



# BRIDGING HOME & SCHOOL

# Self-Regulation

What is it and how can you build these skills?



# Self-Regulation

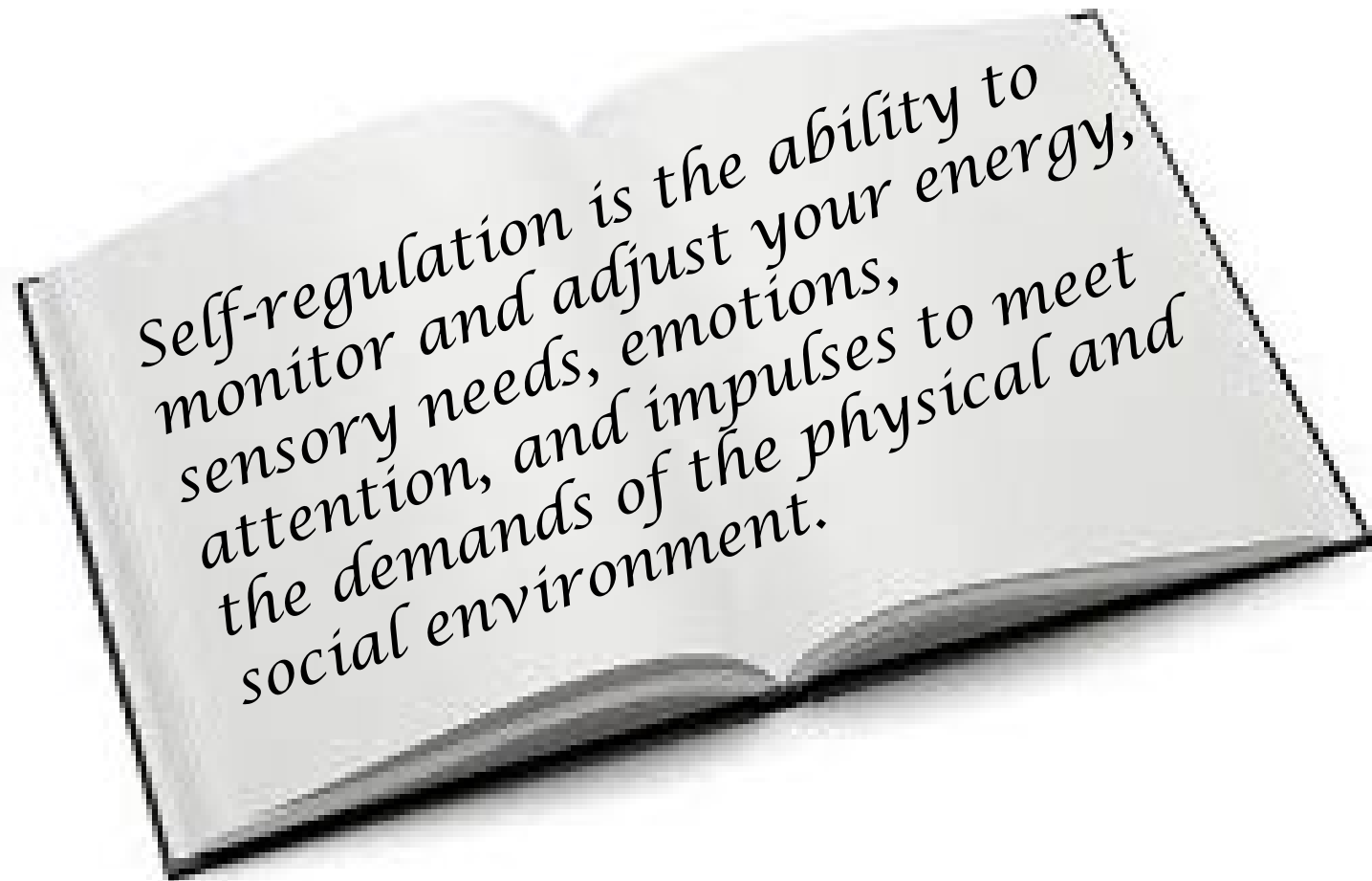
Is a better predictor  
of success than IQ

Is not the same as  
compliance

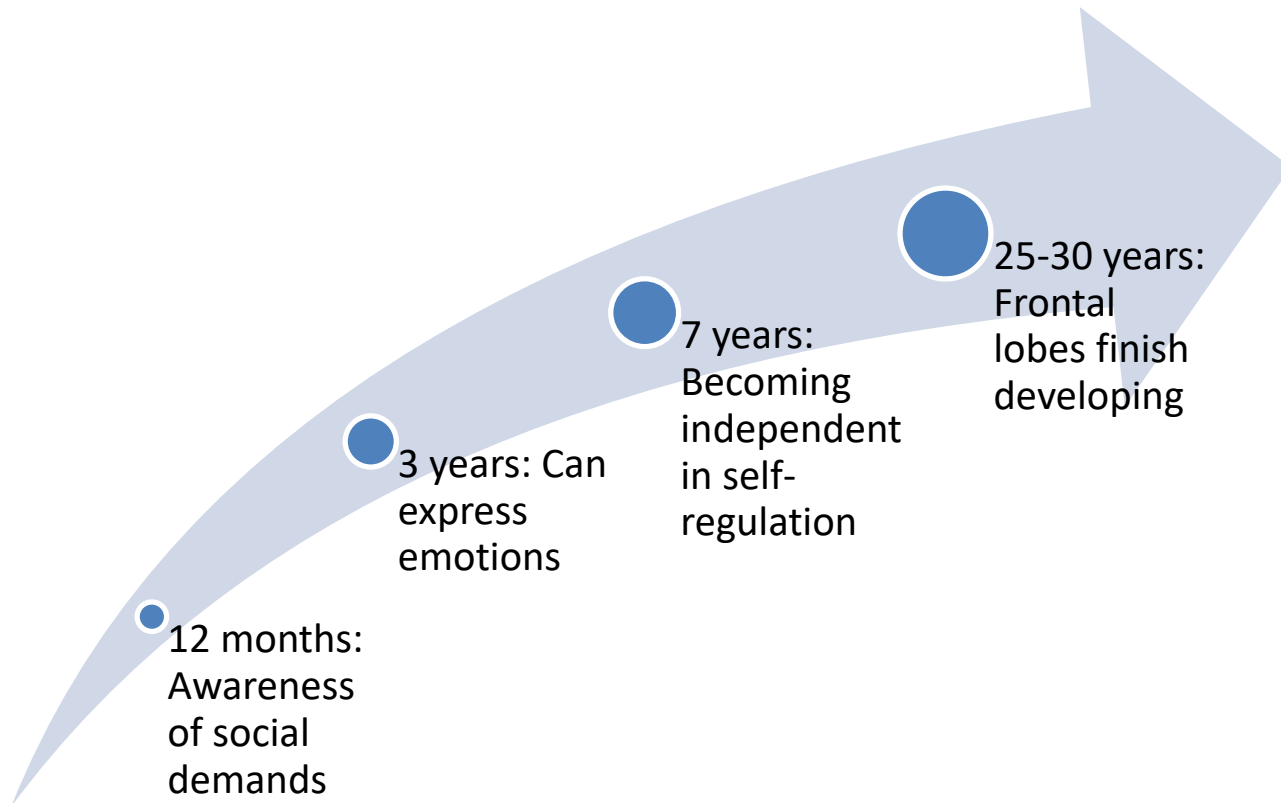
Needs to be taught  
and practiced



# What is self-regulation?



# Developmental Milestones





# Most kids are dysregulated sometimes!

When they're dysregulated, they may...

- ... Act aggressively
- ... Struggle in social situations
- ... Have trouble turning off at bedtime
- ... Be picky about eating
- ... Worry a lot
- ... Have trouble listening
- ... Struggle with schoolwork
- ... Daydream
- .... Move constantly





## Misbehaviour

They are acting deliberately  
They CAN choose a different  
behaviour  
Negative consequences should work  
Our response is anger  
Reactive approach



## Stress Behaviour

They are reacting to stress  
They CANNOT make different  
choices  
Negative consequences won't help  
Our response is curiosity  
Proactive approach



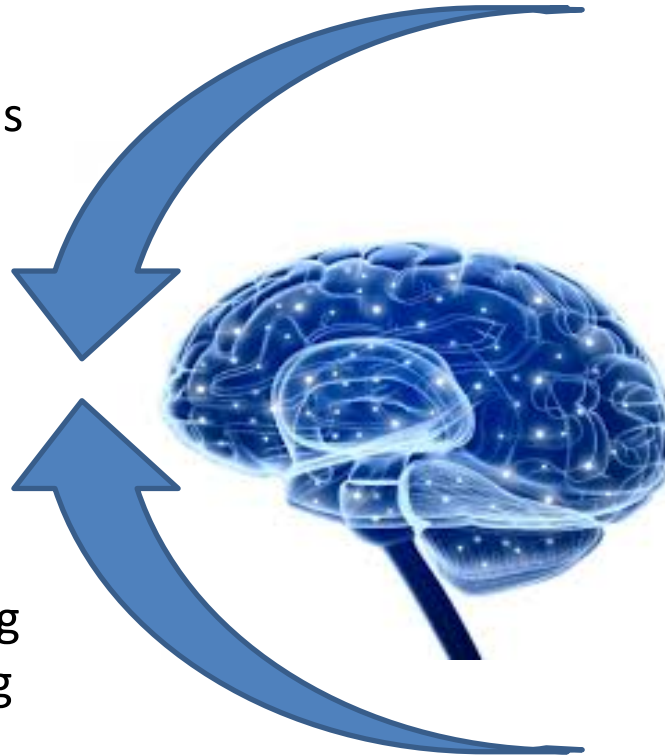
# It's a brain thing!

## Top-down Processing

- Executive functions
- Rational thinking

## Bottom-up Processing

- Emotional reacting
- Aroused, illogical





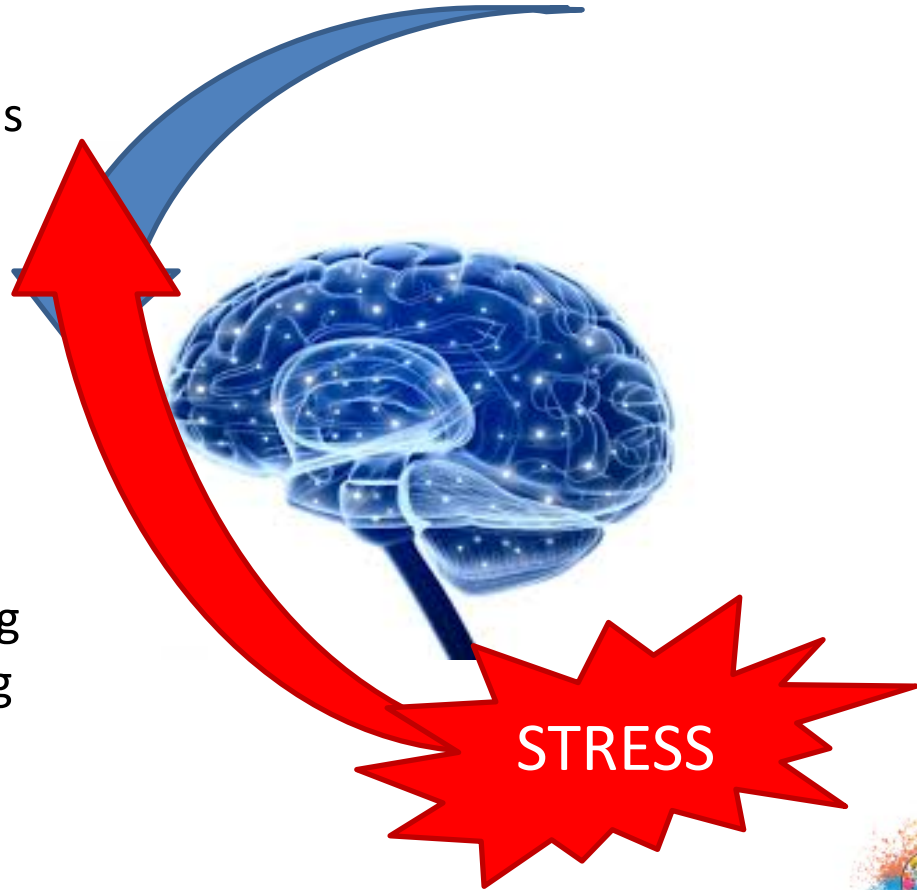
# It's a brain thing!

## Top-down Processing

- Executive functions
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## Bottom-up Processing

- Emotional reacting
- Aroused, illogical



# Behaviour is communication

- What is your child's behaviour trying to tell you?
- Oppositionality:
  - It's too hard
  - I'm anxious
  - I'm tired
- Aggression:
  - I'm embarrassed
  - I can't
  - I don't have words to tell you

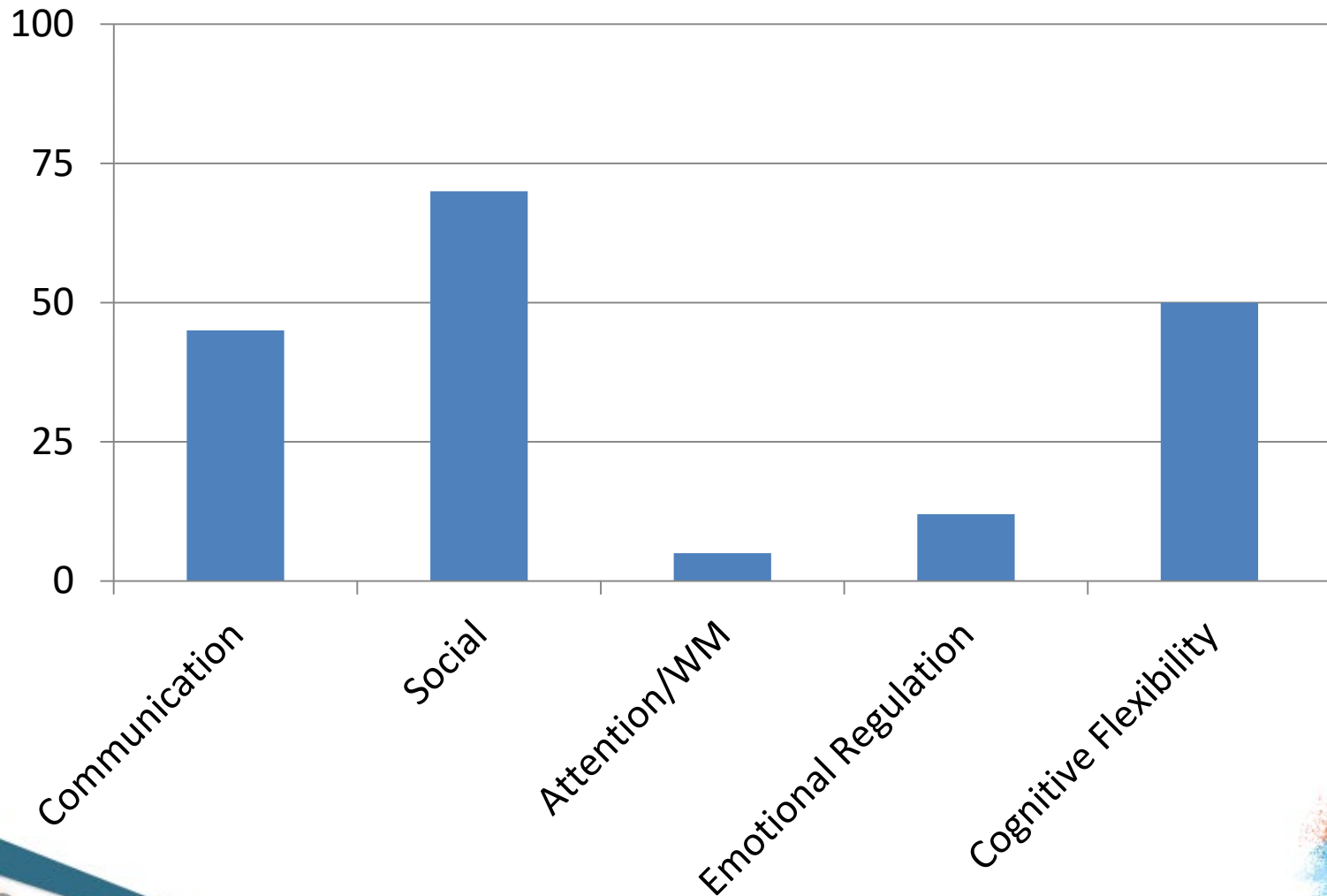


# Thinking skills underlying behaviour

- Language and communication skills
- Social skills
- Attention and working memory
- Emotional and self-regulation
- Cognitive flexibility



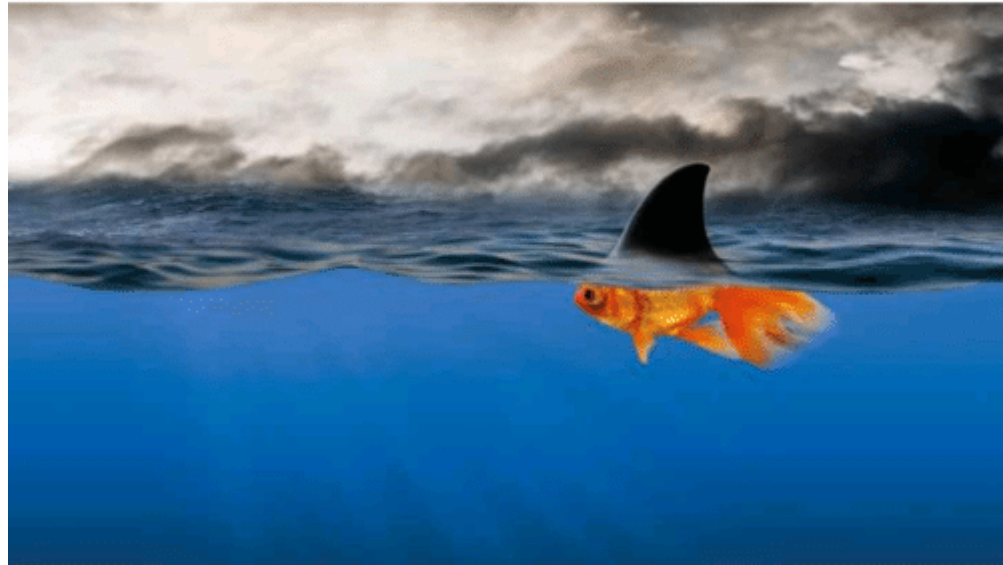
# Skills develop at different rates



# What to do when it's all going wrong?

- Stay calm, it's not about you!
- Empathize with the emotions
- Give time and space as needed, but stay with your child
- Use the SMARTEST approach
- Remember, this is bottom-up processing

May we all spend the day looking for the goldfish, instead of punishing the shark.



# What about consequences?

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"I can understand you getting upset when they make fun of your little arms, but eating your classmates is not the answer."

Having a focus on self-regulation does not mean no consequences

Self-regulation needs to happen first, then consequence

The consequence should "fit the crime"

Consequences could include relationship repairs

Preventative planning for next time



# How to build self-regulation skills?

- Modelling
- Empathy
- Co-regulation



# It's all regulation



External  
Regulation



Co-Regulation



Self-regulation

# Body calming strategies

- Interoception
- Breathing techniques
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Mindfulness
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Moving



# Thinking strategies

- Identify unhelpful thinking patterns
  - Black and white, catastrophizing, overgeneralizing...
- Challenge negative thinking
- Imagine a different outcome
- Counter “shouldy” thinking
- Teach positive self-talk
- Monitor your own internal (and external!) monologue



Think, think, think.

# Emotion regulation strategies

- Build an emotion vocabulary
  - Talk about emotions (books, tv, movies, etc.)
- Talk about intensity of emotions
- Link emotions to body cues
- Link emotions to triggers and reactions:
  - When \_\_\_\_\_, you felt \_\_\_\_\_, so you \_\_\_\_\_.
- Reassure that all emotions are okay!



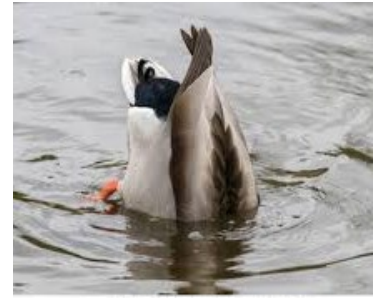
# Putting it into practice

- Pick your battles
  - Anticipate difficulties
  - Plan ahead
  - Match expectations to skills
- To encourage participation:
  - Involve your child in problem solving
  - Use humour and games
  - Provide age-appropriate, realistic choices
- If it goes south...
  - Figure out what the behaviour is trying to communicate
  - Acknowledge your child's emotions and stress





# Break the bottom-up cycle



- If your child is stressed, you're stressed
  - So how do we as adults self-regulate?
- What can you do in the moment?
  - Acknowledge to yourself that this is hard
  - Take a time out
  - Give yourself permission to let go of expectations
  - Reflecting back on a couple of good things
- What else can you do for self-care?



# Thank you!

Any questions?

