

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.**



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**.



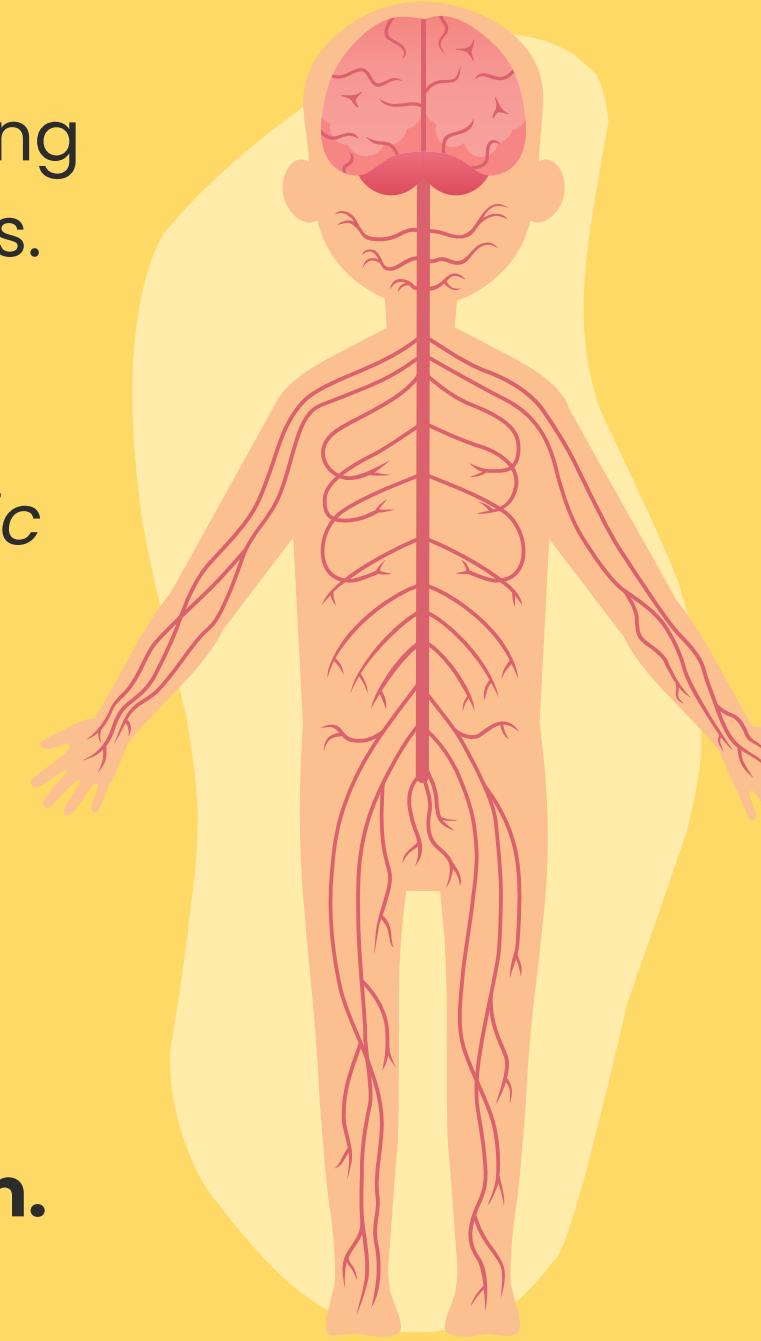
A regulated client is **better able to engage** in therapeutic activities and learning, and participate in daily life tasks.

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.



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.

CO-REGULATION STRATEGIES

Tips for Providers, Parents and Caregivers



Modeling Regulation

Demonstrate calm behavior:

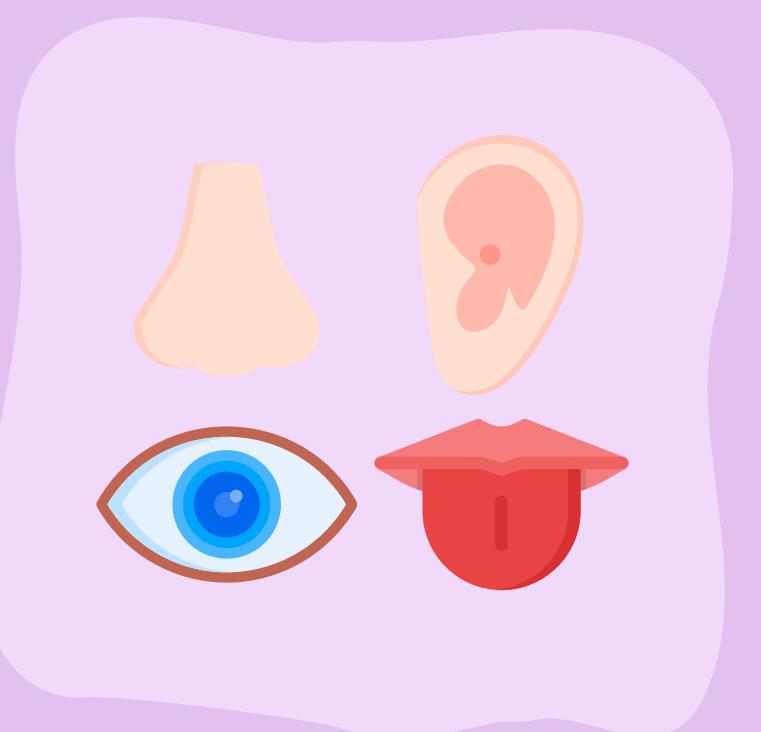
- Practice slow breathing.
- Maintain a steady tone of voice.
- Keep a relaxed posture.
- Sit with them.



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.



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.



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.