

Building the Self
Self-Regulation: A Toolkit for Normalization
Classroom Resource List

MSM attendees:

- You can view and download our Prezi at:
http://prezi.com/hr5ijozn6pth/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy
- Email us at sjohnson@lexmontessori.org if you would like editable versions of any of the documents found on the Prezi or included in this handout.

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Summary of Self-Regulating Routines

At Lexington Montessori School, we use a variety of daily and weekly routines to support students with self-regulation.

Morning Recess

Each morning as they arrive, students go outside for morning recess between 8:15-8:30. The purpose of morning recess is to “up-regulate” the body and brain through cardio exercise and activities. Another benefit is the opportunity for students to connect with their friends socially before starting the regular school day.

Morning Meeting/Meditation

From 8:30-8:45, we have regularly scheduled meetings on circle. During this time, a student takes attendance. Another student has the weekly job of ringing a chime to signal the beginning and end of our morning meditation. During the meditation, students engage in a variety of mindfulness activities including: focusing on the breath, guided relaxation, stretching/yoga, listening to music, meditating on virtues such as kindness, reflecting on poetry, etc. These activities can be teacher or student led.

Once a week during this time, we also give a mini-lesson related to self-regulation (many of which overlap/intersect with traditional Montessori peace education presentations). We have included a number of ideas below. Another great resource is The Mind Up Curriculum published by Scholastic and the Hawn Foundation. There are three books for different age groups, Pre-K-8th grade, all available on amazon.com.

Planning Meeting

On Friday afternoon, we gather as a community from 2:30-3:00 to reflect on the previous week and plan for the following week. Students can choose from a variety of work planners or supply their own work journal to record assignments and intended activities. Students begin by updating the previous week’s planner and make a list of assignments to accomplish the next week. The students also answer two reflection questions on the back of their planners. When students have finished with their planners and reflection questions, they bring them to a teacher for a brief check-in.

Sample reflection questions (see appendix):

- What work are you most proud of?
- What work do you plan to focus on next week?
- Looking at your long-term goals, how are you feeling about them? Are there any you need to change?
- What is one thing you learned on the class trip that could help you in the classroom?
- Write one act of kindness you performed this week?
- Write one act of kindness you experienced this week?
- Make a list of positive/negative emotions you experienced this week.
- How do you like to learn best?
- What do you enjoy learning about the most?
- Who is your favorite singer/songwriter and why?
- What do you plan to share at your parent/teacher conference next week?

Work and Help

Every Tuesday from 3:00-4:00, the upper elementary students have the option to stay for Work and Help. This is a time when teachers are available to work with students one-on-one. Students can also choose work independently to catch-up or get ahead. We have some students who come to Work and Help every week; others we invite if we notice they have work to complete. Work and Help is not a punishment, but rather a support. It is also not meant to provide tutoring, but can give teachers an opportunity to follow up with individual students in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Community Meetings

Our upper elementary classroom meets on a weekly basis to share acknowledgements, concerns, brainstorm solutions, and offer reminders to the whole community. There are many resources on community and class meetings, but one starting place is Positive Discipline in the Classroom by Jane Nelsen, Lynn Lott, and H. Stephen Glenn.

Assessment Week

At the end of each term (fall, winter, and spring), we designate a week as “assessment week.” This is a time when no new lessons are given. Students have a chance to finish previous work, choose favorite works for their portfolios, and collate past work into “bindings.”

To create a binding, students:

1. Sequence their work chronologically
2. Number the pages
3. Write a table of contents
4. Create a front and back cover out of colored construction paper
5. Decorate the cover
6. Bind the work together using golden round head fasteners

Bindings are generally subject specific. For example, a student might create a history binding from all of her/his follow-ups in U.S. History and create a separate Science binding with work from a recent science unit. In addition to choosing select works for their portfolios, this is a great chance for students to reflect on all they have accomplished by seeing their work gathered in one place.

Lesson Sign Up Boards

Our UE students progress through the Montessori math sequence (polynomials and squaring, cross multiplication, square root, cubing, cube root, and multi-base math) on an individual basis (or in small groups of 2-3). When they are ready for a new lesson, they know to “sign up” on the Sequence Math Board (a dry erase board on a classroom wall). This gives the students and teachers a visual, public reminder of who is waiting for lessons and in what order to give them.

Mini-lessons on Self-Regulation

Included below are a collection of mini-lesson ideas that take between 10-20 minutes each. We do them in place of a meditation on morning circle, usually on a weekly basis. Some lessons work well with the whole class, while others are best done with a smaller group. These lessons can be done in any order, depending on class need and interest.

Learning about the Brain

- Read aloud the book, **My Fantastic, Elastic Brain** by JoAnn Deak, which uses rubber bands as metaphors for parts of the brain that can be stretched. Engage students in a discussion about times they have “stretched” their brains recently. Ask them to make a list of which abilities they have already stretched and which abilities they are still stretching. This is another way of thinking about strengths and challenges that encourages a growth mindset.
- Reflect on a **specific part of the brain**. Show a picture and explain how this part of the brain works and why it is important. For example, you can tell them about the anterior cingulate cortex, which is activated when something does not work as expected. It is sort of our brain’s control of error. When it is alerted, we have to “look again,” and figure out what to do differently. Explain that mistakes tell you that you are stretching and they make you think – this is a good thing!
- Ask students to meditate on the question, “How is your brain like a juggler?” After the meditation, allow students to share responses. Finally, discuss the concept of **active working memory**. This is the part of your memory that holds things in mind as you do tasks. It is like the juggler in your brain, where the balls are the parts of information. We know from cognitive psychology that it is not possible to enlarge your active working memory. But the good news is that you can make it more *efficient* by memorizing things to make them automatic and by chaining events together to make the sequence automatic. That is why memorizing math facts is so important, and connecting the steps for long division.
- Watch the Invisible Gorilla video (www.theinvisiblegorilla.com). Ask how many people saw the gorilla and how many did not. Discuss why this was the case.

The following day, meditate on the question, “How is our classroom like the gorilla video?” We find it is helpful to use the gorilla as a metaphor for the **things that distract us**. Some people see more gorillas than other people, and they have to work harder to pay attention to the task at hand. Others may be so hyper focused on their tasks they are constantly missing the “gorilla in the room” and need to focus more on the big picture.

Learning about Our Emotions

Promoting emotional awareness is one of the most important things we can do for our students, both as people and learners. If a student has a difficult time with emotional regulation, it deeply affects his or her social relationships and ability to learn. Students also love to talk about these sorts of things. Here are two lessons we have done related to emotions [Note: The first lesson is formatted as a student handout]. Depending on your time and the nature of your group, you can also break these up into smaller presentations.

Emotional Awareness Reflecting on Our Feelings

One of the special parts about being human is that we are able to experience many different types of feelings.

The word emotion comes from a combination of the Latin prefix, *ex-* (out) and the Latin word *movēre* (to move). *Emovēre*, therefore, means “to remove or displace.” Some emotions are positive, while others might be generally viewed as negative. See if you can list a few of each below:

Positive Emotions

Negative Emotions

Things to Know:

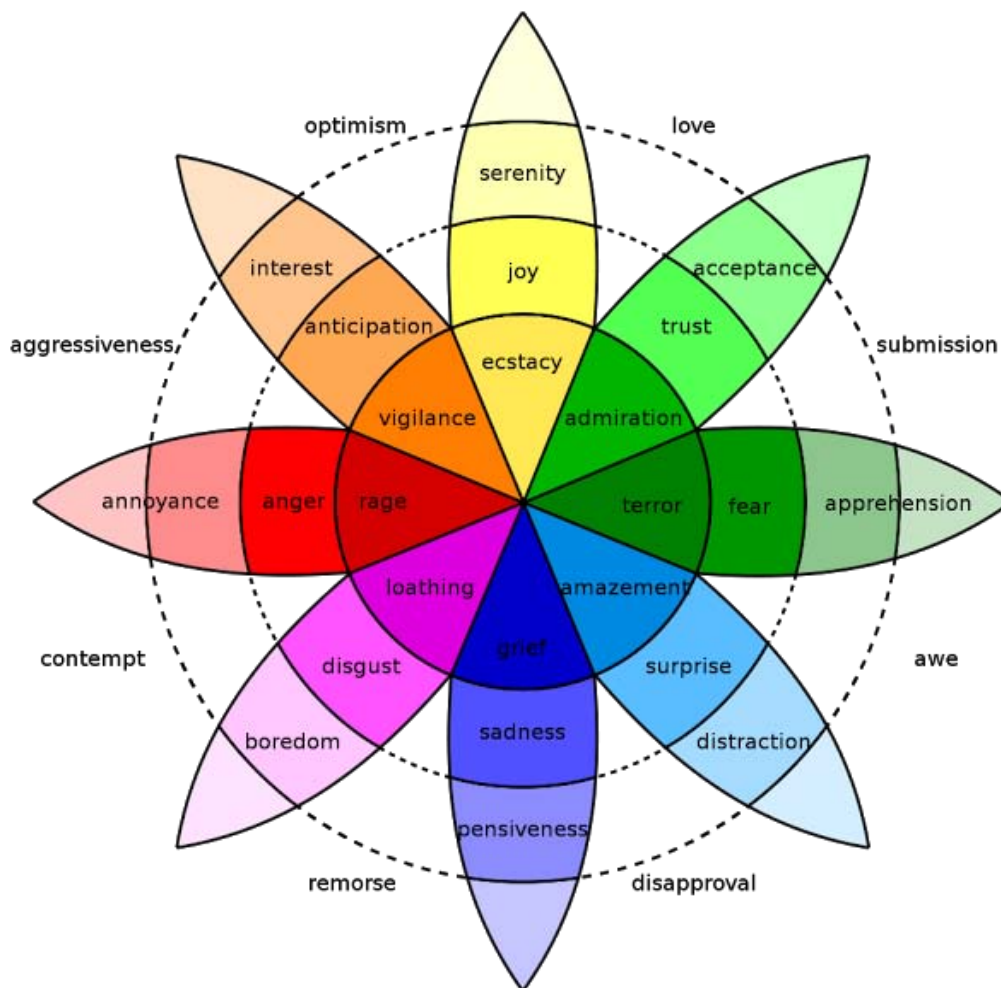
- Emotions come from our brain’s reaction to environmental situations.
- The Amygdala is a tightly-packed group of cells deep within the center of the brain that controls your emotions.
- Our thoughts determine our emotions.
 - Be sure you have all the facts!
- All feelings are OK, it’s what you do with them that counts.
 - Think about tennis balls labeled “angry” or “peaceful.”
 - We can’t always control how we feel, but we can control what we do with our emotions.

Ways to Deal with Emotions Constructively:

1. **Take three** deep breaths, in and out for 3 sec. each.
2. **Flex it**—tighten your muscles for 10 sec., then relax them. Stretching or yoga is also good.
3. **Imagine** a peaceful place.
4. **Listen** to music to relax or distract you.
5. **Move it**—exercise releases good chemicals in your brain.
6. When ready, listen to your feelings and **share** them with others.

Follow Up Activities:

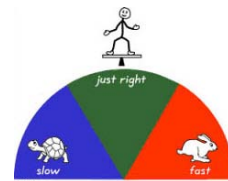
- In small groups, roll an emotions cube and discuss situations in which the individuals have experienced certain emotions and how they dealt with them.
- Create an emotions collage
- Chart emotional vocabulary, identifying gradations of emotions and the words we use to describe them. (i.e. See Robert Plutchik's emotion wheel below)
- Sing songs such as the first two verses of "Keep on the Sunny Side" by A.P. Carter
- Read books or poetry that relate to emotional learning
- Link emotional awareness to perspective taking by discussing how individuals may have different emotional reactions to a given situation. Discuss how different people *express* emotions differently.



Introducing the Zones of Regulation A Mini-Lesson on Emotional Regulation

Define self-regulation as being aware of the energy state of our body-mind and choosing how to respond appropriately in a given situation.

One question to ask ourselves from time to time is, “How is my body running?”
[Show picture and discuss.] It might be running slow, fast, or just right



Do you remember when we talked about emotional awareness? We classified emotions as positive/negative, thought of them like tennis balls, and discussed a few ways of dealing with emotions (i.e. deep breaths, listen to music, etc).

Today, we are going to learn a new way of classifying our emotions based on the energy levels that accompany them. It is called the “Zones of Regulation.” Let me share them with you: **[Use a poster or lay out colored cards with the name of the zone and traffic sign on the front and definition/emotions on the back. Also lay out emotions cards below each zone in columns.]**



The **Red Zone** is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone. A person is described as “out of control” if in the Red Zone.

- Angry, aggressive, elated, mad, out of control, terrified

The **Yellow Zone** is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions; however, one has some control when they are in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone.

- Excited, silly, upset, nervous, annoyed, overwhelmed, frustrated, scared, confused, worried, jealous, embarrassed

The **Green Zone** is used to describe a positive state of alertness. A person may be described as focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the Zone students will predominately find most helpful in the classroom in order to feel successful.

- Good, happy, calm, focused, appreciated, relaxed, proud, okay, thankful, content

The **Blue Zone** is used to describe low states of alertness.

- Sad, tired, sick, bored, exhausted, shy, depressed, hurt

Emotions in all of the zones are expected throughout our lives. Sometimes situations happen to us that cause various emotional reactions. There are called triggers. Triggers can result in positive or negative emotions. Some examples of triggers might be:

- A practical joke is played on you
- You win something
- You can't get silly thoughts out of your head
- It is your birthday!
- You don't want to get ready for bed
- Someone pays you a compliment

As we talked about before with emotions, you can't control how you feel; you can only control what you do about it. In our classroom, we have a number of tools that can help you change your "zone of regulation" when needed based on the situation. During the school day, there are times when you need more energy and times when you need less energy. In terms of self-regulation, we call this up-regulating and down-regulating. You can also think of it as becoming more calm or alert.

Think of your classroom environment and your mind-body as a "toolkit." Here are a few tools you might pull out from time to time to change your energy level. **[Lay out cards for each.]**

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a fidget• Jump on a trampoline• Count to ten• Go on a walk-a-bout to get fresh air• Take 3 deep breaths• Carry something heavy• Doodle• Take a break | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read• Bounce on a ball• Swing on a tire• Talk to an adult• Get a hug from a friend• Listen to music• Jumping Jacks• Stretches |
|---|--|

Different tools work better for different people in different situations. You might already know of some that work best for you and some you don't like at all. It doesn't matter which tool you use, so experiment with lots of them and see what you like!

Follow Ups:

- Students can fill out a personal chart of which tools they would use in which zones
- Students can chart their "Zones Across the Day" to look for energy patterns
- Students can create a "Stop-Opt-and Go" board or card game to share with their friends (w/emotion, tool, and trigger cards)
- See The Zones of Regulation by Leah Kuypers for more resources or ideas



Learning about Learning

Lessons related to the cognitive and social domain are a natural fit with Montessori philosophy. We strive to help our students “learn how to learn” on a daily basis. We also support them in functioning as a “community of learners.” During the elementary years, students begin developing the capacity for metacognition—thinking about our own thinking. The purpose of these lessons is to give them the vocabulary to identify their unique learning styles and learn to be successful within a social context.

Lessons on Learning Styles

At the beginning of the year, we interview our students about their interests, strengths, and challenges by filling out a **personal learning profile** together. Different sections are filled in as lessons on various learning styles are given and specific inventories or surveys are completed. A few popular constructs might include:

- Visual, spatial, and kinesthetic learning
- Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences
- Coordination patterns (www.moves4greatness.com, patpinciotti.com/learning-styles/patterns-of-coordination-learning-style-guide)

Functioning as a Community of Learners

Here are three lessons that encourage students to think concretely about the social environment in which they learn.

The Individual and the Community

This is a simple presentation to illustrate the value of a diverse community in a concrete way. Take a stick from outside (or a popsicle stick). Then take a bunch of sticks and rubber band them together. Make the point that each of us is a unique individual, like this stick:

We all have important qualities and strengths that we bring to the world. We do not live in isolation, however. From time to time, bad things come our way...maybe an illness or a stressful situation like our pet dying. And if the pain becomes too great, we can break! [Snap the individual stick in two.] This bundle of sticks represents a community. [Hold up bundle.] Notice what happens when I try to break this bundle of sticks in two. Nothing. Diverse communities (just like diverse ecosystems) are much more resilient. Bad things will happen, but we can get through them more easily by working together.

Place labels under an individual stick and a “community” of sticks and set them in a tray on the shelf as a future reminder.

The Toothpaste Lesson

This is another simple one. If your students are being careless or hurtful with their words, bring in a tube of toothpaste. Place a desk on its side and cover it and the floor in front of it with garbage bags. Take off the toothpaste cap and lay it on the garbage bags pointing towards the table. Now ask the students to stomp on the toothpaste. After the tube is empty, ask the students to put the toothpaste back inside! This is just like our words; while we might wish we could take them back, they are out there and all we can do is take responsibility for them.

A Mini-Lesson on Partner Work

Begin with a couple of games:

- Turn to a partner. Put your toes together, hold hands, and lean back slowly. See if you can balance each other using an equal amount of effort.
- Using one finger each, lift a ruler until it is eye level.

To be successful with these games, you had to work together for a common purpose. This is called collaboration. What makes for successful collaboration? [Make a list of student responses and highlight the following points in your discussion.]

1. Trust—it is difficult to work closely with someone if you don't believe they have your best interests in mind
2. Agreement-on purpose and roles
3. Communication—partners have to communicate with one another respectfully. Can be verbal or non-verbal.
4. Equal amount of effort—while the nature of the work each person does might be different based on individual strengths and interests, everyone has to be trying their hardest.

Every day in Montessori, you are working independently and working together. When you work together, we call this collaboration. Collaboration is different from socialization, however, which might also occur from time to time during the school day (as it does in an office space). [Make a list of examples of socialization together; i.e. talking about your weekend or birthday party.]

Both collaboration and socialization are important in life, but they have different goals. It is important to be aware of the differences and mindful of when to use them appropriately.

Singing as Collaboration

Singing is another wonderful way to practice working together as a community. It requires trust, agreement, communication, and an equal amount of effort (balance).

Students can sing along with recorded music (grooveshark.com is a great resource for free steaming of popular songs). They can also sing rounds such as Frere Jacques, Scotland's Burning, One Bottle of Pop, or Dona Nobis Pacem (search online for notation/You Tube videos). Partner songs are another fun option. This involves singing two or more songs that are similar in harmony and length together, such as "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain", "Swing Low Sweet Chariot", and "When the Saints Go Marching In".

The Self-Regulated Learning Cycle

Teaching students explicitly about the idea of self-regulated learning is also useful to develop metacognition. We did this through a handout (below) at the beginning of the year, followed by weekly reflection questions and discussions during our Friday planning meetings.

What is Self-Regulated Learning?

During the work cycle in our Montessori classroom, you will be using a strategy called self-regulated learning. This strategy allows you to take full responsibility for your own education. It will help you finish your work on time and enjoy the process of learning more. Through the practice of self-regulated learning, you are learning how to learn.

Self-Regulated Learning is a cycle that consists of three overlapping parts: 1) planning, 2) monitoring, and 3) reflecting. Draw curved arrows below to show the cycle:

Planning

Reflecting

Monitoring

The first part of self-regulated learning is planning. One of the main tools you use in the classroom is a work planner or work journal. Here are a few tips on using these effectively:

- 1) Make or update your To-Do list each Friday for the following week.
- 2) Use abbreviations that make sense to you (i.e. abbrev.)
- 3) Start each day with a plan
- 4) Prioritize the most important assignments first using stars, numbers, or color coding
- 5) Use symbols to keep track of your work habits such as:
 - A box or circle to *plan* your works for the day or week.
 - A dot when you *start* a work.
 - A check mark when you *finish* a work.
- 6) Write others you find useful below:

The second part of self-regulated learning is monitoring. This includes tracking your progress on various assignments, but also being mindful of your energy level and ability to focus. In our classroom, we have a variety of concrete tools you can use for these purposes including:

- The assignment board
- Schedules and calendars
- Sensory supports (such as fidgets, seat cushions, water breaks, snack time, walk-a-bouts, etc.)
- Calming techniques (such as deep breathing, stretching, and visualization)

The third and final part of self-regulated learning is reflecting. This is done on an ongoing basis automatically, but we also schedule times for you to reflect on your learning. These include:

- Weekly Friday reflections (during our planning meetings)
- Goal sheets
- Self-Assessments
- Peer conferences with your classmates
- Mini-conferences with teachers
- Choosing portfolio works
- Bindings

Being in charge of your own learning isn't easy. It takes time and practice to perfect the skills of planning, monitoring, and reflecting. With each passing year, however, you will become more aware of what tools and strategies you need to build your brain and construct yourself, both as a learner and an authentic person.