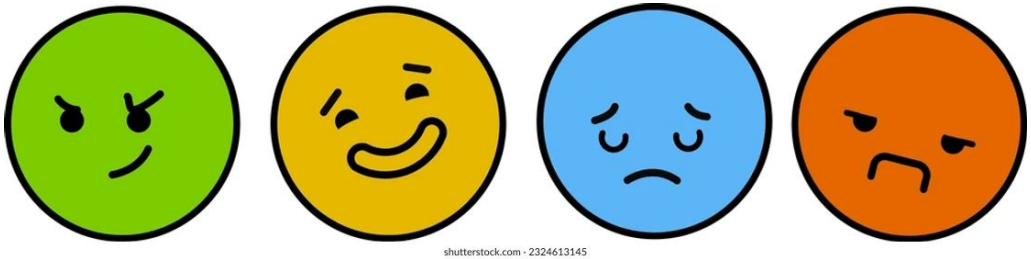
Supporting Regulation:

Practical Breathing & Mindfulness strategies

Chelsea Bembridge - Wellness Coach

Emotional Regulation



- **Definition**: It involves influencing *which* emotions you feel, *when* you feel them, and *how* you show or act on them.
- **Conscious vs. Unconscious**: Regulation can happen deliberately (such as deep breathing to calm down after a hard conversation) or automatically without active thought.
- **Goal**: The aim is not to get rid of difficult feelings like anger or sadness, but to keep them from overwhelming your behavior or damaging your well-being.
- **Learned Skill**: Unlike temperament (which is genetic and inborn), emotional regulation is a set of skills that develops over time through childhood, practice, and life experience.

What does dysregulation look like in our students?



STRESS RESPONSES DURING MELTDOWN

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FIGHT



- Yelling or screaming
- Using aggressive language
- Physically hurting peers or educators (e.g., hitting, kicking, biting)
- Throwing objects or damaging property

FLIGHT



- Running away or absconding from the group
- Avoiding eye contact or interaction
- Being hyperactive or restless
- Attempting to leave the room or hiding

FREEZE



- Withdrawing and isolating themselves
- Giving short and disengaged responses like "I don't know," "Nothing," or "Whatever"
- Feeling stuck

FAWN



- Complying without understanding
- Saying what they think others want to hear (e.g., "I'm sorry" without understanding the reason)
- Agreeing to tasks or requests to avoid conflict or attention

Saurubh Malviya
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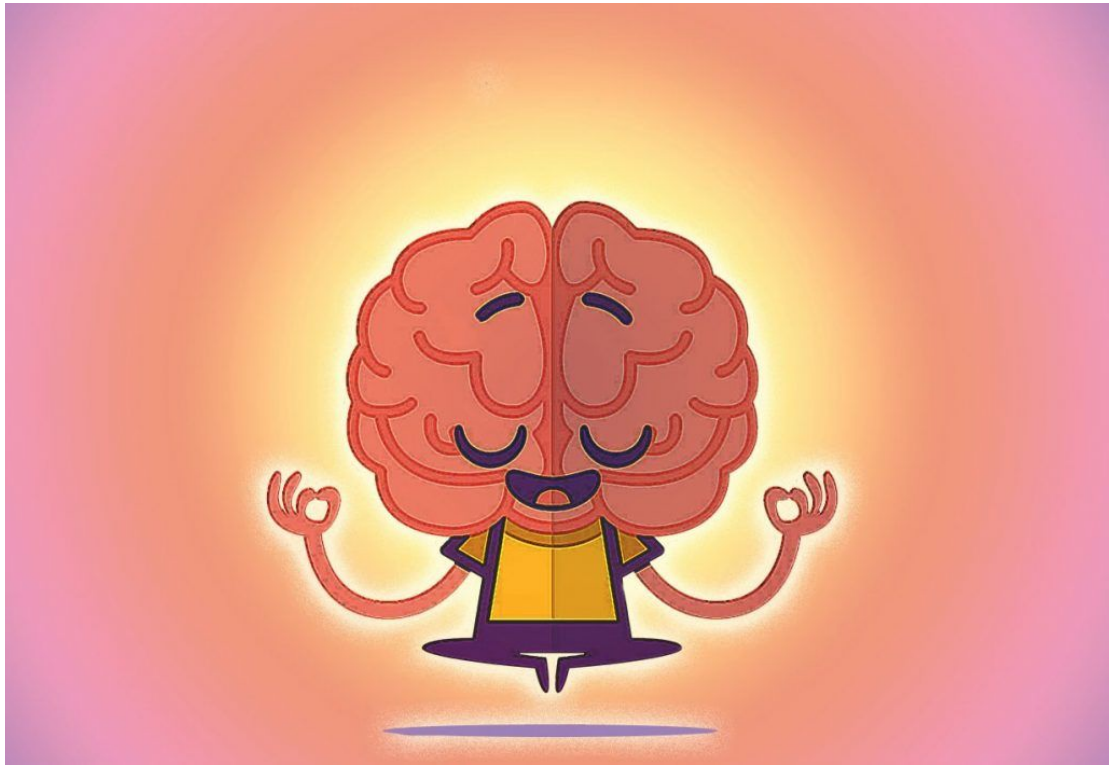
The Brain



Guard dog - Amygdala



Owl - Prefrontal cortex



If we were all on a bus to Edmonton, who would we want driving our bus? The guard dog or the owl?



The Power of Co-regulation

Before students can regulate themselves, they often need to experience regulation with someone else.

-Using a calm steady voice
-Giving the student physical space
-Slowing down movements
-Reducing the number of words we use
-Communicating “I’m here to help”

"Co-regulation is when someone else's calm helps you find your own. It's not about fixing. It's about being felt."

– Terri Cole

Definition of mindfulness

-Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us





"Just Breathe" by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman (Wavecrest Films)

Checking in with the student

-asking how their body is feeling
-asking what they need: space, closeness, a walk, etc
-sharing things like ‘sometimes when I’m mad I feel my heart racing’

-Getting them to start to recognize and be mindful of how their body is feeling in hopes they will be able to start identifying it prior to dysregulation

Breathing

CANDLE

BREATHING EXERCISE



Pretend you are holding a cupcake in front of you.

Smell the cupcake and visualize a flavor you like, for example, chocolate.

Blow out the candle on the cupcake by breathing out from your mouth.

PIZZA

BREATHING EXERCISE



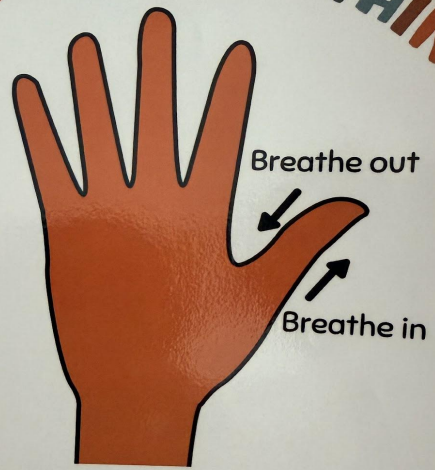
Imagine holding a piece of freshly made pizza with your favorite toppings.

Take a deep breath to smell the delicious pizza for a count of 3.

Breathe out from your mouth for a count of 3 to cool the hot pizza slice.

Repeat 3 times.

TAKE FIVE BREATHING



Open one palm and place it in front of you.

Using your pointer finger, trace your palm.

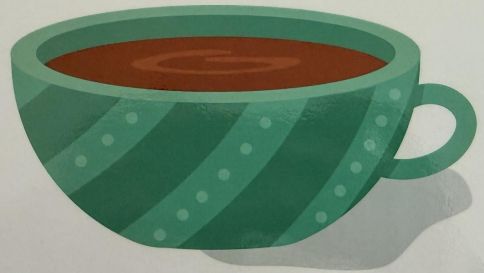
Breathe in as you trace upwards.

Breathe out as you trace downwards.

Repeat this for the other 4 fingers.

HOT CHOCOLATE

BREATHING EXERCISE



Imagine you are holding a warm cup of hot chocolate.

Breathe in deeply through your nose to smell the creamy, sweet scent of chocolate.

Breathe out slowly through your mouth to cool the hot chocolate.



Adaptations for grounding

-how many red lockers are in our hallway?
-can you smell that? Can we find where it's coming from?
-Does it sound like that class is learning math or science?
-What is your favorite animal in that mural?
-What is one sound that is close and one that is far?

-what can you see in your binoculars? What more can you see when you don’t have them?
-Mindful movement - wall pushes, standing on one foot, touching toes
-How does the wall feel different than the lockers?
-Tell me about your favorite place?



Would your body like a quiet break or a movement break?

-wall pushes or chair push ups
-carrying books
-animal walks
-pushing palms together or using a fidget
-jumping

Word Swaps

- "Calm down!" → "I'm here. Let's take a moment."
- "What's wrong with you?" → "Something seems hard right now."
- "You know better!" → "Let's figure out what will help."
- "You need to do this now!" → "Let's work out the first step."
- "Use your words!" → "You can tell me, point, or show me."

Questions?

