Modeling Emotional Self-Regulation Skills

According to Timm (1993), the modeling of healthy mental and emotional skills by a teacher has a greater effect on student learning than any other tool or instructional method. Teachers can model self-regulation skills by explicitly naming their emotions and describing how they handle them. For example, "When people start talking about other things while I'm still giving directions, it feels frustrating to me, and I have to take a breath, catch myself, and say, 'It's okay, I'm going to try again'" (edutopia, 2019, 1:12). Think alouds and role-playing are additional ways to model self-regulation (Parrish, 2018). By teaching and modeling how label and respond to emotions in appropriate ways, students are given vocabulary to self regulate their own emotions. Additionally, students need time to "practice new behavior in a low-stakes way that breaks the desirable behavior in achievable steps" (Parrish, 2018, pp. 13). Teachers must recognize that while modeling is an important tool in helping students learn to regulate emotions and behavior, students may also need additional learning tools and scaffolding to be able to practice and apply these self-regulation skills.

Grade Level:	All
Materials:	None
Duration:	Daily, as needed.
Implementation:	1. Create an emotion word bank for you and students to draw from when describing feelings (anger, frustration, joy, excitement, etc.) 2. Frequently describe your emotions and thought processes to your students to teach them how to regulate emotions effectively. 3. Role-play with your students effective emotional regulation skills, such as how to react when we feel angry or hurt (take a deep breath, count to ten, etc.).

Does it work?

One study evaluated 11 teachers in 3 elementary schools to better understand the underlying factors that lead to strong student-teacher relationships, particularly with disruptive students (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2019). The teachers with positive teacher-student relationships showed evidence of self-regulating and reflecting on their own emotions. They consciously reflected on how students' behaviors caused them to feel and regulated their emotions in constructive ways. Additionally, teachers used perspective taking to perceive students' reactions and empathize with them. This, in turn, led to more caregiving behaviors. For example, they spoke calmly to the children, regulated "the intensity of their own emotional displays," and more accurately understood their students' emotions which allowed them to administer consequences and teach behavior skills in more appropriate ways (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2019, pp. 346-347). Teacher emotional competence and regulation was associated with a more positive classroom climate (McGrath & Van Bergent, 2019). In another study of 26 teachers in Kentucky, USA, researchers found that teachers who had a high level of emotional intelligence and modeled emotional regulation skills in the classroom, often had fewer class disruptions and behavioral referrals (Walker, 2001).
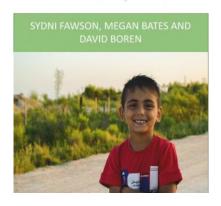
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ADDRESSING

WELLBEING

IN SCHOOLS

An Educator's Practical Guide to Improving Wellbeing

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