



Emotion Regulation in Children: A Guide for Teachers

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Introduction

My name is Christina Scanlon, and I would like to take a few minutes to introduce myself and explain this study guide. I am a student at the University of Pittsburgh studying for my Master's in Applied Developmental Psychology. My interests lie in school-based behavioral health, program design, crisis intervention, and professional training and development. I have worked in the mental health field for five years in various positions, including direct care staff, supervision of direct care staff, training and development, and crisis intervention and prevention.

I extensively researched emotion regulation and its effect on young people. In order to share this information with you, I developed a Power Point presentation that thoroughly explains the development, processes, and implications of emotion regulation. In conjunction with the Power Point presentation, this study guide will help you become more familiar with emotion regulation. In this study guide, you will receive an overarching view of emotion regulation, key points made in several research articles, a thorough explanation of a case study, some supplementary material, some questions for you to ponder, and some questions I will answer.

While this guide is directed at educators, anyone can benefit from learning how emotion regulation affects our young people. For more information and resources regarding various emotional/behavioral disorders or intervention approaches, please visit www.sbbh.pitt.edu. Thank you for taking the time to read through this information, and I hope you find it enjoyable, informative and useful!

Glossary of Terms

Before we get into any of the main material, it is important to have a basic understanding of the vocabulary surrounding emotion regulation. The following list of terms should help you in understanding the material in this guide. I have grouped the terms into different categories to make them easier to reference.

Emotional Response Tendencies	
Emotional Response Tendencies (ERT)	components of emotion that when combined, created the overall experience of emotion
Behavioral ERT	the outward expression of emotion (i.e., crying, laughing, screaming, or aggression)
Experiential ERT	the internal experience of emotion (i.e., feeling happy, sad, proud, mad)
Physiological ERT	the body's physiological response to emotion (i.e., blood pressure, heart rate, sweating, headaches)

Display Rules and Disorders	
Display Rules	a developmental task crucial to emotion regulation in which a child learns that the emotion he or she expresses does not necessarily need to match the emotion he or she experiences
Internalizing Disorders	disorders that affect the way a person thinks or feels, such as depression, anxiety disorders, and attention deficit disorders
Externalizing Disorders	disorders with behaviors that can be observed directly, often caused by a lack of control, such as conduct disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and anger management issues

Glossary of Terms (continued)

Process Model of Emotion Regulation	
Situation Selection	the choice of whether to engage in or avoid a situation
Situation Modification	adjusting a situation to change its emotional impact
Attention Deployment	the choice of whether to attend to a situation or redirect attention away from it
Cognitive Change	the ability to control how a person looks at a situation or the meaning that he or she puts behind a situation
Response Modulation	intentional control or adjustment of an emotional response tendency

Regulation Strategies	
Reappraisal	the process by which a person regulates emotion by adjusting the way he or she thinks about a situation through situation modification, attention deployment, and/or cognitive change
Suppression	the process by which a person regulates emotion by prohibiting himself or herself from expressing one or more emotional response tendencies or avoiding a situation entirely

Annotated Bibliography

In the next few pages, I am going to present information from a variety of research articles that relate to emotion regulation. This information will be presented through references followed by summaries. In addition, at the end of each summary, I will provide three key points to take away from the article.

Gable, R. A., & Van Acker, R. (2004). Sometimes, practice makes imperfect: Overcoming the automaticity of challenging behavior by linking intervention to thoughts, feelings, and actions. *Education and Treatment of Children, 27*(4), 476-489.

The push for academic success in schools across the country puts additional emphasis on managing disruptive behavior in the classroom. Both internal and external events influence a student's behavior, and understanding the interplay between these internal and external influences is necessary for creating effective intervention plans. While direct observation and documentation of antecedents and consequences that externally affect a child are useful, interviews gain insight into the student's internal processes. In the case of difficult youth, the antisocial, disruptive, or aggressive behavior can become automatic responses due to a student's experiences. When the undesirable behavior becomes an automatic response, it is crucial to address both internal and external influences. Treatment and intervention should involve combined aspects of cognitive, affective, and behavioral therapy. Cognitive interventions include learning that there can be more than one solution to a problem, goal-oriented thinking, and efficiently predicting the consequences of one's actions. Affective skill development consists of recognizing physiological warning signs, identifying social and environmental triggers, and coming up with ways to cope with these warning signs and triggers. Behavioral interventions revolve around self-control and anger management skills. Due to the incorporation of affective, self-regulation, anger management, and cognitive skill development, the use of mixed intervention methods is particularly advantageous to youth who are developing or have poor emotion regulation.



- A child's behavior is not only influenced by external events and situations, but also by their internal experiences.
- In cases where a child's experience has caused learned behaviors, antisocial, disruptive, or aggressive behavior may become the child's go-to response.
- Combinations of cognitive, affective, and behavioral interventions are useful for helping children with emotion

Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271-299.

While most disciplines of psychology have touched on the topic of emotion regulation, this review illustrates many avenues for future research. Gross defines emotion regulation as "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (p. 275). Emotional responses consist of three response tendencies: behavioral (the outward expression of emotion), experiential (the internal experience of an emotion), and physiological (the body's reaction to emotion). Gross provides a process model of emotion regulation in which there are five separate points for regulatory processes to help control our responses to emotion: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. *Situation selection* occurs when a person chooses to engage or avoid an activity or person in order to help control anticipated emotional responses.

Once a person becomes involved in a situation, he or she has the option to regulate their emotion by *situation modification*. Situation modification occurs when a person finds a way to adjust a situation in order to avoid negative emotion. Situation modification can also be called problem-focused coping or problem solving. If the situation cannot be modified, a person has another opportunity to engage in emotion regulation via *attention deployment*, meaning that the redirect or displace attention away from a situation. Finally, a person can engage in using *cognitive change*, which involves regulating emotion by changing the way he or she thinks about the situation in front of them. The previous four regulation strategies all occur prior to the behavioral, experiential, and physiological emotional responses.

Once a person initiates a response, he or she can engage in emotion regulation by consciously modulating one or a combination of the emotional responses. A person who engages in regulatory process to control emotions is using *response modulation*. This model of emotion regulation is pertinent to assisting those who have emotion regulation difficulties, as it points out five specific strategies to help a person control their emotions.



- Emotional cues cause emotional response tendencies, which are how we feel, how we act, and how our body reacts.
- Emotion regulation occurring before emotional response tendencies is antecedent-focused, while emotion regulation occurring afterwards is response-focused.
- There are five points on the process model to regulate emotion situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation.

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology*, 39, 281-291. doi: 10.1017.S0048577201393198

Gross relies on his 1998 process model of emotion regulation to explain how our emotions elicit behavioral, experiential, and cognitive response tendencies. These response tendencies are affected by the way in which a person regulates his or her emotions. Reappraisal is the process by which a person regulates emotion by adjusting the way he or she thinks about a situation. People may also regulate emotion by suppression, meaning that the person prohibits himself or herself from expressing any emotional response. Reappraisal and suppression have effects on the response tendencies associated with an emotional response. Reappraisal decreases adverse physiological response, more expression and experience of positive emotions, less expression and experience of negative emotions, and an increase in positive social interactions and desirability. Conversely, when people use suppression to regulate emotions, they are more likely to experience higher negative physiological responses, lower levels of expression of both positive and negative emotions, less experience of positive emotions, detrimental impacts on memory, and poor social support and desirability. This study finds reappraisal to be a more beneficial and effective emotion regulation strategy than suppression.



- Emotion regulation can occur by reappraisal (changing how a person thinks) or suppression (avoidance or inhibiting behavioral response tendencies).
- People who use suppression tend to experience negative effects on the emotional response tendencies, including increased experience of negative emotions, increased adverse physiological responses, and poor social support/desirability due to lack of appropriate emotional behavior.
- Reappraisal is the more beneficial and effective strategy due to the positive effects it has on the emotion response tendencies, including increased experience of positive emotions, decreased experience of negative emotions, and increased expression of positive emotions, leading to better social support /desirability.

Gross, J. J., & Muñoz, R. F. (1995). Emotion regulation and mental health. *Clinical Psychology Science and Practice*, 2(2), 151-164.

Emotion regulation is necessary for mental health, defined as the ability to be productive, have social relationships, and a sound interpersonal life. Major depressive disorder (MDD) serves as an example of the importance of the applications of emotion regulation. MDD corrupts these three tenants of mental health. Treatment strategies for MDD include biological theories, cognitive-behavioral theories, and interpersonal theories. These three theories correspond with the emotional response tendencies involved with emotion regulation: biological theories address physiological response tendencies, cognitive-behavioral theories address behavioral response tendencies (or emotion expression), and interpersonal theories address the way people experience and respond to emotion. In this emotion regulation theory, assessment, treatment, and prevention revolve around the development and strengthening of emotion regulation strategies. The discussion of prevention is especially relevant to the younger population, as it focuses on the direct teaching of emotion regulation strategies in an effort to strengthen skills in preparation for future environments and situations. The authors also place emphasis on integrating education about emotion regulation into public health systems in an effort to decrease societal problems, such as substance abuse, unsafe sex, violence, and poor school performance.



- Emotion regulation is necessary for mental health. Biological, cognitive-behavioral, and interpersonal interventions target the three emotional response tendencies.
- Teaching and strengthening emotion regulation skills in younger populations is necessary to prepare the population for the future.
- Education on emotion regulation should be integrated into the public health systems in attempts to decrease societal problems.

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Emotion regulation plays a large role in adolescents' ability to handle everyday stressors, and the way in which an adolescent responds to these stressors can result in the development of depression, anxiety, or anger management problems. Responses to stress are voluntary or involuntary. When the responses to stress are voluntary, the adolescent consciously activates them in order to cope with a problem. These voluntary responses split into primary and secondary responses. Primary responses involve attempting to change a situation by active engagement, and secondary responses involve changing oneself or one's perspective of a situation through coping mechanisms. Involuntary responses are automatic and often unconscious. Involuntary responses are disengagement (i.e. avoidance or withdrawal) and involuntary engagement (i.e. ruminating on a subject or a loss of emotional control).

This study consisted of 152 adolescents who recorded emotions and responses to emotions in response to a pager system over the course of one week. Adolescents with more unstable and intense moods who reported poor regulation skills were more likely to experience symptoms of internalizing disorders and externalizing behaviors. Moreover, adolescents responding to negative emotions with involuntary responses (disengagement and involuntary engagement) did not effectively manage these emotions and often experienced more symptoms of internalizing disorders and problem behavior.

Interestingly, the authors' hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of voluntary regulation strategies proved to be *unfounded*. The hypothesis stated that voluntary responses (both primary and secondary) would be more effective in handling negative emotions; however, the study found no significant correlation between these two variables. The results of this study imply that attempts at preventing or intervening with adolescents with emotion regulation difficulties should place more of an emphasis on avoiding involuntary stress responses rather than placing emphasis on learning voluntary stress responses. In other words, this study suggests that teaching a child to appropriately express himself or herself is more important than teaching him or her coping strategies.



- Responses to stress are voluntary (active engagement or changing one's thinking) or involuntary (disengagement or involuntary engagement).
- While the study predicted that voluntary responses would be more effective in handling stress, there was no significant correlation; however, those using involuntary responses did not effectively manage emotions and experienced more internalizing and externalizing disorders.
- This study suggests that it is more important to teach a child to express himself or herself (or rather, to not suppress his or her emotions) than it is to teach coping skills.

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and adolescents. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 27(2), 133-138.

This article describes the development of emotion by following it through typical developmental stages and looks at the development of emotion regulation as an interaction between biological and environmental factors. Biological factors relate to brain development, focusing on the amygdala, prefrontal cortex activation and functioning, hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenocortical system, and vagal zone. Environmental contributions rely heavily on parental modeling, coaching, and reinforcement of appropriate emotion responses.

The development of adequate emotion regulation is imperative in the development of social competence and psychopathology. The ability to appropriately express, manage, identify, and respond to emotion is necessary for social competence. Those skilled in emotion regulation are generally rated as more socially desirable, are better at handling conflict, and have better interpersonal skills. The presence of childhood psychopathology is also closely tied to emotion regulation. Children with internalizing disorders, such as major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, and bulimia nervosa, and externalizing disorders, such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, consistently have shown poor development of emotion regulation components.

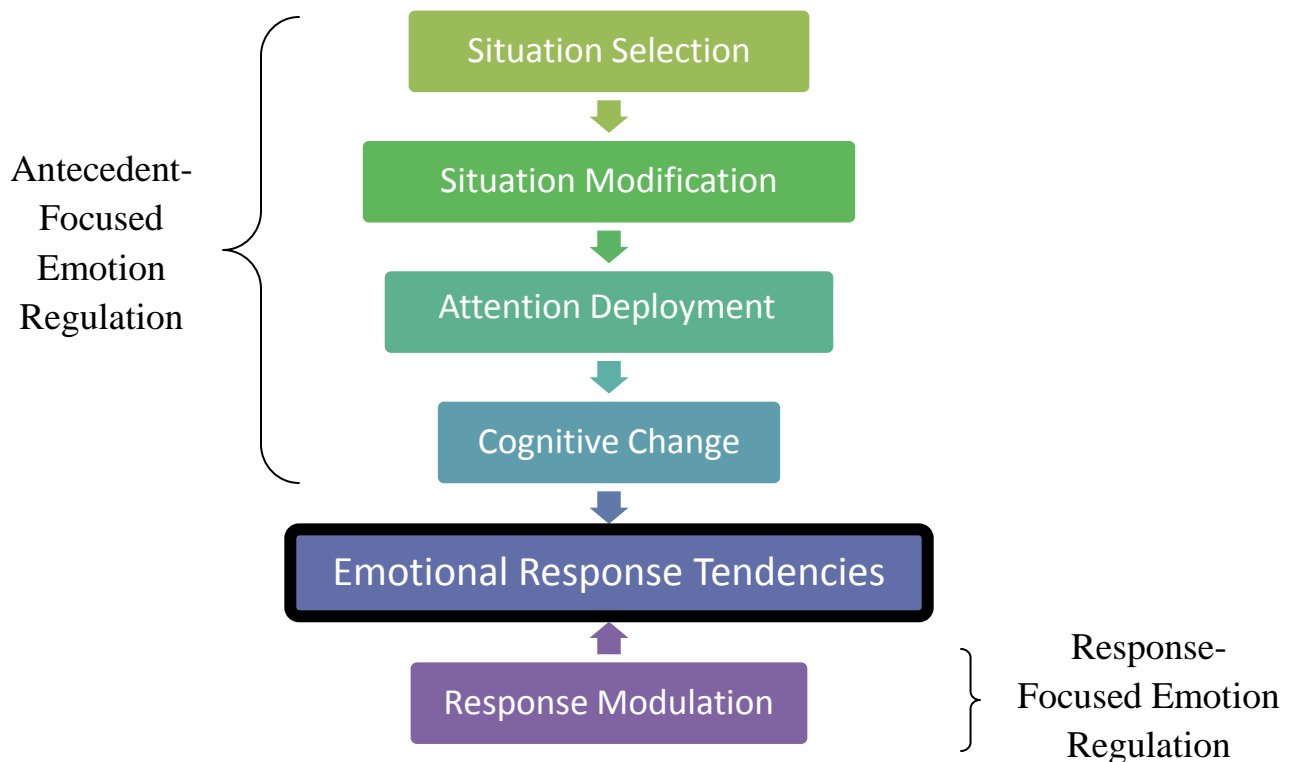
The authors identify five signs that could potentially lead to or stem from emotion regulation-related issues: (a) inhibited temperaments, irritable temperaments, or elevated reactivity early in life, (b) flat affect in response to events that would typically elicit emotion from others, (c) emotional reactions or lack of emotional reactions that interfere with making and keeping friendships, (d) responses that consist of aggression or explosive behaviors, and (e) home environments that lack support for emotion expression or provide poor examples of emotion regulation. Any of these five factors could indicate the need for a child to undergo treatment in order to develop more effective emotion regulation.



- The development of emotion regulation is affected by biological and environmental factors.
- A lack of emotion regulation skills affects a child's ability to be social and may result in developing internalizing or externalizing psychological disorders.
- There are five signs that indicate a child is either at risk for or already experiencing deficits in emotion regulation.

How Does Emotion Regulation Work?

Now that we have reviewed the research behind emotion regulation, let's break down the processes of emotion regulation. James J. Gross created a model of emotion regulation that shows points for regulatory processes to help us with regulating our emotions.² Situation selection occurs when a person engages or avoids something in order to control emotional responses. Next, situation modification occurs when a person adjusts a situation in order to avoid negative emotion through problem solving. Then, there is another opportunity to engage in emotion regulation via attention deployment, meaning attention is directed away from the situation. Finally, a person can use cognitive change, which involves regulating emotion by changing the way he or she thinks about a situation. Because these processes are used before the emotional response tendencies occur, situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, and cognitive change together make up antecedent-focused emotion regulation.



After the emotional response tendencies are triggered, a person has the option to suppress the way he or she experiences or expresses emotions through response modulation. Response modulation is also referred to as response-focused emotion regulation due to the person having to actively hold back one or more of his or her emotional response tendencies.

² Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271-299.

Reappraisal and Suppression

There are two means by which people regulate emotion: reappraisal and suppression. Reappraisal occurs when a person adjusts the way he or she engages in or thinks about a situation. Reappraisal is a part of all antecedent-related emotion regulation. Suppression involves inhibiting emotional responses tendencies and avoidance. Suppression via avoidance happens during situation selection if a person chooses to not engage in an activity due to the emotional impact it might have. Suppression also occurs during response modulation when a person inhibits emotional response tendencies by using display rules.

When a person uses reappraisal, he or she decreases adverse physiological responses, such as high heart rate or blood pressure, and experiences and expresses more positive emotions. Because of their expression of positive emotions, the people who use reappraisal have positive social interactions and are rated as socially desirable by his or her peers.

On the other hand, people who use suppression to regulate their emotions generally have poor social support and are rated as less socially desirable. The detrimental social effects for people who suppress result from his or her conscious prohibition of emotional responses, which makes him or her seem aloof, miserable, or unfriendly. Those who use suppression as a means of emotion regulation also tend to have fewer reported experiences of positive emotions, more adverse physiological responses, such as high blood pressure, and detrimental impacts on memory due to using conscious processes to suppress emotions rather than attending to situations.

Outcomes of Using Reappraisal vs. Suppression

Reappraisal	Suppression
Decreases adverse physiological responses	Increases adverse physiological responses
More expression and experience of positive emotion	Less expression of both positive and negative emotions
Less expression and experience of negative emotion	Less experience of positive emotions
No effect on memory	Detrimental impacts on memory
Increases social desirability and amount of positive social interactions	Poor social support and desirability

Poor Emotion Regulation: Risk Factors and Warning Signs

Some of your students may be at risk for emotion regulation-related issues, while other students may already be displaying behaviors that stem from a deficiency in emotion regulation skills. Children with inhibited or irritable temperaments may be considered to be more at risk for developing poor emotion regulation. Children who displayed elevated reactivity to events early in life may also be at risk. You might notice that some of your students lack emotions or display a flat affect in dealing with situations that elicit emotions from other students. Additionally, some children's inappropriate emotional responses or lack of emotional responses can inhibit them from making or keeping friendships. These are both signs of a child having difficulty with emotion regulation. Furthermore, poor emotion regulation can also manifest in aggressive or explosive behaviors in the classroom. Finally, children with home environments that either lack support for emotion expression or that provide examples of poor emotion regulation are likely to have underdeveloped emotion regulation skills.

Risk Factors and Warning Signs
Shy or Irritable Temperaments
Lack of Emotions in Emotional Situations
Emotional Reactions or Lack of Emotional Reactions that Interfere with Friendship
Aggressive or Explosive Behaviors
Home Environments that Lack Support for or Provide Poor Examples of Emotion Regulation

While it is easy to identify the warning signs of a child who has regular tantrums or the risk factors for a child with an unstable home life, identifying emotion regulation deficits is more difficult when considering the quiet, isolative child who internalizes all of his or her negative emotions.

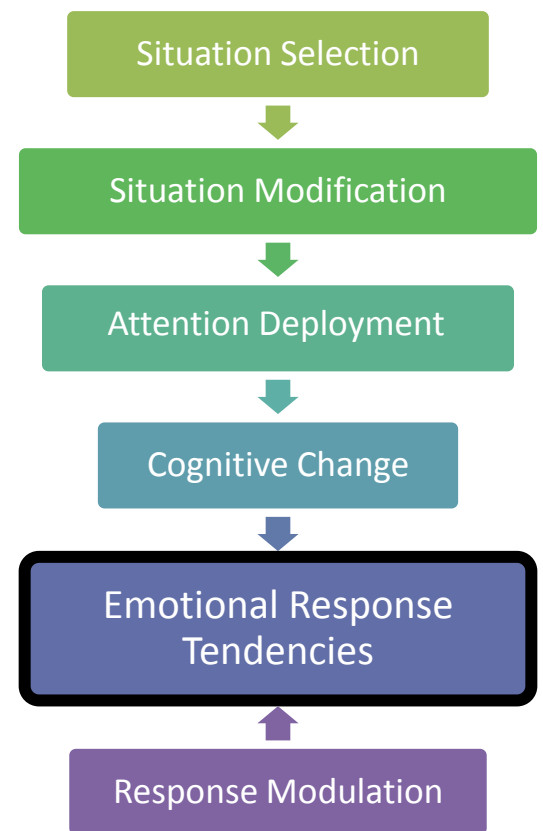
Case Study: Laura

The following is a case study of Laura, 12, who is having difficulty at school due to her explosive outbursts. Please read the case study below, and think about what we have reviewed thus far in this guide.



Laura, 12 years old, is yet again sitting in the principal's office awaiting the verdict of her latest outburst. Today, Laura got into a pushing match with Erica after a mix-up in classroom responsibilities. Laura thought it was her day to clean the chalkboard, but it was actually Erica's day. Laura began to argue with Erica, and when Erica would not give Laura the sponge to clean the chalkboard, Laura pushed Erica. Laura consistently loses control of her emotions, even when faced with the simplest of tasks. Laura is considered the classroom's "problem child," and cannot manage any friendships due to her emotional outbursts.

Let's follow Laura's conflict through Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation. Laura engaged in the situation through *situation selection* so as to follow classroom rules. When the conflict with Erica began, Laura was unable to modify the situation to control the emotional impact it had upon her. If Laura did use *situation modification*, she could have problem-solved with Erica about the mix-up in assignments to figure out who was right. Laura was not able to use *attention deployment*, most likely because as the situation continued, she was not able to pull herself away from the event. Laura's option of *cognitive change* was thwarted by her insistence that she was right, and the influence of frustration and anger clouded her thought processes. Since antecedent-related emotion regulation processes failed for Laura and she was unable to suppress her emotions using *response modulation*, her physiological, behavioral, and experiential emotion resulted in an over-reaction to the situation, elevated adrenaline, frustration, and anger, all of which contributed to Laura's aggressive outburst.



In order to handle this situation better in the future, Laura can either readjust her way of thinking about the situation through reappraisal, or she can suppress part or all of her emotional response. We are going to send Laura through this situation again using both of these regulation strategies, but first, let's make sure we have an understanding of Laura's emotional cue, emotional response tendencies, and factors that may indicate she has emotion regulation-related problems.

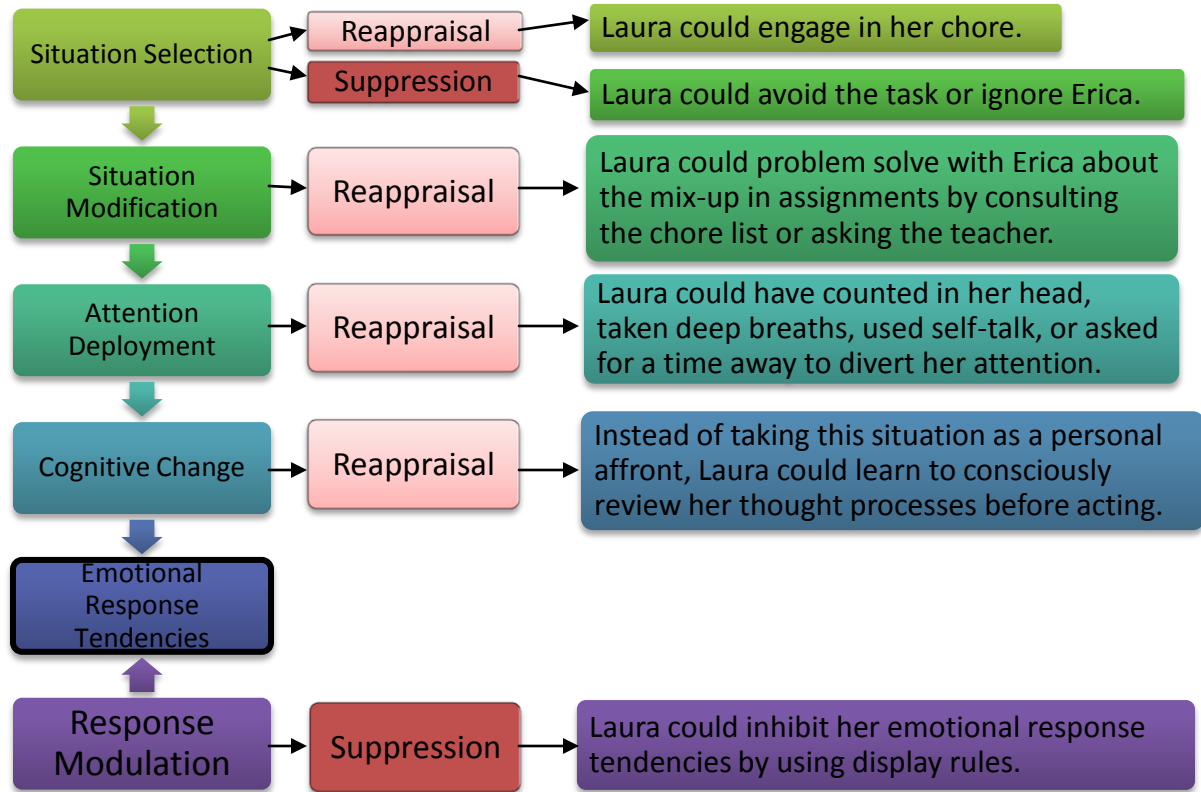
Let's analyze Laura's situation first. Laura's emotional cue was the mix-up with Erica and washing the board. Laura felt frustrated, angry, and irritated, and expressed these feelings by arguing, yelling and pushing. During the situation, Laura most likely experience a few physiological responses, which may have included increased adrenaline, increased heart rate, sweating, and a flushed face. Combining these experiential, behavioral, and physiological emotion response tendencies allows us to see Laura's overall emotional response.

Emotional Cue:		Laura thought it was her day to wash the board and was told by Erica that she was wrong.
Emotional Response Tendencies	How Laura felt (Experiential):	Frustrated, angry, irritated
	How Laura acted (Expressive or Behavioral):	Arguing, yelling, pushing
	What Laura's body did (Physiological):	Increased adrenaline, increased heart rate, sweating, flushed face

While we don't know a lot about Laura, we can try to see if she has some risk factors or warning signs that might lead us to think that her behavior is related to poor emotion regulation.

Risk Factors and Warning Signs	
Shy or Irritable Temperaments	Laura may already have an irritable temperament, adding to her frustration when confronted with conflict.
Lack of Emotions in Emotional Situations	We do not know this about Laura, but we do know that she was explosive during a typically non-emotional situation.
Emotional Reactions or Lack of Emotional Reactions that Interfere with Friendship	The case study reports that Erica's emotional outbursts inhibit her from keeping friendships.
Aggressive or Explosive Behaviors	As evidenced by the outburst with Erica, Laura displays aggressive and explosive behaviors.
Home Environments that Lack Support for or Provide Poor Examples of Emotion Regulation	We do not know this about Laura, but as an educator, you would most likely have a general idea of your students' home environments.

Now that we understand Laura's flaws with emotion regulation, Laura's emotional response tendencies, and a little bit of Laura's background, let's figure out some ways that Laura could help Laura respond more positively to this situation in the future by using reappraisal and suppression.



Situation selection can either use suppression or reappraisal. Laura could have used suppression at this point if she had either avoided completing her chore or confronting Erica. Situation modification uses reappraisal, which would consist of Laura problem-solving to alleviate emotional stress. Reappraisal occurs again in the attention deployment emotion regulation process. Here, Laura could use coping skills in order to calm herself down. The final place to use reappraisal happens with cognitive change, where Laura could re-evaluate the way that she thinks about an event before taking action. After Laura's emotional response tendencies are generate, she has the option to use suppression through response modulation. In this case, Laura could use display rules to express a different emotion than she feels. For example, Laura could bottle up her frustration, causing her to ruminate on the event for the remainder of the day.

Notice how the processes using reappraisal differ from the processes using suppression. Reappraisal allows a person to process through his or her emotions, while suppression results in avoidance or emotional unrest.

Emotion Regulation Worksheets and Discussion Questions

In order to assist children to the fullest extent, we must first assure that we, the educators, are educated. The following pages are worksheets that I have created to help people gain a better understanding of emotion regulation. These worksheets are meant to be supplementary tools for you and your colleagues to have the opportunity to apply the information you have learned. The worksheets that I have included are:

- Emotional Cues and Emotional Response Tendencies,
- Processes of Emotion Regulation, and
- Risk Factors and Warning Signs Tools.

In using these activities, you will apply the concepts of emotion regulation and will benefit from the ability to recognize, map out, and analyze your students who may need assistance with emotion regulation.



Emotional Cues and Emotional Response Tendencies

In the chart below, we are going to identify some emotional cues and what our emotional response tendencies might be for several situations.

We will do the first situation together. Let's pretend that you overslept for work or school. This situation is your emotional cue. For the first row, we fill in how you might feel about the situation, for example, frustrated, angry, or disappointed. In the second row, we think about how we might act if we overslept, which could include rushing around to get ready, being easily flustered, or mumbling. The third row talks about things your body might do in response to the situation, such as increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, sweating, or turning red in the face.

I have given you the emotional cue for the second scenario: your best friend ignores you at lunch. Try to think of how you would feel, how you would act, and what your body would do if this situation were to happen to you. For the last emotional cue, think of a situation one of your students has had difficulty with identify his or her feelings, actions, and body's response to that situation.

Emotional Cues:	You oversleep and are late to work/school.	Your best friend ignores you at lunch.	
EMOTION REGULATION OCCURS HERE			
Emotional Response Tendencies	How you would feel (Experiential):	Frustrated, angry, disappointed in yourself	
	How you would act (Expressive or Behavioral):	Rushing around to get ready, easily flustered, mumbling under your breath	
	What your body does (Physiological):	Increased heart rate and/or blood pressure, sweating, face flushes	

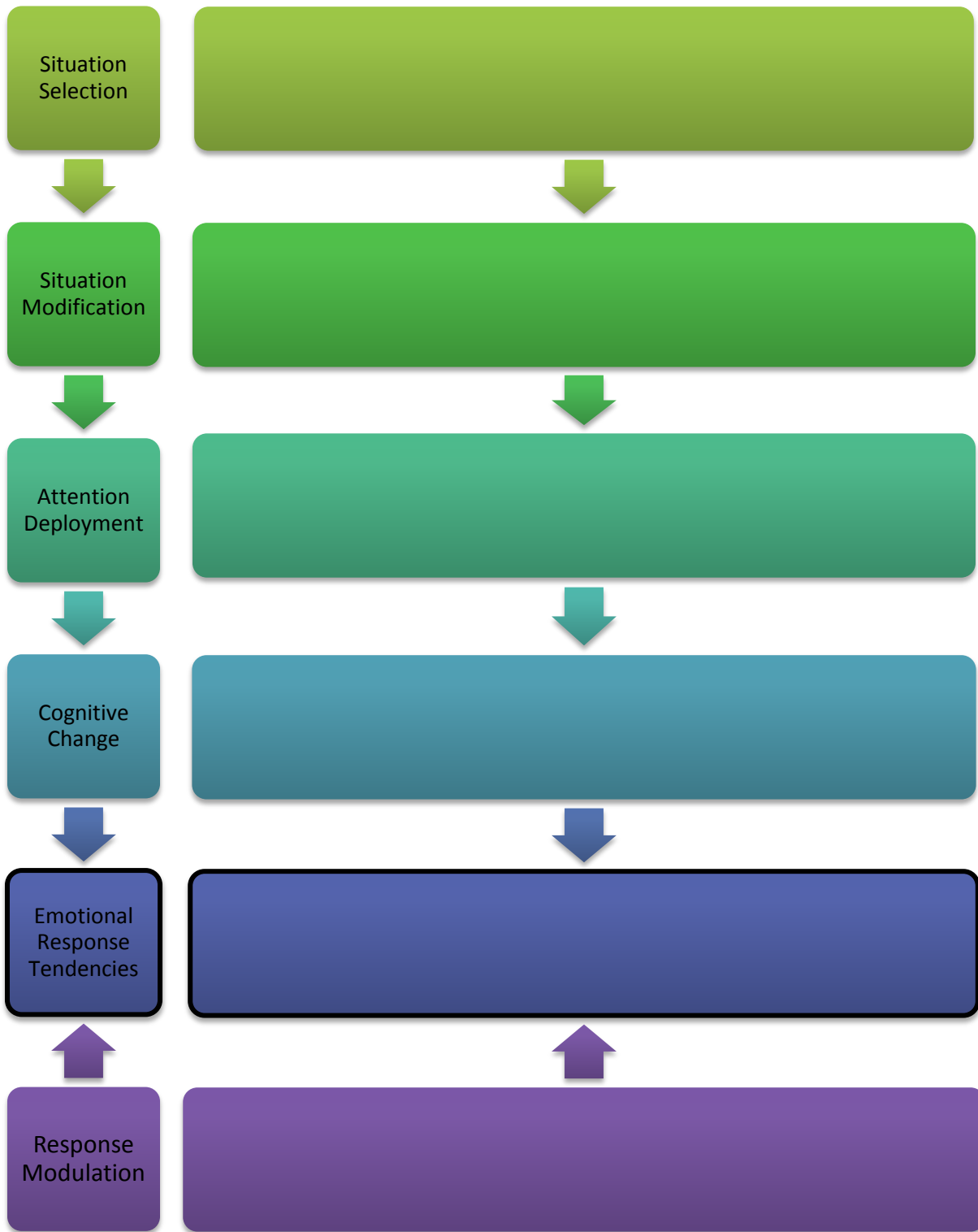
*****NOTICE THAT EMOTION REGULATION TAKES PLACE BETWEEN THE EMOTIONAL CUES AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TENDENCIES*****

Processes of Emotion Regulation

We've discussed the process model of emotion regulation and suppression and reappraisal work, and we have applied this information to our case study. I'm going to give you another situation, and help you to work through it. We'll use the example of oversleeping and being late to work. I will lead you through different ways of using emotion regulation through a series of questions. On the following page, I have provided a place for your responses.



Answer Sheet



Note: This form may be useful when helping one of your students map out their response to an event or when identifying ways he or she could respond better in the future.

Temperament Identification

In the tables below, I have provided some tools that can help you to gather data on children in your classroom that you suspect may be having emotion regulation difficulties. These tools will be beneficial when you consult a parent, counselor, or school psychologist about your concerns. The first table has to do with different elements of inhibited or irritable temperament and what they may look like in a student. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it can help give you a general idea of temperament issues related to emotion regulation.

Child's Name:	What Does It Look Like?	Yes	No
Inhibited (Shy) Temperament	Clingy with teachers or parent figures		
	Avoidance of unfamiliar situations		
	Withdrawal/hesitation when interacting with unfamiliar people		
	Can be described as timid, quiet, or shy		
	Isolating during social situations		
	Infrequent smiling		
	Hesitation to share feelings or thoughts		
Irritable Temperament	Sensitivity to correction or criticism		
	Impatience		
	Snapping or yelling at others		
	Throwing or breaking objects when frustrated		
	Annoyed by noises		
	Arguing with friends or adults		
	Threatening violence against him/herself or others		
Can be described as having a "short fuse" or is easily frustrated			

On the following page, I created a table that can help you record and describe behaviors and information that can be warning signs to emotion-regulation difficulties. To use the table, simply document what information you know or what behaviors you have seen that align with the warning signs of a child developing poor emotion regulation.

Warning Signs Associated with Poor Emotion Regulation

Child's Name:

Warning Signs	Behaviors/Information
Lack of Emotions in Emotional Situations	
Emotional Reactions or Lack of Emotional Reactions that Interfere with Friendship	
Aggressive or Explosive Behaviors	
Home Environments that Lack Support for or Provide Poor Examples of Emotion Regulation	

Discussion Questions

The following questions are meant to spark discussion between you and your colleagues about some emotion regulation-related issues. There are not necessarily right or wrong answers, but based on the information in this guide, you should be able to make some informed responses to these questions.

1. As an educator with a myriad of things on your plate, it might be easy to tell Johnny to ignore Susie when she teases him about his braces. As we have learned, ignoring an emotional response is response modulation via suppression, which generally leads to undesirable results. How should we handle this type of situation? Is there a point where Johnny can healthily ignore Susie's taunts?
2. Empathy and emotion education programs, such as Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Roots of Empathy, and Second Step, are showing up in elementary schools as ways to give more structure to the learning of emotion regulation strategies in hopes of preventing violence and dysfunction in a child's later years. If you are in a setting that uses one of these programs, what are some of the results that you've noticed? If you are in a setting that does not have access to these resources, how can you incorporate "emotion curriculum" into your classroom?
3. Silk, Steinberg, & Morris (2003) suggest that it is more important to teach a child to express himself or herself (or rather, to not suppress his or her emotions) than it is to teach coping skills. What are your thoughts on this issue? What if the child is expressing emotions, but does not have a grasp of display rules or social appropriateness? Are coping skills necessary to emotion regulation?
4. Poor emotion regulation can result in internalizing and externalizing behaviors. While externalizing behaviors are easy to recognize (i.e., attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorders), internalizing disorders (i.e., depression, anxiety, attention-deficit) can be much more difficult to identify, mostly because these children are not outwardly evoking teacher attention and are easy to overlook. How can you determine whether a quiet, reserved child is struggling with emotion regulation? What are some ways to help this child?
5. Paul, a child in your classroom, has displayed aggressive and disruptive behaviors in class, mostly resulting from an inability to handle frustration and anger. Paul has been identified as having poor emotion regulation skills and is working on anger management, problem solving, and developing coping skills with the school psychologist. However, Paul's home environment does nothing to promote these skills. Every weekend, Paul returns home to encounter constant chaos, dysfunction, and confrontation, which seems to derail whatever progress Paul makes during the week. What can be done to help Paul in his home environment?

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: WHAT IS EMOTION REGULATION?

A: When a person encounters a situation, there are emotional cues that cause a person to feel a certain way. A person's overall emotional response is made up of a combination of three emotional response tendencies: the way a person shows emotions, the way a person feels, and the way a person's body reacts. It is between the emotional cues and the overall emotional response that emotion regulation occurs. Emotion regulation is defined as “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions.”

Q: HOW DOES EMOTION REGULATION DEVELOP?

A: Emotion regulation develops throughout childhood as a child learns to express and experience emotion. By middle childhood, a child has developed a large emotional vocabulary and has begun to interpret the emotional responses of others. In adolescence, emotion regulation is refined and changes depending on the type of emotion, social context, and motivation to use it.

Q: WHY IS EMOTION REGULATION IMPORTANT?

A: Emotion regulation is necessary for mental health, which is made up of a person's ability to be productive, be at peace with one's self, and have positive social relationships. If a child is too preoccupied with negative thoughts to pay attention in class or too reactive to manage frustrations while taking a math test, the child's academic performance will most likely suffer. The ability to properly cope with emotions allows a child to experience an inner sense of calm, as opposed to dwelling on whether he or she will “fit in” with his or her friends or making threats when not invited to sit with the “cool kids” at lunch. Emotion regulation also affects social relationships, as a person must be able to appropriately express, monitor and respond to emotion when interacting with others. In fact, people skilled in emotion regulation are typically rated as more well-liked by their peers.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Q: WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL AND SOCIETAL ISSUES CAN BE LINKED TO EMOTION REGULATION?

A: Poor emotion regulation has negative effects on school performance and social relationships, may result in internalizing (i.e., depression, anxiety) and externalizing (i.e., conduct disorders, ADHD) disorders, and can contribute to societal problems. Adolescents are often faced with events while they are experiencing “hot cognition,” meaning that a person is “thinking under conditions of high arousal and/or strong emotion.”³ Even if an adolescent can make good decisions when calm, those with poor emotion regulation who are faced with emotional arousal will most likely make negative decisions, including substance abuse, violence, and unsafe sex.

Q: HOW DOES EMOTION REGULATION WORK?

A: Models of emotion regulation show points for regulatory processes that control our responses to emotion. Situation selection occurs when a person engages or avoids something in order to control emotional responses. Next, situation modification occurs when a person adjusts a situation in order to avoid negative emotion. Then, there is another opportunity to engage in emotion regulation via attention deployment, meaning attention is directed away from the situation. Finally, a person can use cognitive change, which involves regulating emotion by changing the way he or she thinks about a situation. After the emotional response tendencies are triggered, a person has the option to suppress the way he or she experiences or expresses emotions through response modulation.

³ Dahl, R. E. (2004). Adolescent brain development: A period of vulnerabilities and opportunities. *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 1021, p. 19.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Q: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REAPPRAISAL AND SUPPRESSION?

A: Emotion regulation that involves changing thought processes is called reappraisal, while emotion regulation that occurs by inhibiting emotional response tendencies or avoidance is called suppression. Using reappraisal results in more positive outcomes than using suppression, such as increases in experiences of positive emotion, social desirability, and positive social interactions.

Q: HOW DO I RECOGNIZE WHEN A CHILD IS HAVING PROBLEMS WITH EMOTION REGULATION?

A: Some children may be at risk for emotion regulation-related issues, and other children may already be displaying behaviors that may stem from a lack of emotion regulation skills. Watching for these five signs may help you identify a child who has problems with emotion regulation: 1) shy or irritable temperaments, 2) lack of emotions in emotional situations, 3) emotional reactions or lack of emotional reactions that interfere with friendships, 4) aggressive or explosive behaviors, and 5) home environments that lack support for emotion regulation or provide examples of poor emotion regulation.

Q: WHAT INTERVENTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN WITH POOR EMOTION REGULATION?

A: There are cognitive, affective, and behavioral interventions useful in adjusting thought processes and changing behaviors that result from poor emotion regulation. Cognitive interventions address the thought processes behind emotion regulation and focus on developing problem solving skills. In affective interventions, the focus is on identifying triggers and coping skills. Behavioral interventions, such as anger management classes, address behaviors that result from poor emotion regulation.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to learn more about emotion regulation. With the numerous issues that can stem from poor emotion regulation, it is imperative that educators be aware of the issue. While empathy and emotion education are growing in popularity and children are receiving interventions when necessary, the preventative approach is always the best route; but until then, education and awareness amongst you and your colleagues is the first step to helping those children with emotion regulation deficits. I hope you have found the information in this guide useful and practical for helping you work with some of your more difficult students, and I encourage you to share this guide with your colleagues. However, if you do use this guide as a resource at your organization, I ask that you contact Christina Scanlon at chris.l.scanlon@gmail.com for consent. If you are looking for more information or interventions regarding children, check out other topics on www.sbbh.pitt.edu. Happy learning!

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