

Being successful socially, emotionally, and academically requires many skills. Kids must be able to manage emotions and competing input, avoid distractions, inhibit impulses and behaviors, know what to pay attention to, and shift and focus their attention, just to name a few. This can be challenging in the best of times. Imagine trying to do these things without support from the part of the brain that controls most of these functions. These executive functions take place in the pre-frontal cortex. Access to this part of the brain is thwarted when we are not regulated. Fortunately, the pre-frontal cortex does not act alone. This region of our brain is involved in controlling behavior through interactions with all other parts of our brain. Unfortunately, these connections are also impacted when we are not regulated.

**Dys-regulation wreaks havoc with our ability to control our behavior.**

Neuroplasticity has taught us that we can alter our brains through new experiences. This means we can adapt and re-organize the networks connecting the areas of our brain. The more well-developed our networks, the more options we have for behavior. Self-regulation helps us maintain access to these networks. In other words, it's all about self-regulation. If we are not able to self-regulate, we can get stuck in dys-regulated states. In these states our only behavioral options are fight, flight, freeze, and fall asleep/collapse.

**Self-regulation is the ability to shift your state of arousal from a dys-regulated to regulated state.**

- **What if we taught self-regulation skills to children?**
- **What if we allowed children to explore and determine their own self-regulatory needs?**
- **What if we offered children opportunities to self-regulate throughout the school day?**

**Explicitly teaching the concept of learning tools™ supports children in gaining self-regulation skills.**



The concept of learning tools™ experientially teaches students about self-regulation. With support, children explore different tools deciding for themselves which tools work for them, and which do not. This process of self-discovery helps children understand their individual regulatory needs. In classrooms, students are encouraged to explore what helps them shift and focus their attention. If an object or behavior is distracting, then it is not the right learning tool for that student. Students practice with different tools, experiencing the impact each has on their ability to self-regulate. They decide if a tool distracts them or helps them learn. Students come to understand that we all have different regulatory needs.



Learning Tool Bracelets™

**Fairness is everyone getting what they need, rather than everyone getting the same thing.**