

CHILDREN'S
Autism Services
OF EDMONTON
AT THE MAIER CENTRE



Applying an Emotional Regulation Approach in the Classroom

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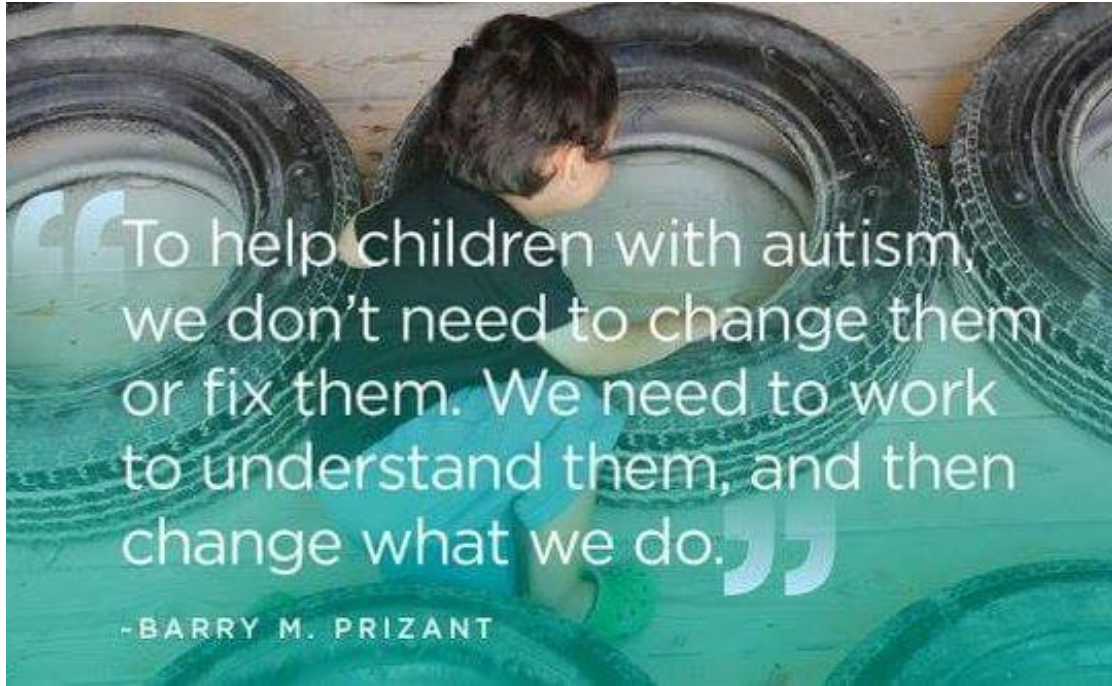
Children's Autism Services of Edmonton

Canada

Providing Context

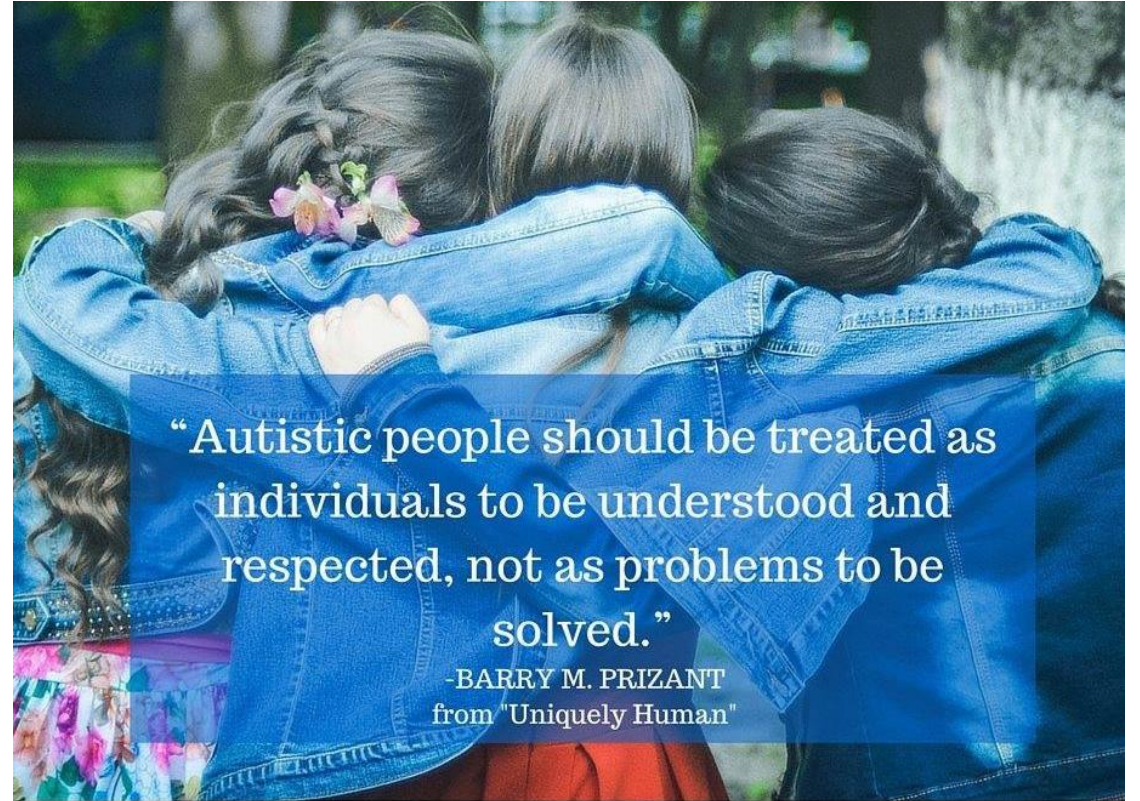
- For the past 19 years, Children's Autism Services of Edmonton and now, British Columbia has supported neurodiverse children and their families in Western Canada using an Emotional Regulation Approach
- Through school based, home based and community-based programs, our teams provide training, parent coaching, modelling and professional development in using an Emotional Regulation Approach





“To help children with autism,
we don’t need to change them
or fix them. We need to work
to understand them, and then
change what we do.”

-BARRY M. PRIZANT



“Autistic people should be treated as
individuals to be understood and
respected, not as problems to be
solved.”

-BARRY M. PRIZANT
from "Uniquely Human"



Why the shift from behaviour management to emotional regulation?

- The neurodiversity perspective

One of the most important contributions of the neurodiversity movement is the idea that Autistic behaviors, interests, challenges, and strengths all represent valid ways of being (Shuck et. al, 2021)

- Emotional memory

We felt that an interpersonal environment for trust needed above all to be alive, attentive, accepting; we all depended on feelings of predictability, reliability, and care (Murray et. Al, 2021)


- Current research and best practice

That is, the development and continued use of emotion regulation require an alignment among a child's internal capabilities and the provision of ecological resources found in the family, school, and larger community (Weiss, 2014)

Differences in information processing and perception in ASD, ranging from slower processing to a heightened sensitivity to environmental influences (e.g., sensory sensitivity, resistance to change) may also affect ER in ASD (Mazefsky et. al, 2014)

We need to break
our reliance on
training
compliance



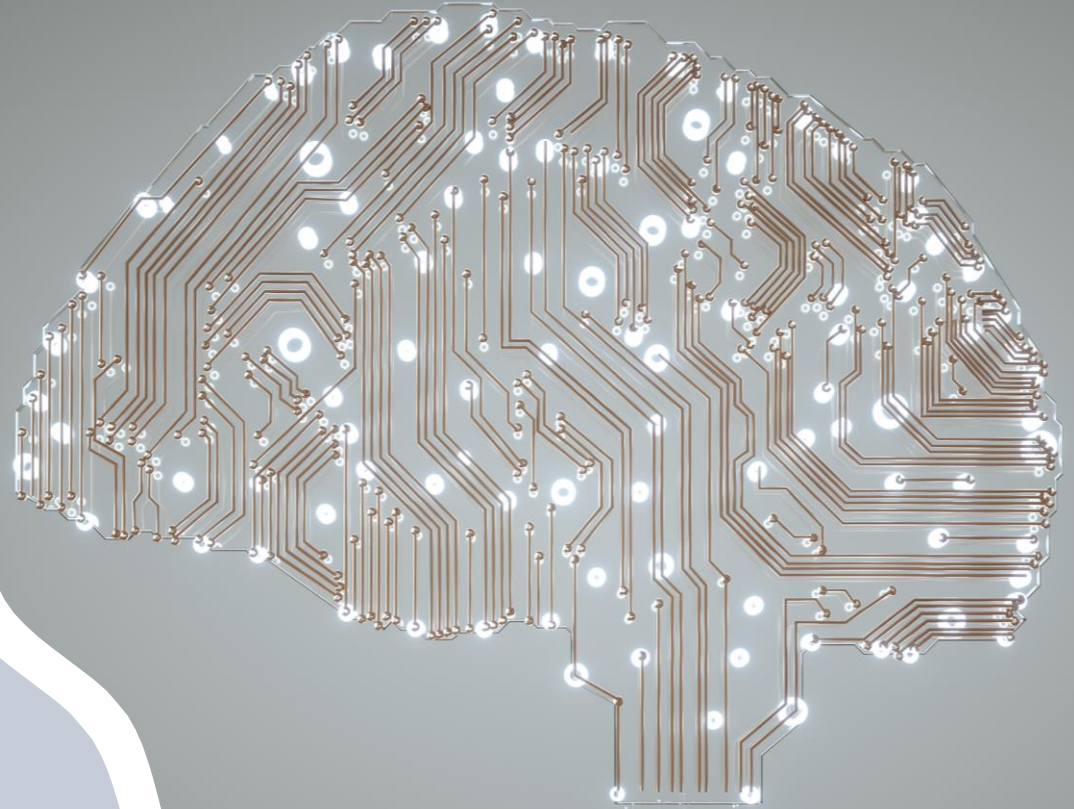
A photograph of a multi-lane highway bridge with a yellow guardrail, curving through a valley. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn, with silhouettes of trees and hills in the background. The text is overlaid in white on the upper half of the image.

The key to breaking our
reliance on compliance is
an Emotional Regulation
Approach

Emotional Regulation

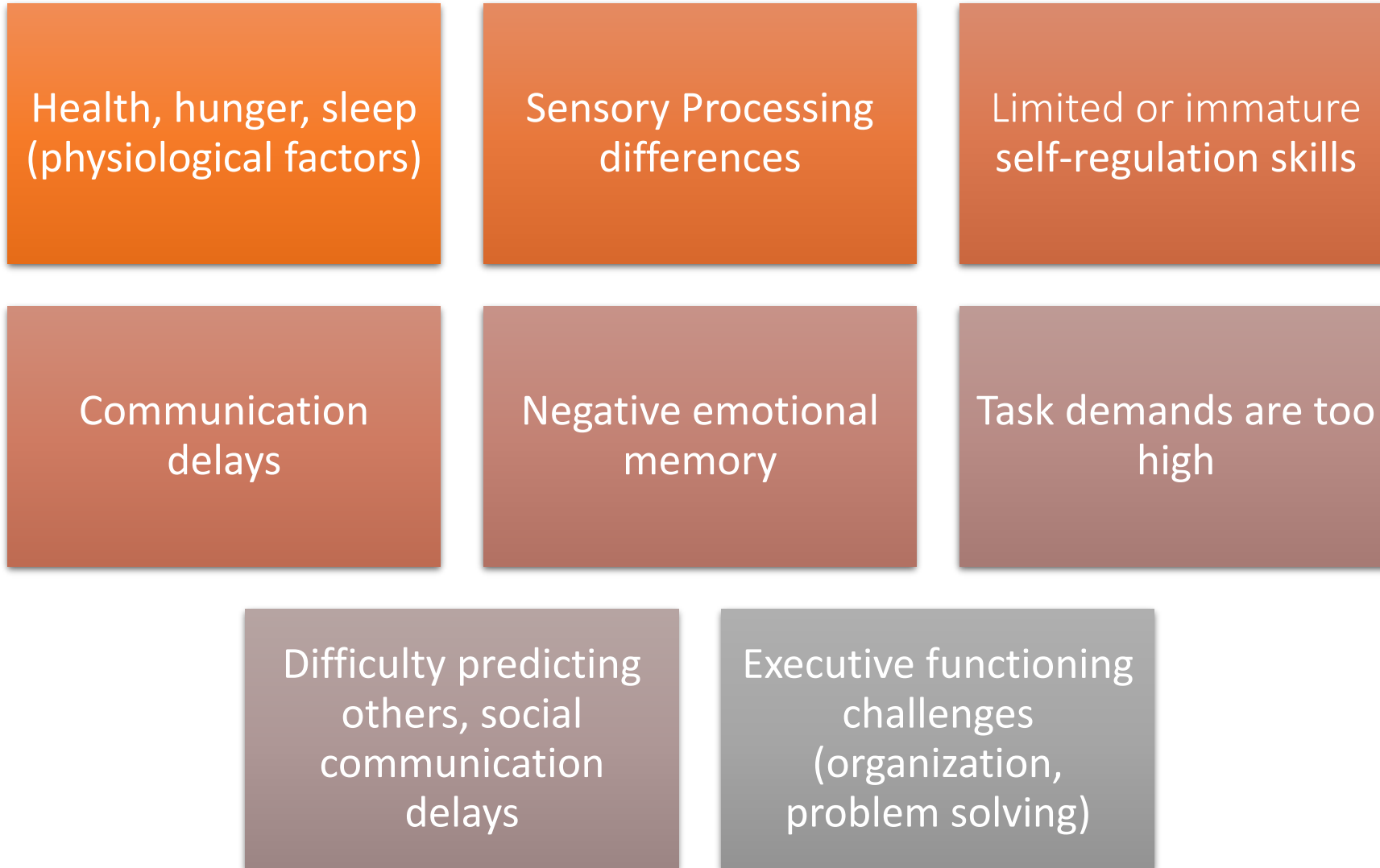
What Is Emotional Regulation?

Emotional regulation is a **developmental process that evolves and matures across the lifespan**. It is the capacity to shift one's internal emotional state and state of arousal (energy level, for example) to meet demands or match the characteristics of one's social and physical environment



The ability to be available for learning

Factors of Regulation



What is an Emotional Regulation Approach?

The process of supporting an individual to have the skills and supports to match their internal state of emotion or arousal, with the demands of the environment, as a primary focus of intervention and development

An Emotional Regulation Approach acknowledges that:

- All behaviours are communication
- Neurodiverse individuals often need support to regulate from others, and need others to modify their environments and interactions to be responsive to those needs
- By reducing stressors, proactively providing tools and support, and explicitly teach regulation strategies the people around the individual have great influence on their development and inclusion





“

*A child's challenging behaviour is a problem
to an adult... to a child, it is a solution.*

Lorna Jean King



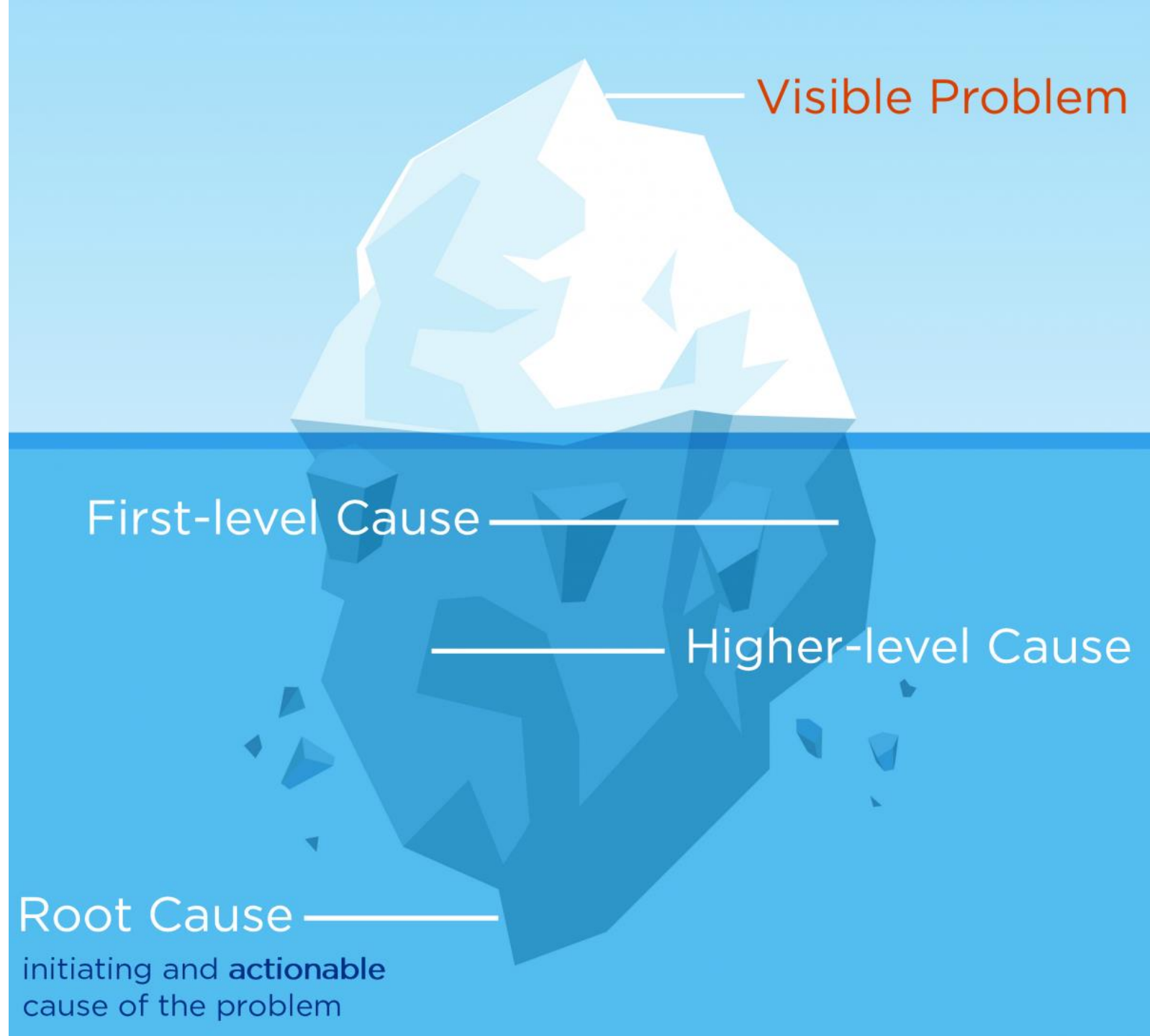
An Emotional Regulation Approach looks at ways that you can make changes to your **environment**, and your **interactions** to support learning and meaningful inclusion in your classroom.

Below the Water

80% of our effort should be focused on the underlying barriers, skill gaps and factors that lead to dysregulation

These are the proactive supports

- Matching strategies and supports to the developmental level of the individual
- Environmental shifts
- Modification to our interactions and expectations
- Explicit teaching and modelling of regulation strategies and supports



How do we apply this learning in the classroom?

Step 1 (Preparation): Consider Your Students and the Environment

- Consider developmental stages of students
- Set the environment up for success
- Develop visuals for routines, transitions, reminders and new learning (along with communication)

Step 2 (Development): Explore Tools for Support

- **Explore** sensory preferences
- **Trial tools and strategies** to support regulation
- Consider a regulation program class wide

Step 3 (Exposure): Explicitly Teach the Approach

- **Explicitly teach emotions language**, strategy use through learning activities and lessons
- **Model the language** and strategies consistently through words, visuals and actions
- Proactive reminders, adult responsiveness and check for understanding

Questions?

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References

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