

CO-REGULATION

What is this developmental skill?

Co-regulation is the process by which a calm, supportive adult helps a child regulate emotions before the child can do so independently.

How does this normally develop?

Infants are entirely dependent on caregivers for regulation. Through thousands of experiences of being soothed, comforted, and understood, children gradually internalize these calming experiences and begin regulating themselves.

How can neglect interfere?

Neglected children often miss these repeated experiences of being comforted. Instead of learning that adults make emotions manageable, they may learn they must handle everything alone or that adults are unpredictable during distress.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Reject comfort.
- Become more distressed when adults approach.
- Demand constant reassurance.
- Escalate quickly during emotional situations.
- Struggle to accept help.
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Parenting Implications

Stay emotionally available even when your child pushes you away. Your calm voice, predictable responses, and consistent presence become the regulation your child's brain is still learning.

From Understanding to Attunement

Your child's regulation skills develop through your regulation first. Every calm interaction strengthens the foundation for future independence.