

PSHE / SEL · RECEPTION–Y5

Emotions & Self-Regulation

Knowledge Organiser — KS1–KS2

Key vocabulary

1

Emotion

A feeling in response to something that happens. Emotions are normal, healthy, and important information.

Example: joy, anger, fear, sadness, surprise, disgust

2

Self-regulation

The ability to manage your own emotions and behaviour, especially when you feel a strong emotion.

Example: taking deep breaths when angry; pausing before reacting

3

Amygdala

The part of the brain that detects threats and triggers the fight-flight-freeze response. Sometimes called the 'alarm system'.

4

Prefrontal cortex

The part of the brain used for thinking, problem-solving, and making decisions. Gets 'offline' when the amygdala fires strongly.

Example: When very angry or scared, it's hard to think clearly

5

Window of tolerance

The zone where you feel regulated enough to learn and connect — not too activated (anxious, angry) or too low (shutdown, numb).



6

Co-regulation

When a calm adult helps a dysregulated child return to their window of tolerance, before the child can do this themselves.

7

Trigger

Something that activates a strong emotional response. Understanding your triggers helps you respond rather than react.

Regulation strategies

What to do when feelings get v

- BREATHE: slow, deep breaths activate the calming nervous system. Try 4 in, hold 4, out 4.
- MOVE: physical movement helps discharge stress hormones. Walk, jump, shake.
- COLD WATER: cold water on wrists or face can quickly reduce arousal.
- NOTICE: name what you're feeling — 'I'm feeling really angry right now'. Naming reduces intensity.
- SPACE: sometimes you just need a moment away from the situation.
- TALK: when you're calm enough, talking through what happened helps processing.
- REMEMBER: you can't think clearly when your amygdala is very active. First regulate, then problem-solve.

