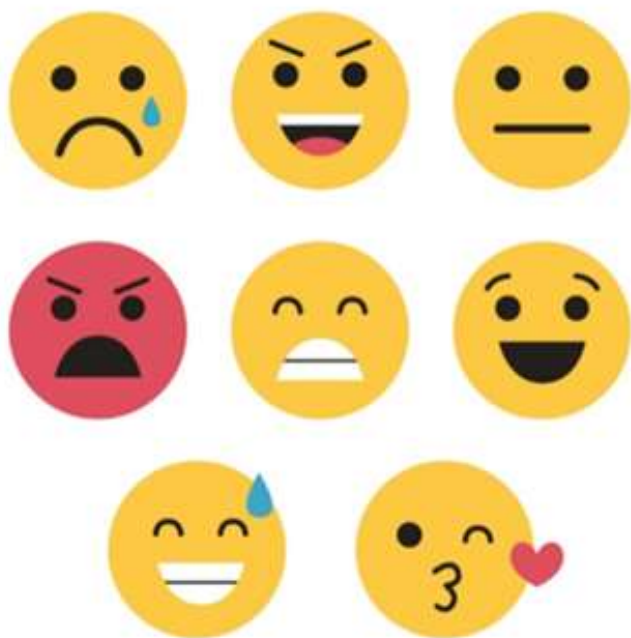


# De-escalation and regulation

Tips for helping children when they struggle to manage their emotional responses



## Key terms about emotions and feelings

**Dysregulation:** a poor ability to manage emotional responses, or keep them within an acceptable range. It can refer to a wide range of emotions including sadness, anger, irritability and frustration.

**Regulation:** managing their emotional response.

**De-escalation:** reduce the intensity of their emotional response.

## The Vital Relational Functions (VRF's)

These are the tools used to address a child's emotional state during a crisis:

**ATTUNE:** Catch 'n' match the feeling! Be alert to how they are feeling. Show the child that you understand the intensity, pitch, pace, volume or special experience of the child's emotional state.

**VALIDATE:** Stop the behaviour, validate the feeling. You need to do this before you can move to help them regulate it. This is the beginning of being able to think about feelings.

**CONTAIN:** Make the unbearable survivable! Show the child that you can take their deep distress, raging anger or sorrow and make it a survivable experience. Remain regulated yourself.

**REGULATE:** Meet the intensity then calm soothe. The child needs to experience being calmed before they can do it themselves.

## If you want to help a child who is dysregulated:

- Pause for thought before acting
- Check your body language and facial expressions
- Stay calm
- Stay positive
- Don't be afraid to use a change of face if needed

### Useful phrases

"I wonder if..."

"I understand that you feel..."

"I am wondering whether..."

"How do you think I could help you?"

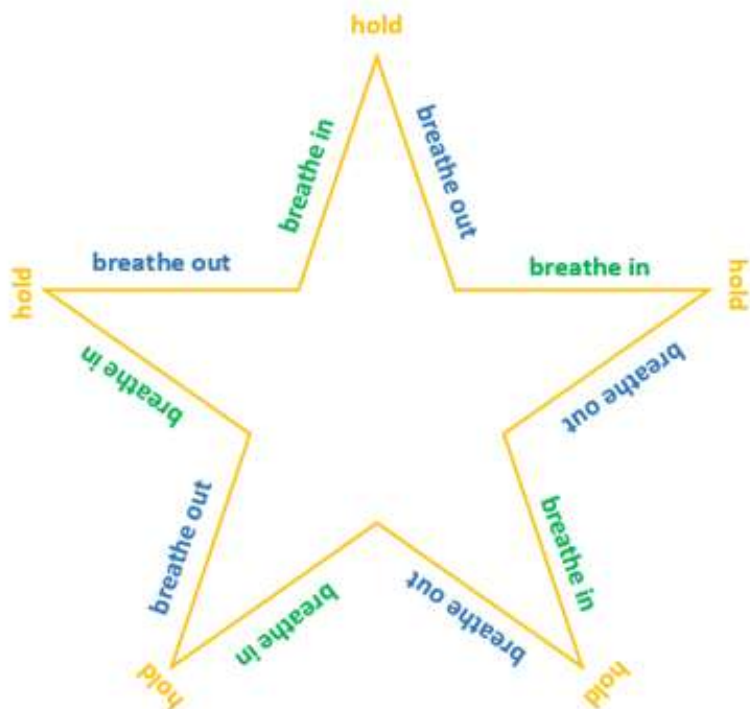
"I can see that you're finding it hard to..."

"I can see/hear that you are feeling... is that right?"

### Some useful strategies

- Use the star breathing exercise and other similar techniques
- Ask the child if they can help you with a task – give them purpose and meaning
- Offer a clear choice, for example "you can complete your work using the red pen or the pencil"
- Offer the child some time out in a quiet space
- Have a few games/books/sensory activities to offer the child to support them in calming down

## Star breathing exercise:



## Top tips

- Validate their feelings and not their actions
- Avoid making demands
- Respect personal space
- Do not try to reason with them
- Think about the tone of your voice
- Communicate one idea and thought at a time
- Try to remain calm