

PRACTICAL REGULATION TOOLS

The Calming Stairs Framework
Trauma-Informed Support for Families



Overview

Regulation tools help children manage strong emotions, stress, and overwhelm in everyday life. These tools support the nervous system and make it easier for children to return to calm after difficult moments.

Practical regulation does not mean stopping feelings. It means helping children experience emotions safely and learn how to settle their bodies and minds over time.

What You Will Learn

- How regulation tools support emotional safety
 - When to use calming strategies
 - How to recognise early stress signs
 - Why consistency matters
 - Simple tools that work at home and school



What Are Regulation Tools?

Regulation tools are strategies that help children reduce stress and return to a balanced emotional state. They work by calming the nervous system and restoring a sense of safety.

These tools are most effective when used regularly, not only during meltdowns. Over time, children learn to recognise what helps them feel better.

Examples of Regulation Tools

- Deep breathing
- Quiet spaces
- Gentle movement
- Sensory activities
- Comfort objects
- Calming routines



When to Use Regulation Tools

Regulation tools are most helpful when used early, before emotions become overwhelming. Noticing small signs of stress allows adults to respond quickly and prevent escalation.

Using tools after distress has passed also helps build emotional awareness and resilience.

Signs a Child Needs Support

- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Tearfulness
- Increased sensitivity
- Loss of focus



Practical Regulation Strategies

Simple, consistent strategies support emotional balance. These do not require special equipment – they rely on understanding and routine. emotional safety.

Everyday Regulation Tools

- Breathing exercises
- Calm-down corners
- Timed movement breaks
- Soft music
- Visual schedules
- Body-based activities



Practical Regulation Exercises

Balloon Breathing

Sit side by side.

Say:

“Let’s pretend there’s a balloon in your tummy.”

- Breathe in slowly through the nose
- Pause
- Slowly breathe out through the mouth

Do 5 breaths together.

The adult breathes calmly first — child copies.

Name & Notice

Sit facing each other.

Adult says:

“Tell me one thing your body feels right now.”

Examples:

- My hands feel tight
- My tummy feels wobbly
- My shoulders feel tense

Then adult models their own.

This builds body awareness.



Practical Regulation Exercises

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

Together, name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you like about today

Slow pace. Calm voice.

Feelings Scale

Draw (or imagine) a simple scale 1–5.

Ask:

“Where are your feelings right now?”

No fixing. Just noticing.



Final Thoughts

Regulation tools teach children that emotions are manageable and temporary. With regular support, children develop confidence in their ability to cope. Small, consistent actions create lasting emotional strength.

