



Becoming an External Co-Regulator Key Points

- All behavior is an attempt at regulation, including aggression.
- Regulation occurs in a moment of mindful awareness. Regulation does not necessarily mean calm. Regulation means “connected”.
- Children borrow the regulatory capacity of the adult as they attempt to integrate their challenging internal states.
- Integrating intensity starts with the adult becoming the external regulator.
- Becoming calm is not the goal of facilitating; the goal is helping children stay connected to themselves in the midst of their dysregulation so they can learn to feel it without becoming consumed by it.
- One of the primary ways that children learn is through observation, by way of the mirror-neuron system. The mirror-neuron system allows the children to copy the regulatory strategies used by the adult.
- Adults must regulate first before they can help children regulate.
- As children engage the adult, the adult will feel the dysregulated states of the children’s nervous systems, through a process called *resonance*.
- Breath, movement, and naming your experience are key elements in the regulation process and can be used to support integration of aggression and dysregulation.
- Becoming mindfully aware is the first step toward regulation and integration.

Dion, L. (2018). *Aggression in Play Therapy: A Neurobiological Approach for Integrating Intensity*. Norton Publishing.