

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE · ALL GRADES

Co-Regulation Script

What to say (and not say)

What co-regulation is

Co-regulation is the process by which one person's calm nervous system helps another person's dysregulated one come back to baseline. Babies learn to regulate by being regulated WITH their caregivers. Children continue to need this through primary years (and arguably into adulthood). When a child is dysregulated, your nervous system can become a 'borrowed regulator.' This isn't metaphor — there's strong physiological evidence. Heart rates synchronise. Breathing rhythms transmit. The child's body picks up your calm if your calm is real. The script below is what helps you BE that calm in moments when it would be easy not to be.

First — regulate yourself

Notice your own breathing Probably faster, shallower than usual. Take 3 deep breaths before you speak.	Lower your shoulders Body language transmits. If you're tense, the child reads danger.
Slow your movements Sudden movements escalate. Move deliberately, slowly, predictably.	Quiet your voice Whatever volume you were at — quieter. Calm voice = safety signal.

Phrases that help — naming feelings

#	Phrase
1	I can see this is hard.
2	It looks like you're really upset.
3	Something has been too much.



#	Phrase
4	I'm not asking you to say anything yet.
5	Take your time.
6	It's OK to feel like this.
7	I'm here. I'll wait.
8	We're not in a rush.

Phrases that help — establishing safety

#	Phrase
9	You're safe.
10	You're not in trouble right now.
11	I'm not going anywhere.
12	You can stay here as long as you need.
13	Nobody's going to make you do anything right now.
14	I'll keep everyone else away from you for a bit.
15	You don't have to talk.
16	We can just sit.

Phrases that help — coming back

#	Phrase
17	Take a deep breath with me. (Demonstrate.)
18	Look around. Tell me three things you can see.
19	Would you like some water?
20	Would you like to come somewhere quieter?
21	Tell me when you're ready.
22	We can talk about it later. Or not at all.



#	Phrase
23	You did really well to come back.
24	Let's go back to class together.

Phrases to AVOID

#	Don't say
X1	Calm down.
X2	Stop crying.
X3	Why are you doing this?
X4	What's wrong with you?
X5	Look at me when I'm talking to you.
X6	If you don't stop, then...
X7	You're being silly.
X8	Don't be like that.
X9	Other children manage this.
X10	You'll lose break / privilege / something.
X11	Just get over it.
X12	It's not that bad.

Using silence

One of the most powerful co-regulation tools is SILENCE. Don't fill it. Don't fill the moments between phrases with more words. A child who is overwhelmed often needs less verbal input, not more. Two phrases, then 30 seconds of quiet presence. Then maybe one more phrase. Then more quiet. Your calm presence WITHOUT words is regulating. The presence is the medicine, not the talk.

When to use this

Use this script for: • Children in active distress • Children who've just had a meltdown • Children who've shut down (be patient — recovery is slow) • Children whose grief, anxiety, or trauma is acute • Children who are NOT in immediate physical danger to themselves or others If there's a



safety issue (child running, child harming someone, child harming themselves), this script doesn't replace your safeguarding response. Get help. Manage the immediate situation. THEN come back to co-regulation when the safety threat is past.

