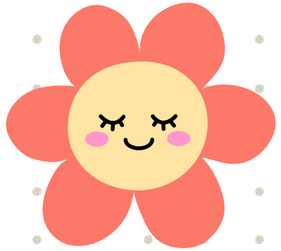
- We jump straight to regulation strategies.

Where Do We Get Stuck?



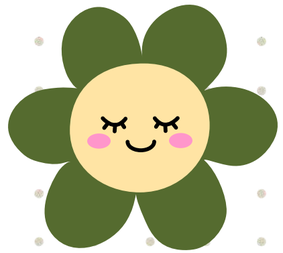
- We jump straight to regulation strategies.
- We use strategies that don’t match what we need.

Where Do We Get Stuck?



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- We try to *look* regulated instead of *being* regulated (ie: we suppress our emotions).

Where Do We Get Stuck?



- We jump straight to regulation strategies.
- We use strategies that don't match what we need.
- We try to *look* regulated instead of *being* regulated (ie: we suppress our emotions).
- We expect ourselves to get it right all the time (without recognising our window of capacity).

Emotional Competence

Noticing + naming what we feel

Experiencing + expressing what we feel

Responding to + regulating what we feel

Emotional Competence

We tend to start here...

Noticing + naming what we feel

Experiencing + expressing what we feel

Responding to + regulating what we feel

Emotional Competence

We tend to start here...

Noticing + naming what we feel

Experiencing + expressing what we feel

Responding to + regulating what we feel

and skip these.

Emotional Competence

We tend to start here...

Noticing + naming what we feel

Experiencing + expressing what we feel

Responding to + regulating what we feel

and skip these.

We cannot have regulation without awareness + expression.



Shake it out

Noticing what's
happening inside you

Feel It

Move It

Shifting your state
through your body

Letting emotion
move safely

Share It

Park It

Choosing what needs
to happen now v. later

Play With It

Choosing playfulness
as a response

You can’t regulate what you don’t notice

Feel It

Move It

When your body is activated, you can’t think yourself into regulation

Adults need co-regulation, too

Share It

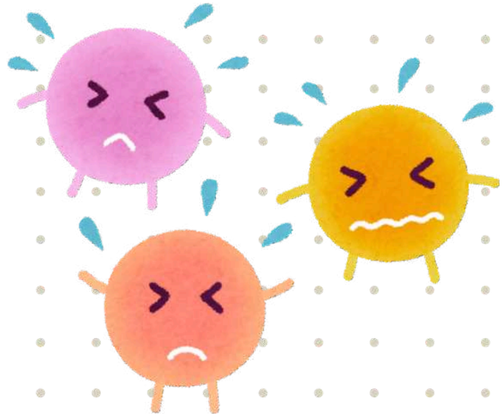
Park It

Timing matters

Play With It

Responding to children doesn’t always need to feel so serious

Feel It



Emotional awareness + acceptance

Suppression (pushing feelings away) = ineffective.
Noticing + acceptance = more effective pathways.

What this looks like:

- noticing body cues (interoception)
- naming the feeling
- making space for the feeling - without fixing it

Feel It

Meta emotion philosophy

- How we feel about feelings
- The meaning we attach to feelings
- Do some feelings feel safer than others for you?

Naming emotions

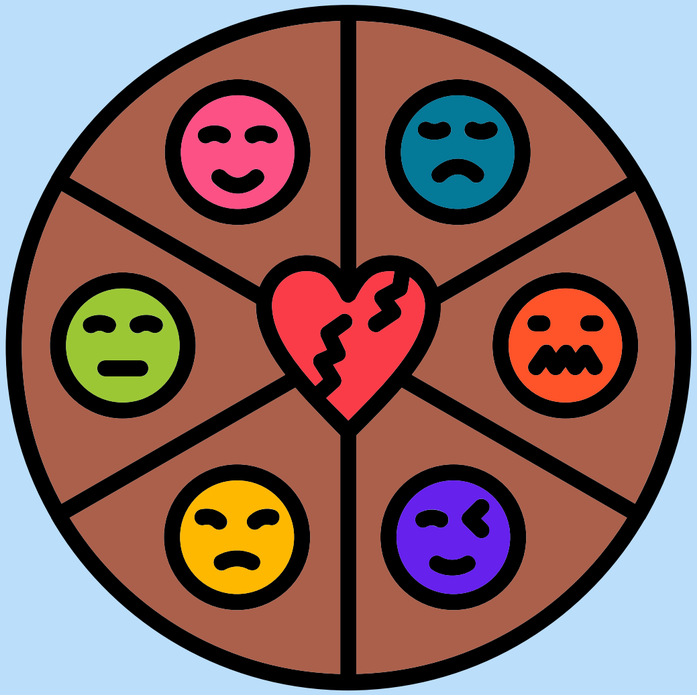
- Name it to tame it.
- What am I feeling right now? “I notice I am feeling…”
- Depersonalise the feeling.
- Later on, consider there the feeling might have come from.

Interoception

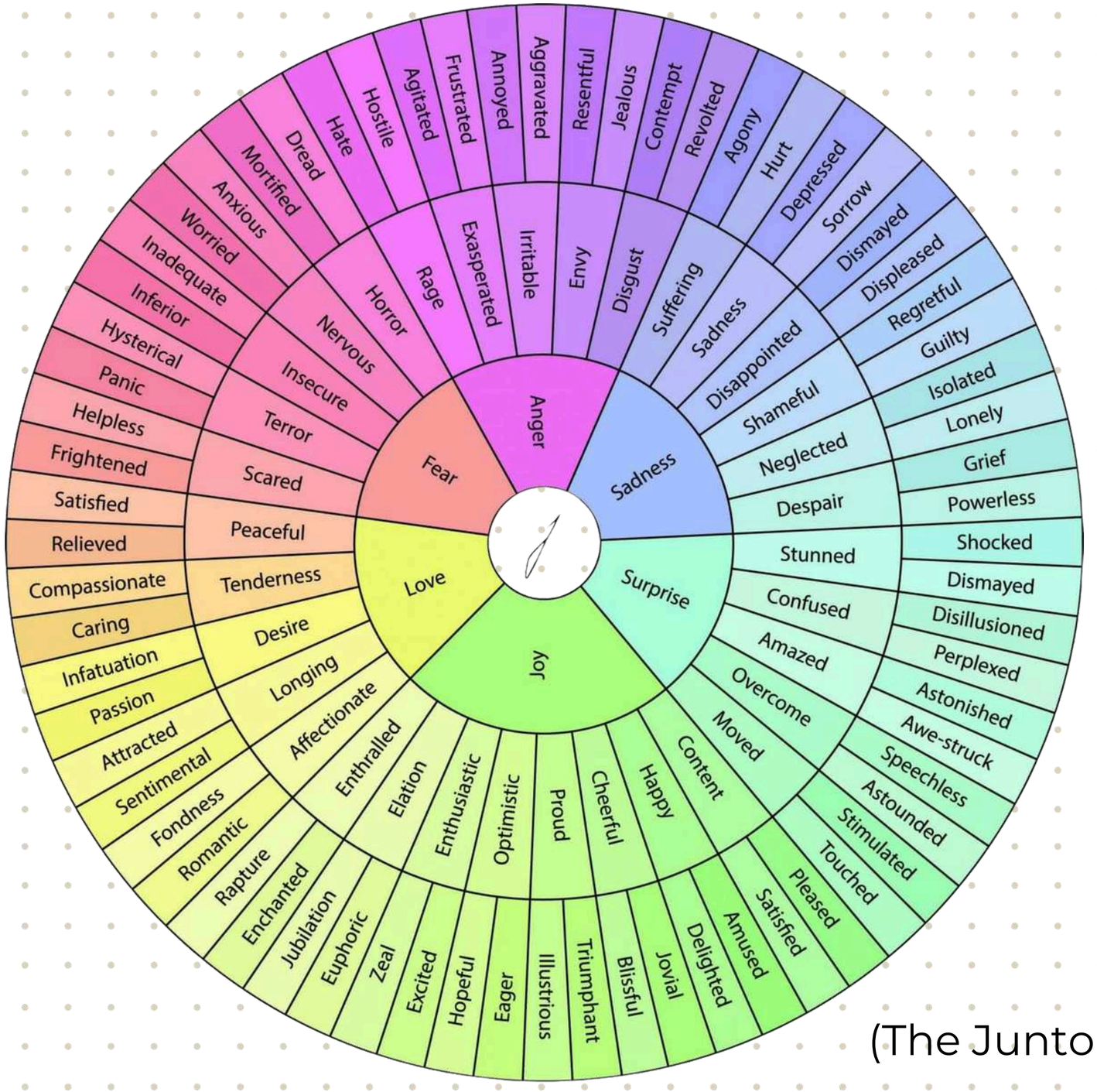
- How does my body process certain feelings? What sensations do I feel?
- Where do I feel anger? Joy? Worry?

Emotions Wheel

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Surprise
- Disgust

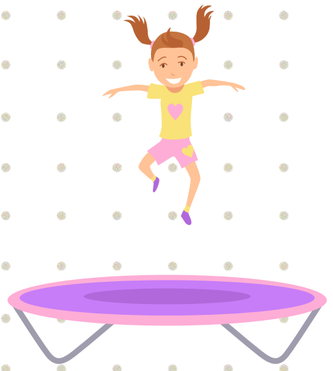


For each of the core emotions, think of 3 more specific emotions that sit close to it. **No cheating!**



(The Junto Institute, 2024).

Move It



Body-first regulation

Regulation is not just cognitive - emotions also affect the body. Movement is a powerful regulator.

What this looks like:

- walking
- stretching
- shaking out tension
- breath work

Move It

Bilateral tapping walk

Walk around slowly, lightly tapping arms or legs left, right, left, right.

Butterfly hug

Cross your arms over your chest + gently tap left, right, left, right.

Jaw release

Place your tongue on the roof of your mouth, let your jaw drop slightly open + slowly massage the jaw joint in circles

Body taps

With a fist, gently tap up + down your arms and legs - fairly quickly.

Strech + sigh

Reach your arms above your head + inhale, release your arms, flop down + exhale.

Fist clench

Tighten your fists + release, noticing the sensations in your palms + fingers as you do.

Move It

Dance

Put on a dopamine-inducing song and dance - with the children!

Body squeeze

Gently squeeze your body from your neck, arms, torso, down to your legs.

Bounce + shake it out

While gently bouncing, shake your arms, legs, then your whole body. ‘Unstick’ the energy.

Audible sigh

Let out an audible sigh with your out breath.

Humming breath

Hum (or buzz) on your out breath.

‘Ahhhhh’ breath

Breathe out with an ‘ahhhh’ onto your forearm and notice the warmth of your breath,

Share It



Co-regulation + expression

Deep acting = authentic emotional alignment (aligning your inner state to your outward expression as opposed to faking a smile). Genuine emotional expression = better outcomes.

What this looks like:

- talking to a colleague
- co-regulating with another adult
- naming your state in a safe way such as writing it down

Share It

Get creative

Get your hands dirty(ish) with some creativity: clay, doodling, creative writing, drawing.

Write about it

- Engage in some critical reflection.
- Keep asking *why: I noticed I was feeling _____. Why do I think that was? Why? Why? Why?*

Find a Marigold

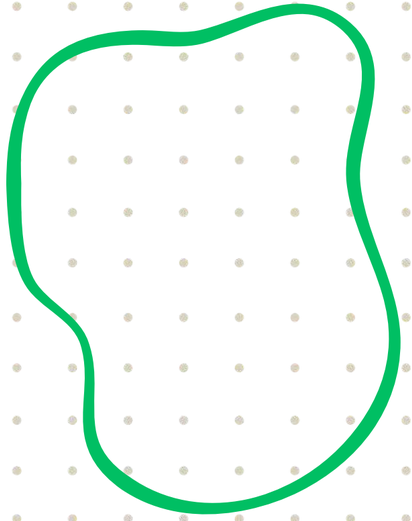
- Find a person/people who are your safe place and can hold space for you in your harder moments. People who *get it*.
- Lean into them and ask for support when you need it.

Exploring Feelings

I’m going to name some emotions. For each emotion, you’ll have roughly 20 seconds to represent it with a shape and colour.

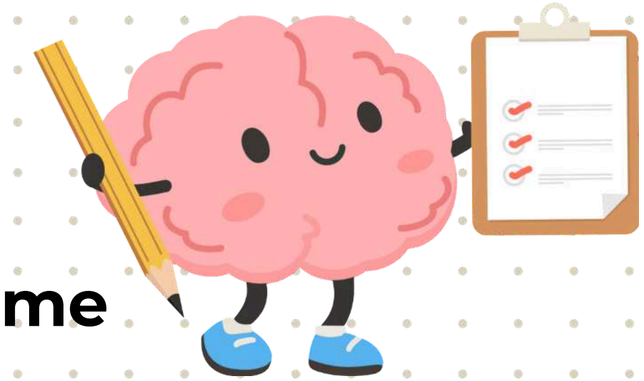








Park It



Getting it out of your head - potentially for a later time

Reappraisal = reframing or reinterpreting a situation.
Cognitive shifts to help reduce the noise.

What this looks like:

- “I’ll come back to this later”
- reframing (when regulated)
- choosing not to solve everything in the moment

Park It

Circles of control

- What's inside of your control (what do you *actually* have influence over)?
- What's outside of your control?

Reframing thoughts (reappraisal)

Reinterpret the situation:

- What immediately comes to mind?
- Is this true?
- How can you reframe it?

***bonus mini guide explores this in greater depth.*

90-seconds of emotion

- Name the emotion you're feeling - with curiosity, and without judgement.
- Let it pass - like a wave. Emotions last for 90 seconds.

Park It

Journalling

- What was I feeling?
- What was this feeling signalling for me (ie: what did I need in that moment)?
- How can I meet that need with self-compassion?

Mantras

- “I am safe.”
- “This is not an emergency.”
- “This too shall pass.”
- “I am enough.”

Body mapping

- Recognise the patterns for how certain feelings show up for you.
- If it’s in your hands, find strategies that work with your hands. If it’s your jaw, work with the jaw etc.

Play With It



Use humour to diffuse situations and lean into connection

Playfulness signals emotional safety and activates neural pathways tied to regulation (Lester & Russell, 2010; Schneider et al., 2022).
It helps us find our way to regulation through connection.

What this looks like:

- making light of the situation (not the children)
- connection before redirection
- tapping into shared humour

Play With It

“I’ve forgotten…!”

- Pretend you’ve forgotten how to do whatever it is you’re trying to ask the children to do - and turn them into the teacher.

Funny Voices

- Change up your tone, volume or pace to deliver your instruction.

Sing

- Bust out a song when you begin feeling heightened.
- Sing-narrate the moment.

Play With It

Novel Materials

- Use a novel item to support your instruction (such as a puppet, cosume, prop or toy).

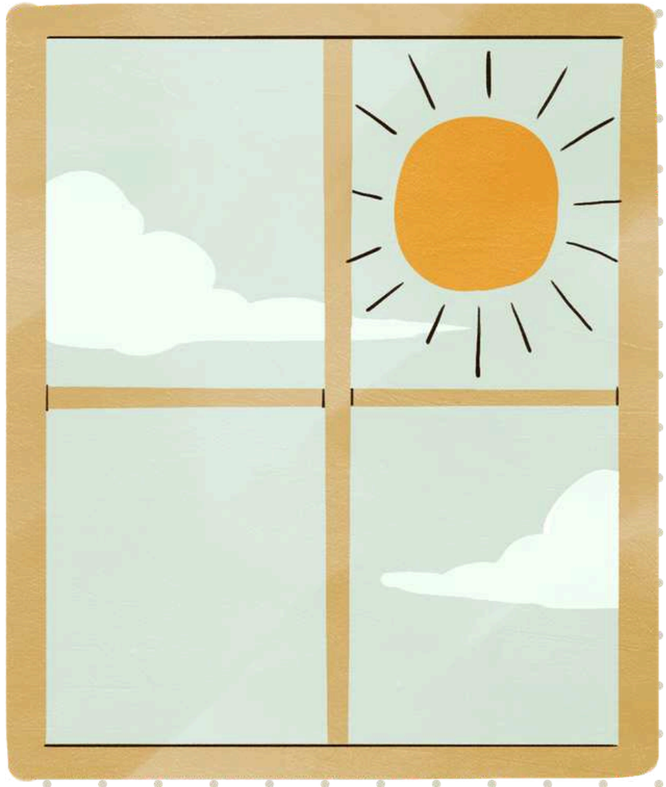
Alter Ego

- Is there a playful alter ego that can come out in moments that feel sticky?

News Broadcasting

- Turn yourself into a news broadcaster and narrate what it is that you’re observing - and what you’ve asked the children to do instead.

When Is It Best to Action These Strategies?



As proactive micro-doses of regulation (or micro-doses of presence) throughout your day.

When you're still within your window of capacity but becoming heightened.

or

When you're noticing yourself becoming heightened (through interoception).

What If It's Too Late?

Cold water therapy

Splash cold water on your face or have a cold drink/some ice.

Close your eyes

Close your eyes + focus on your breath for a minute.

54321 Grounding

5 things you can see
4 things you can touch
3 things you can hear
2 things you can smell
1 thing you can taste

Tapping out

Can someone else take over from you momentarily?

Fresh air

If it's safe for you to step away for a second.

Self-compassion Repair

Feel It

- Meta-emotion philosophy
- Naming emotions
- Name it to tame it
- Interoception
- Emotions wheel

Build your toolkit: which strategies feel most aligned for you?

Move It

- Bilateral tapping walk
- Butterfly hug
- Jaw release
- Body taps
- Stretch + sigh
- Fist clench
- Dance
- Bounce + shake it out
- Body squeeze
- Audible sigh
- Humming breath
- ‘Ahhhh’ breath

Share It

- Clay
- Doodling
- Creative writing
- Drawing
- Small manipulatives
- Write about it
- Find a Marigold
- Giving feelings a shape + colour

Park It

- Circles of control
- Reframing thoughts
- 90-seconds of emotion
- Journalling
- Mantras
- Body mapping

Play With It

- “I’ve forgotten…!”
- Funny voices
- Sing
- Novel materials
- Alter ego
- News broadcasting

Scan the QR code to receive a copy of the presentation slides (and a bonus mini guide!).







Questions?

Keep in touch

@littlebloom.consultancy