

# CREATING A REGULATION PLAN



This worksheet leads you through the steps that can help you create a regulation plan for your child (at home and in school) to help teachers, therapists, aides and you to work with your child during a difficult situation.

**Educators: this is a plan you should create along with parents.**

If you do the work in the first half of the worksheet, the last page - the regulation plan - becomes really easy to build. Take your time doing the work in the first part of this worksheet.

**Q1) What is the primary behavior you can expect when your child feels unsafe?**

*You can answer hyperactivity, aggression, stubbornness etc.*

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**Q 2) What does this behavior look like at home, and what can it look like at school?**

*Don't shy away from writing down the worst case scenario here? Does your child throw things, hit something or someone, run around, climb surfaces, completely go frozen, etc.*

*Remember behavior is not just aggression - please note down the freeze response as well - low tone, inability or unwillingness to move etc.*

*The idea is to normalize this by using very matter-of-fact language. Don't use emotions here, don't share what it feels like to you or someone else- simply describe the behavior.*

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### Q3) What factors in the environment trigger this behavior?

*This needs a little bit of thinking and reflecting. I suggest that you print the worksheet with this lesson, and take time filling out - as you notice behaviors.*

*Triggers could be loud sounds, the presence of someone they don't trust, the presence of someone who treats them like a child, or like a person without intelligence - this is so common.*

*It could be a new environment. It could be a visually busy environment. It could be people around them being aggressive or disruptive.*

*You may really slow down, and watch and take notes, because this part is so individual.*

*I recently worked with a student who seemed to simply be "difficult" for no reason at all. Her parents could not find a single reason for her extreme anger and unwillingness to work, until, they found that treating her for Clostridia overgrowth in her gut cured her symptoms in 3 days! So even though people couldn't see a trigger, it was there - and it was an infection in the gut.*

*If you can't find any reason or any trigger, there is a chance that their triggers are gut inflammation related. Are they constipated? Do they have a stealth yeast infection?*

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#### Q4) What helps when they are in this state?

Often parents have some strategy. Sometimes they have none - in which case we will create a suggestion plan. You can try some of the strategies listed in the next section at home and see if they help in calming your child.

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#### SUGGESTED STRATEGIES (TRY TO SEE WHICH OF THESE WORK FOR YOUR STUDENT DURING A CRISIS)

Consider the strategies listed below. Try them at home (or school) to see which will be most beneficial during a stressful “behavior” situation

##### 1. Changing the Auditory environment

- Remove low frequency sounds
- Add calming sounds - soft classical music, soft vocal music, gentle flute music, chants, etc. [Try what works for your child]
- Have someone sing, or play a soothing recorded song from a loved one.
- Do Earmuffs help?

*[Note down which of these work]*

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## 2. Soften the Visual environment

- Are there flickering lights? *Can you turn them off for a bit?*
- Is it too bright? *Can you make it less bright? [Some Autistic students can be sensitive to LED or Flourescent lights]*
- Do blue light blocking glasses or sunglasses help?

*[Note down which of these work]*

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### 3. Reduce or Eliminate Fragrances

- Many Autistic people are hypersensitive to fragrances, especially artificial.
- Consider asking staff not to wear fragrances or cologne [this is a good idea anyway, because the chemicals in fragrances can sometimes cause allergies or sensitivities, and there is some speculation about their neurotoxicity]
- Is there a food nearby that has a strong smell?

*[Note down which of these work]*

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4. Address pain. Headaches are hard to identify in non-speaking kids, and even kids with some speech. Same for stomach aches, which are so common in kids with autism - about 80% of who have gut issues of some sort. What are you going to do about the pain? How will you identify and treat it?

*[Note down your plan to identify and treat pain]*

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5. Consider if they faced an emotional event and address appropriately. Eg. how have they been treated in the past half or 1 hour? With respect? With condescension? Forced to do activities that they are unable to do?

*[Note down your plan to identify emotional triggers]*

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6. Consider fatigue or sleepiness and address appropriately.

*[Note down points to identify sleepiness, and how you will support the child in that state]*

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## REGULATION PLAN

You will now be putting together the answers to the first 4 questions, choosing the strategies that worked best for you and put them together into a plan.

It will read like this -

### REGULATION / SUPPORT PLAN FOR *[insert name, age, school]*

My son / daughter, *[insert name]*, is a curious and affectionate *[insert age]* year old Autistic *[or insert diagnosis]* student in \_\_\_ grade. In the document below, I would like to support you in helping him/her when (s)he feels unsafe and loses his/her ability to self-regulate.

When *[insert name]* experiences a lack of safety, he can *[list answer to Q1, eg. start throwing objects around]*.

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Different environments affect him differently. At home, where he feels safer, he may *[List answer to Q2]*, and at school and other environments that are more chaotic, he may *[list answer to Q2]*.

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*Specifically some things in his environment can make it very hard for him to feel safe and relaxed. Such as:*

*[List answer to Q3 - list as many bullets as you want]*

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*These are the tools / strategies that we have found helps him stabilize and feel safer when he experiences this state of crisis:*

*[List answers to Q4 as bullet points. Remember if you don't have any strategies, or even if you do, please also try the suggested strategies in the previous section and list them if they work]*

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Thanks for reading. Please note that [insert name]'s behavior can appear intentional, but is simply a response to the stress he is perceiving due to his unique sensory overwhelm. Please reach out to us if he has an episode of dysregulation, so we can further collaborate on what helps him and what does not.

Sincerely,

[insert your name]

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**It is now time to create your own regulation plan, adjust the wording as needed, and drop a copy off with the appropriate people in school.**

Note that it is completely up to you how much detail you feel like including in the final letter. Use the first half of the worksheet to make a full list of triggers and solutions, but review them - if you don't feel comfortable including everything in your letter to school, you don't have to.



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