

WHAT IS CO-REGULATION?

A Guide to Nervous System Harmony

The Role of Co-regulation

Co-regulation is a supportive process where one person helps another manage their emotions, behavior, and physical responses through warm, connected interactions.

This shared experience helps individuals gradually develop self-regulation skills, **making it easier to handle life's challenges on their own.**

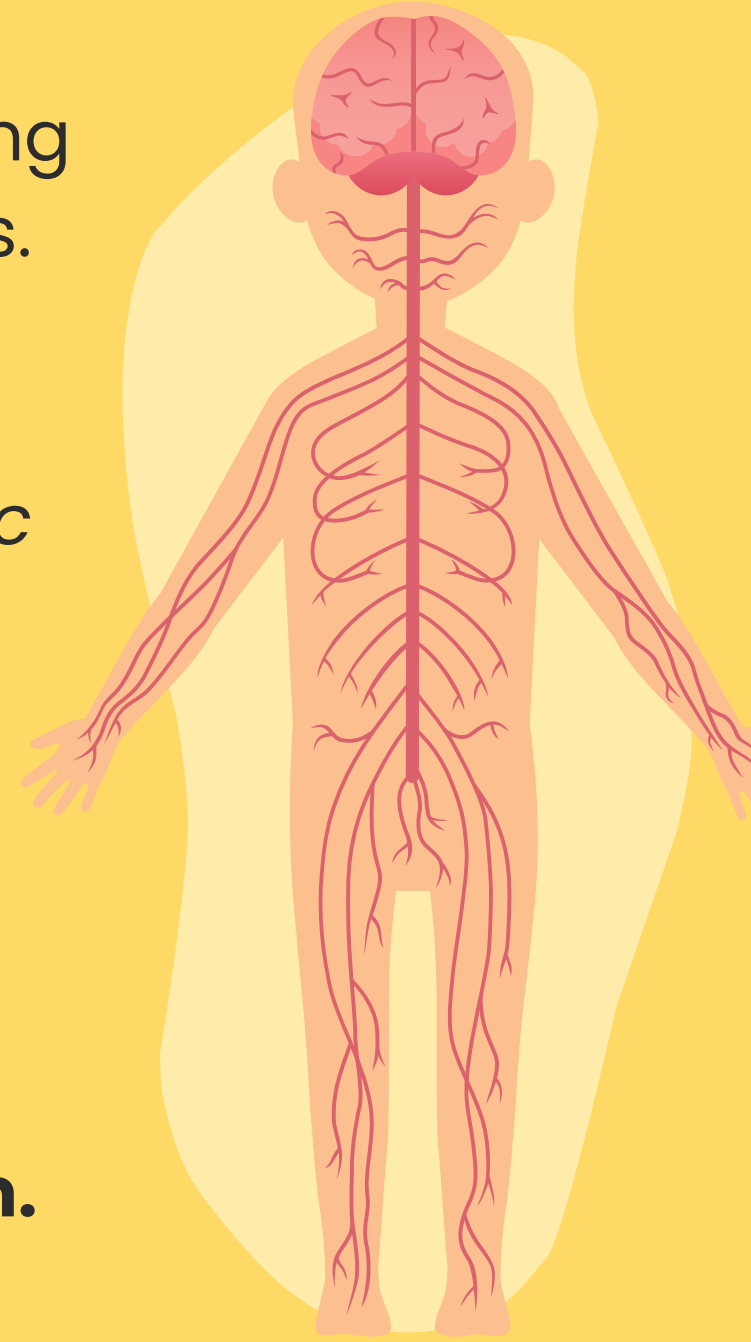


The Science of Co-regulation

The autonomic nervous system is key in regulating our emotional responses.

Co-regulation helps balance our *sympathetic* ("fight or flight") and *parasympathetic* ("rest and digest") systems.

This helps us achieve a state of safety and calm.



Why It Matters

Co-regulation fosters a sense of **safety**, especially for people with attachment challenges or trauma backgrounds.

It provides tools to help us understand and regulate our emotions, which supports overall **emotional resilience.**



A regulated client is **better able to engage** in therapeutic activities and learning, and participate in daily life tasks.

Barriers to Co-regulation and How to Avoid Them



Provider Dysregulation

Use grounding techniques to stay calm when a client is highly dysregulated.



Sensory Overload

Simplify the environment or use soothing sensory tools to ease co-regulation.



Emotional Escalation

Respond to aggressive behavior with empathy and clear boundaries to encourage calm.



Special thanks to Daphne Boucher BA, MScOT, OT Reg.

Visit unyte.com for more educational resources and to learn more about therapeutic tools for nervous system regulation.

CO-REGULATION STRATEGIES

Tips for Providers, Parents and Caregivers



Modeling Regulation

Demonstrate calm behavior:

- Practice slow breathing.
- Maintain a steady tone of voice.
- Keep a relaxed posture.
- Sit with them.



Sensory Regulation Support

Provide sensory strategies to help them regulate.

- Teach them deep pressure exercises on hands, feet, and other joint areas.
- Engage in proprioceptive activities, like jumping or pushing.

Grounding and Breathing Exercises

Provide strategies they can practice on their own at home, school, etc.:

- Practice deep breathing techniques.
- Use grounding techniques that engage their senses: *"What can you see, hear, or feel right now?"*



Creating a Co-regulating Environment

Consider these when creating a safe space:

- Reduce overwhelming stimuli and introduce calming sensory elements (soft lighting, calm music).
- Maintain clear routines and expectations to create a sense of safety.
- Designate a quiet space to go to with calming objects when feeling overwhelmed.
- Use listening therapies like the Safe and Sound Protocol to help regulate the nervous system.



Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

Pay attention to your body language.

- Use a calm, steady voice, and gentle eye contact to convey safety.
- Provide physical reassurance if appropriate, such as a gentle hand on the back or sitting close by.



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