



# A NEW TAKE ON EMOTIONAL REGULATION

WORKBOOK

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A Framework and Strategies  
to help children with  
Emotional Regulation Difficulties

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# EMOTIONAL REGULATION

"The process by which we influence which emotions we have, and how we experience and express them"(Gross, 1998)

Emotional Regulation can be \_\_\_\_\_ **or** \_\_\_\_\_

A part of: **Self-regulation**- The ability to adjust reactions and behaviors to meet the demands of the environment.

Emotions themselves are innate and natural.

**Hand model of the brain**- developed by Dan Siegel, psychiatrist at UCLA \* language adapted in part from Julia Harper OT of Therapeeds.

The Base of hand =the \_\_\_\_\_, it is in charge of automated processes, digestion, breathing, survival and sleep.

The middle of the hand=the \_\_\_\_\_. This area is a center for emotion and helps us link emotions to memories. It is involved with the attachment we have with caregivers.

The base of the thumb is the \_\_\_\_\_ which is said to be the fire detector of the brain because it detects danger and can signal a protection response. (It is also involved with many other emotions)

The top part or \_\_\_\_\_ is the CEO of the brain , it takes all the information from below to make a response such as language to communicate needs .

**Flipping a lid**- represented by when fingers are up-when the cortex is offline - loss of control.

# Level 1 Brainstem (Bottom Up Strategies)

How do you know a child would benefit from strategies for the brainstem? They are:

- easily triggered
- often in sympathetic state
- slow to recover

## What is the sympathetic state?

The **Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)** is connected to brainstem and can be split into at least two main systems:

### \_\_\_\_\_ State the flight and fight state

- Increased heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Stomach “butterflies” as blood moves away from digestive organs towards the limbs
- Constriction of most blood vessels and increased blood pressure
- Pupil dilation
- Sweating
- Dry mouth as the glands responsible for salivation are inhibited
- Release of stress hormone cortisol (Alshak & Das, 2020)

### \_\_\_\_\_ State: rest and digest/ pause and plan system

- Decreased heart rate
- Improved digestion
- Relaxed and opened blood vessels
- Constriction of the pupils improving near vision
- Improved salivation

For more on this see the blog on the ANS:  
<https://thebigpicturetherapy.com/blog-13/>

# Level 1 Brainstem (Bottom Up Strategies)

When we see sympathetic responses we need to **slow down or stop** the activity.

\*Remember: you can be happy AND in a \_\_\_\_\_ state

A healthy body needs to be able to transition between **both** states easily. (The goal is not to suppress the sympathetic state)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Up Strategies include:**

- Reflex Integration
- Breath Work
- Sleep Strategies
- Sensory Processing Integration

What is a **reflex**?

"Simply stated a **reflex** is a neurological arc that has both a specific stimuli and a predictable response or responses"  
(Brandes, 2015)

- provide the code for basic body movements
- are the foundation for complex movement patterns
- will manifest differently during different stages of a child's life
- assist in protective and survival responses
- are involuntary and not under conscious control
- change in expression with age, injury, or trauma

(Modrell & Tadi, 2021) (Svetlana Masgutova Educational Institute, 2015)

**3 reflexes that send kids into fight/flight/freeze responses:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Reflex
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reflex
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reflex

# Moro Reflex

## **The Stimuli:**

Vestibular input, head moving backwards or entire body moving towards floor

## **The Response:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_-arms move away from core with hands open, ext. rotation at shoulders, inhalation

2. \_\_\_\_\_-arms and usually legs will return to center of body, exhalation

## **Signs that the Moro Reflex is not integrated :**

- Emotionally Fragile
- Difficulty tilting head back for hair washing
- Poor balance
- Hesitation with swings, rides and slides
- Motion Sickness
- Increased Cortisol and Adrenaline causing
- Weakened immune response

(Berk, 2009) (Shackleford et al., 2017)

## **Integration:**

Most active response at 2 months and typically integrate by 4-6 months

# Moro Reflex

## INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES FOR MORO REFLEX

# Fear Paralysis Reflex

**The Stimuli:** Something a child **sees, touches** or **hears** that is threatening (visual/ tactile/ auditory)

**The Response:** Inhibition of movement (freeze) and flexion pattern of limbs, withdrawal of core and internal rotation of shoulders

**Signs Fear paralysis Reflex is not integrated:**

- overwhelming fears/ anxiety
- phobias
- difficulty managing stressful situations
- avoidant behaviors
- dissociation (feeling disconnected from self)
- insomnia
- fatigue

**Integration:**

The fear paralysis reflex turns to the The Startle Reflex at 3 years old. (Shackelford et al., 2017)

# Fear Paralysis Reflex

**INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES FOR FEAR PARALYSIS REFLEX**

# Foot Tendon Guard Reflex (TGR)

**The Stimuli:** Perception of threat

**The Response:** Muscle contractions affecting foot tendons, achilles tendon and gastrocnemius (calf) muscle (Curlee, 2015)

Foot Tendon Guard Reflex is one of three expressions of Tendon Guard Reflex which also include Core TGR and Upper TGR (neck)

- \_\_\_\_\_ **light Response-** Freezing- flexion pattern of the muscles, a withdrawal of the core, visual convergence
- \_\_\_\_\_ **light Response-** Fleeing- backwards motion of the trunk, visual divergence (Masgutova, 2015).

**Signs Foot Tendon Guard Reflex is not integrated:**

- Toe Walking
- Difficulties with Visual Convergence and divergence
- Fear with rapidly approaching stimuli- these kids have difficulty catching
- Impulsive behavior
- Eloping
- Emotionally reactive
- Poor ability to shift focus (Rentschler, 2009)

**Integration:**

Integrates at approximately 1 year with activities such as crawling and walking (Story, 2015)

# Foot Tendon Guard Reflex (TGR)

## INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES FOR FOOT TENDON GUARD REFLEX

# Level 2 Limbic System (Middle Zone Strategies)

## Emotion, Attachment, and Memory

**Limbic system-** connects emotionally charged experiences to memories about people

**Amygdala:** triggered with fear response, also key in motivation and involved in positive experiences as well

Limbic System Key in :

- **Co-Regulation** -Involved in Caregiver Attachment
- Psychosocial Learning- learning how to emotionally respond
- Involved in the formation of memories prioritizing emotionally charged memories

### LEVEL 2 PROTOCOL FOR BIG FEELINGS

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Level 3 Cortex (Top-Down Strategies)

## Voluntary and Conscious Emotional Control CORTEX

The **Cortex** - pulls together information from lower systems to make a response (I need... a hug... a break etc)

**Prefrontal Cortex:** Involved in impulse control, executive functioning and planning- fully develops in late 20's!

### **Top-Down Strategies for kids who are:**

- Able to identify their state
- Showing emerging use of Prefrontal Cortex for impulse control and planning
- No longer dominated by protective reflexes
- May have trouble using tools in the moment
- may have limited emotional regulation tools

### **TOP-DOWN TIPS**

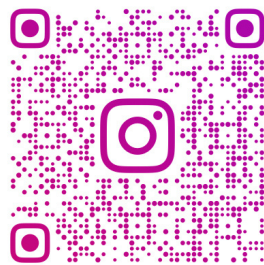
# Would you like to feel more confident in your practice?

Looking a few therapists to pilot a system to organize regulation strategies.

Email your name to get on the waitlist

[Jasmine@thebigpicturetherapy.com](mailto:Jasmine@thebigpicturetherapy.com)

Or send DM to Instagram:  
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