

Supporting Emotional Regulation

Understanding big feelings and how to respond



bright path
THERAPY

Bright Path Therapy

CBT informed support for children and young people

This resource is for information and reflection. It does not replace personalised therapeutic support.



What Is Emotional Regulation?

Emotional regulation is the ability to notice, manage, and recover from strong feelings.

For many children, especially neurodivergent children, regulation develops with support, not through self-control alone.

Children are not born knowing how to manage big emotions. Regulation develops gradually through repeated experiences of being supported and understood.

In early years, children rely on adults to:

- Notice when they are overwhelmed
- Stay calm during distress
- Help them recover safely

Over time, these repeated experiences build internal regulation skills

“ Big emotions are not a problem to fix. They are signals ”





The Brain and Big Feelings

When a child feels overwhelmed, the thinking part of the brain becomes less available.

The body shifts into protection mode: fight, flight, freeze, or shut down.

In these moments, children cannot access reasoning, logic, or learning. They need safety and connection first

“Emotional dysregulation is not defiance. It is a nervous system response.”

Emotional Intensity

You might notice your child moving between:

- Calm and regulated
- Worry or frustration building
- Overwhelm
- Shutdown or meltdown

Support is often most effective before emotions reach their highest intensity



What Can Unintentionally Make Things Harder?

1

Pressure to “calm down” quickly

2

Expecting reasoning during distress

3

Punishment for emotional expression

4

Talking too much when a child is overwhelmed

5

Interpreting distress as misbehaviour

Children regulate better when they feel understood, not corrected





What Helps Regulation?

1

Predictable routines

2

Calm, steady adult responses

3

Sensory awareness and adjustments

4

Co-regulation before independence

5

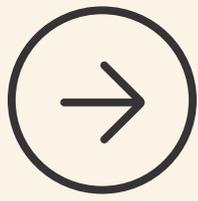
Repair and reassurance after emotional moments

6

Reducing demands during overwhelm

Regulation develops through repeated experiences of feeling safe





Next Steps

Regulation comes before learning.

When adults stay calm and connected, children gradually build the skills they need to manage emotions more independently over time.

Supporting emotional regulation is not about controlling behaviour, it is about building safety and resilience.

You may wish to seek additional support if:

- Emotional outbursts are frequent or intense
- Recovery time is increasing
- Regulation difficulties are affecting school
- You feel unsure how to respond without escalating distress

Early support can prevent patterns becoming entrenched.



A FREE 15 minute initial consultation can help explore whether Bright Path Therapy may be appropriate for your child's needs. You are welcome to get in touch via the contact details below. Initial conversations are exploratory and there is no obligation to continue.



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