



**Early Childhood
Australia**

A voice for young children

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Everyday Learning Series
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Self-regulation of emotions

An Everyday Learning Series title

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An *Everyday Learning Series* title

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About the *Everyday Learning Series*

The most important early learning happens through day-to-day life experiences and interactions, and the **Everyday Learning** books are about how educators can support parents and carers in making the most of these experiences and interactions.

What an exciting responsibility it is to help lay the foundations for the future of young children!

Early learning matters

- The early years of life are the foundation for all later growth, development and learning.
- Every experience counts. Babies and young children are learning all the time, with most learning taking place through relationships.
- Research shows that learning in these early years is the key to:
 - educational success
 - mental and emotional health and wellbeing
 - being able to relate confidently and effectively with others.

What do babies and young children need to get the best start for living and learning? To learn best, they need their first teachers—parents and educators—who:

- are warm and caring
- know the children well and appreciate what is special about them
- take time to understand the children's messages (cues), respond to them with encouragement and praise, comfort them and allow them to be independent, as needed
- are able to see, share and celebrate the big and small joys and achievements of the children in their care.

Young children also learn from family and cultural backgrounds that are part of the way they are, and these contexts need to be included in their experiences.

Educators must provide children with:

- responsive and sensitive care
- quality learning experiences
- a safe and interesting place to be.

Educators must lead children's learning by supporting their exploration and the things they like to do.

There is no set list of things to teach young children. Living is learning and children learn through living. All young children have their own abilities and interests.

To support and extend their development and wellbeing, educators must follow children's lead, observe them and listen to them, plan opportunities for varied learning experiences, give them support and build on their strengths.

The *Everyday Learning Series* expands on various topics relevant to the daily practice of educators. The titles in this series are ideal for students of early childhood education as well as beginning practitioners, and will help educators provide the best start for young children in their care.

What is self-regulation?

Self-regulation, also known as self-management, is the ability to manage thoughts, emotions, attention and actions. More broadly, it can be described as a person's response to different kinds of stress. Learning the skill of self-regulation early on can set the foundation for future success in life.

Self-regulation and the early years

The early years are a critical period for developing self-regulation skills, as this is when children start learning about themselves and others. In particular, they learn how to:

- ❖ identify and express emotions
- ❖ understand their own and others' emotions
- ❖ understand the impact of their emotions and behaviours on others
- ❖ balance their own needs with the feelings and needs of others.

Children begin to feel emotions such as happiness, excitement and frustration at around one to two years of age. Because they do not yet have the language to describe how they are feeling, they may respond by crying or yelling when they get frustrated or angry.



The early years are a critical period for developing self-regulation skills.

As they grow older (between three and five years—preschool age), most children develop the language required to name and describe their feelings (children learning English as an additional language and children with language delays are able to do this through visual prompts). And, with adult support, they can learn how to regulate their responses to strong emotions such as frustration and excitement.

Thus, early childhood education and care settings are ideal for teaching young children how to monitor and manage their feelings or behaviours and to develop strategies to regulate strong emotions.

It is important to note, however, that promoting self-regulation does not mean that children shouldn't be encouraged to express their emotions, or that strong emotions are 'bad'. Rather, it is about educators making space for children to express a full range of emotions—including fear, jealousy and anger, as well as happiness, excitement and joy—and acknowledging the strong feelings that children may have. It is healthy to show emotions and express ideas, but, over time, children benefit from support in adapting their emotions to the situation and balancing their needs with the needs of others. These are capabilities that take a long time to develop—many adults are still learning to do this!

... promoting self-regulation ... is about educators making space for children to express a full range of emotions ...



To regulate emotions, children first need to be aware of their feelings.



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Everyday Learning Series

is for students, beginning practitioners and educators. These books offer simple strategies to help you provide the best start for children in your care.

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