

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning at Home

This Week's Focus – Self-Management

What is Self-Management?

Self-Management refers to an individual's success in controlling his or her emotions and behaviors to complete a task or succeed in a new or challenging situation. Both children and adults need to learn how to control their emotions so that they can get the job done. Often, when talking about managing emotions, we focus on how to calm down when we are angry, upset, or scared.

These are important skills, but we also need to be able to energize ourselves when we are tired, bored, or just don't feel like working hard. Sometimes we need to calm down and focus; other times we need to "psych ourselves up" to get the energy to tackle our schoolwork, our chores, or our jobs. Being able to psych ourselves up so that we can get to work is a life-long skill that helps us be successful.

Strategy – "Psych Yourself Up"

The goal of this strategy is simple – to increase your energy level and motivation to do whatever needs to be done.

For elementary students – One key to psyching yourself up is to get up and get moving! Increased activity gets your heart pumping and can give you a boost of energy. For your young children have them spend 5 minutes pretending to be an active animal – jump like a kangaroo, stomp around like a dinosaur, or prance like a pony. Do this a few times throughout the day to keep them energized!

For middle school students – Music can heighten our mood and help us get fired up to take on a challenge. Have your middle schooler create a playlist of music that they find energizing or inspiring. For the baby boomer writing this strategy I might include the Theme from Rocky or Eye of the Tiger, but I bet your child could find something more meaningful to them! You might also want to create a playlist for calming down and relaxing when the schoolwork or chores are done.

For high school students – Many professional athletes and entertainers have "pre-performance success rituals" that they go through to get ready for the big game or concert. They might listen to the same music, eat the same food, take deep breaths, or do something silly like basketball star LeBron James tossing chalk before each game. A good success ritual for your high school student is to think about and picture in their minds their past successes – specific times when they performed well and achieved their goals. Remembering their past successes can give them the energy and the confidence to take on their current challenges.



For preschool students – Many classic games for preschoolers are not only fun but promote young children’s self-management skills. Consider playing games with simple directions like Simon Says or Red Light, Green Light. As you actively engage in these games with your child, think about how you are not only enjoying the time together, you are also teaching your child important skills that will benefit them later in life.

For Infants and Toddlers - Your baby takes cues from listening and watching you. When you find yourself practicing self-management techniques like taking deep breaths, talk to your baby about your strategy. He will learn by the tone of your voice, the expressions on your face and your overall demeanor. Whether your strategy is to get psyched up by listening to fun music or to calm yourself down by deep breathing, your child will notice that you are engaging in something that promotes a positive mood.

A Note to Parents

Adults need to get psyched up too. All the strategies described above can work for you too! Consider creating some family pre-performance success rituals or playlists that you can share to get everyone psyched up and ready to take on the day’s challenges.

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning at Home is brought to you by Aperture Education (www.Apertureed.com) and The Devereux Center for Resilient Children (www.CenterforResilientChildren.org). Feel free to visit our websites for additional ideas.

Next Week’s topic – Social-Awareness