Making it Out the Door: Tips for Getting Students to School on Time

John Marshall Elementary School

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Rules, Routines, and Reinforcement

Morning Routines

▶ Mornings set the stage for the remainder of the day.

▶ It's beneficial to establish a routine that reduces the morning chaos as much as possible.

   ▶ Routines the night before can also lead to smoother mornings.

▶ With some planning and support in place, it is possible to create a morning routine that works for your family.

Considerations When Developing a Morning Routine

► What time should each family member wake up?

► What time do you need to leave the house?

  ► Leave at least a 5-minute buffer.

► How long should each task take?

  ► Again, leave a buffer.

► What tasks need to be done in the morning?

  ► Consider what tasks can be done the night before or after school.

Planning with a Routine

- Set up a routine with expectations
  - Night before: "We have school tomorrow." Get backpack ready the night before.
  - Morning of: "We have school today." Bring backpack to the door.
  - Morning of school:
    - Get changed from pajamas to school clothes
    - Eat breakfast
    - First _____ Then _____, withholding reinforcing activities until expected task(s) are completed.
- Use of visual supports
  - First-then board, visual schedules, prompt cards, visual timers

Visual Schedules

▶ Typically consist of a board with pictures and/or words of each activity needed to be completed.

▶ A visual schedule for a morning routine might look like this:

  ▶ Use the bathroom

  ▶ Take a shower

  ▶ Get dressed

  ▶ Eat breakfast

  ▶ Brush teeth

  ▶ Gather backpack

  ▶ Put on shoes and coat

Daily Schedule
(Hume, et al., 2020)

Daily Schedule Example

	Task	To Be Done	Done
	Read (45 minutes)		✓
	Computer (30 minutes)		✓
	Eat lunch	✓	
	Walk the dog	✓	
	Complete homework	✓	
	Eat snack	✓	

Visual Timers

▶ Time can easily get away from young children, especially those who have not grasped the concept of time.

▶ Visual timers on their own or in combination with a visual schedule or verbal instructions can be helpful.

▶ Provide the instruction and then set the timer.

  ▶ This can help your child see how much time is left of that activity.

▶ Example: Your child eats slowly which causes you to be late.

  ▶ Set a visual timer for 15 minutes to visually show them how much time they have to eat breakfast.

Tips for Transitions

- Be specific
  - NOT: In a few minutes
  - In two minutes
- Be careful of transition warnings to transition warnings
  - NOT: Timer goes off for cleaning up then announcing that we'll be cleaning up soon
  - Timers goes off and cleaning up starts
- Count Down Timers
- Use Technology for timer
  - Apps

Timer Apps
(Hume, et al., 2020)
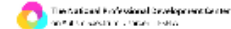
Visual Cues Around the Home

- Some children have trouble remembering the steps in the morning routine.

- Visual prompt cards can help them remember what they are supposed to do.

- Example: If your child often forgets to brush their teeth, place a visual prompt on the bathroom mirror that says, "brush teeth" or a picture.

- Example: Your child often forgets their backpack when they walk out the door. Put a picture of a backpack on the door or a text prompt, "Got your backpack?"

Creating Visual Supports
(Hume, et al., 2020)

Creating Visual Supports and Social Narrative Apps

First Then Visual Schedule	Pictello	iPrompts
$9.99	$18.99	$9.99
iCreate	Social Story Creator & Library	First Then
Free (in-app $)	Free (in-app $)	Free

Reinforcing Morning Routines

▶ Find your child's motivation to help reinforce following a morning routine.

▶ What are they motivated to do? Are they motivated to watch TV rather than following their morning routine?

▶ Use that motivation to reinforce follow through!

  ▶ Example: Allow TV time (or whatever they are motivated for) contingent on completing all items on the morning routine checklist.

  ▶ Although immediate reinforcement is best, if there is not time in the morning, children can earn their reward for getting to school on time after school.

Reinforcement

- Systematic Reinforcement System
- Systematic praise (frequent positive feedback)
  - "I love the way you got ready this morning!"
- Use Socratic Questioning to encourage the child to internalize what he/she needs to do instead of continually reminding the child what he/she needs to do.
  - For example:
    - "What should you be doing right now?"
    - "What should you do if you're having trouble?"
    - "Remember, what happens after you complete your morning routine?"

Set the Stage the Night Before

▶ The activities you do the night before can lead to smoother mornings.

▶ A few things you can do to "set the stage" include:

    ▶ Lay out clothes the night before

    ▶ Prep lunches and pack backpacks

    ▶ Have children pick what they want for breakfast the night before

    ▶ Ensure all homework is complete and any forms that need to be reviewed or signed are completed.

Planning

- Have a nightly "planning conference"
  - Review the daily assignment log and long-term calendar
  - Create a nightly calendar that includes work time frames, chores, meals, and relaxation
  - Talk about the upcoming day / week. Let children share any worries they have. Talking during a low-pressure time ensures the chance to troubleshoot and unpack any difficult feelings that may arise.
  - Practice challenging situations
- Maintain open & honest communication
- Praise children's efforts and make very explicit what assistance you need as a parent

Reducing Excessive Screen Time

- Practice good sleep hygiene
  - No screen time at least 1 hour before bed
- Explore activities that create distance from screens
- Primarily use screen time for education and contact with friends and family
- Set limits for recreational screen time
  - Create opportunities for children to earn the screen time rather than taking away screens as a result of negative behavior
  - Don't have children use electronics "for free."
- Role play transitions from screens to other activities
  - A social story or rule card prior to screen time may be helpful

What Contributes to Challenging Behavior?

▶ Poor Self-Regulation

▶ Developmental / Educational Delays

▶ Significant Stress, Discomfort, Uncertainty, Loss, Trauma, Changes, etc. contributing to Mental Health Issues (e.g., Depression, Anxiety, PTSD)

▶ Disconnected, Disaffected, Unmotivated

▶ School Failure/Frustration

▶ Characteristics of the Adults & Environment

Trouble Coping

- Stay alert for signs of anxiety & depression
  - Change in sleeping or eating patterns
  - Increases in repetitive behaviors, excessive worry or rumination
  - Increased agitation
  - Irritability and anger
  - Decreases in self-care
  - Inconsistent attendance and performance
  - Avoiding social situations or unusual social behaviors

Stress, Anxiety, & Frustration

- Feelings of discomfort, especially stress, anxiety & frustration, are commonly associated with various:

  - Negative physical conditions: headaches, tension/pain, fatigue & heart disease (Mayo Clinic, 2013)

  - Psychological conditions: anger, depression, anxiety, concentration issues and irritability (American Psychological Association, 2013)

  - Problematic behaviors: substance abuse, overeating, aggression

How to Regulate

▶ Identify Replacement Behaviors

    ▶ These need to replace the "automatic pilot" behaviors children have been displaying for weeks, months, or years

    ▶ Practice, Practice, Practice until fluency (like muscle memory)

    ▶ Regulation Can Be Taught

How to Regulate

- Identify Replacement Behaviors
  - Feelings Identification
  - Feelings Check-In throughout the day (thermometer)
  - Identify & practice what to do when various feelings & thoughts show up throughout the day
  - Functional Communication Training
    - Learning to Wait
    - Accepting "No"
    - Asking for help
    - Seeking attention appropriately
    - Asking for missing / needed items

How to Regulate

► Notice Thoughts and Feelings

  ► Is it an Up Feeling or a Down Feeling?

  ► Up: happy, excited

  ► Down: sad, worried, anxious, scared, frustrated, angry

► Stay focused on who/what is important

  ► Solving a problem

  ► Staying safe and calm

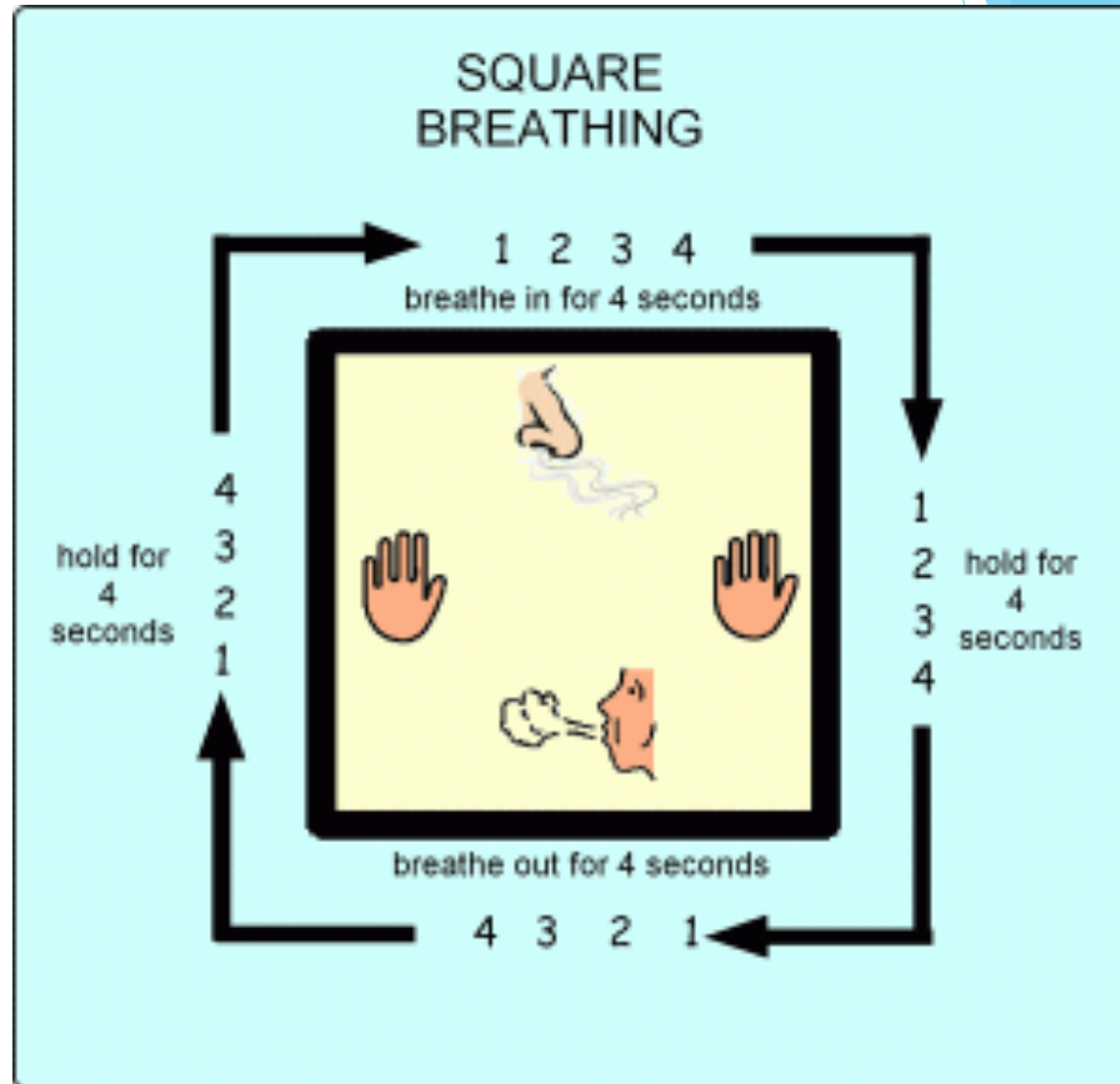 ► Remaining friends

  ► Staying out of trouble

How to Regulate

- Regulation Can Be Taught
- Appropriate expression of emotions
  - "I feel…when…"
- Notice what has worked and what hasn't
  - Does it move you toward who/what is important?
  - Does it work only short-term to help you "feel" better but actually lead to more problems?
- Be Flexible instead of Rigid

How to Regulate

▶ What does it feel like when stressed (automatic responses)?

- ▶ Breathing faster

- ▶ Heartrate faster

- ▶ Blood pressure increases

- ▶ Sweating

- ▶ Louder voice

- ▶ Angry facial expression

- ▶ Tense muscles

- ▶ May feel hot and turn red
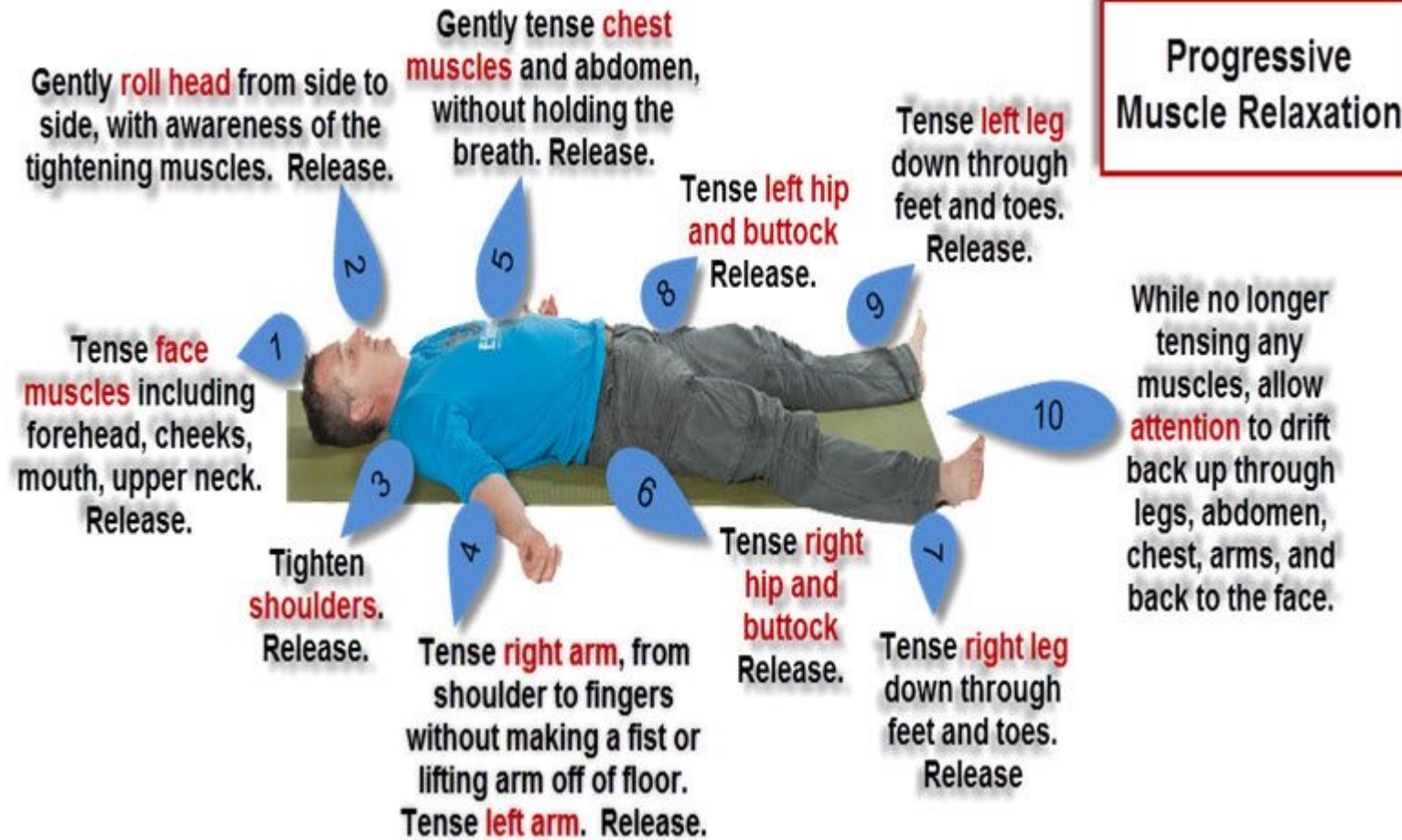
How to Regulate

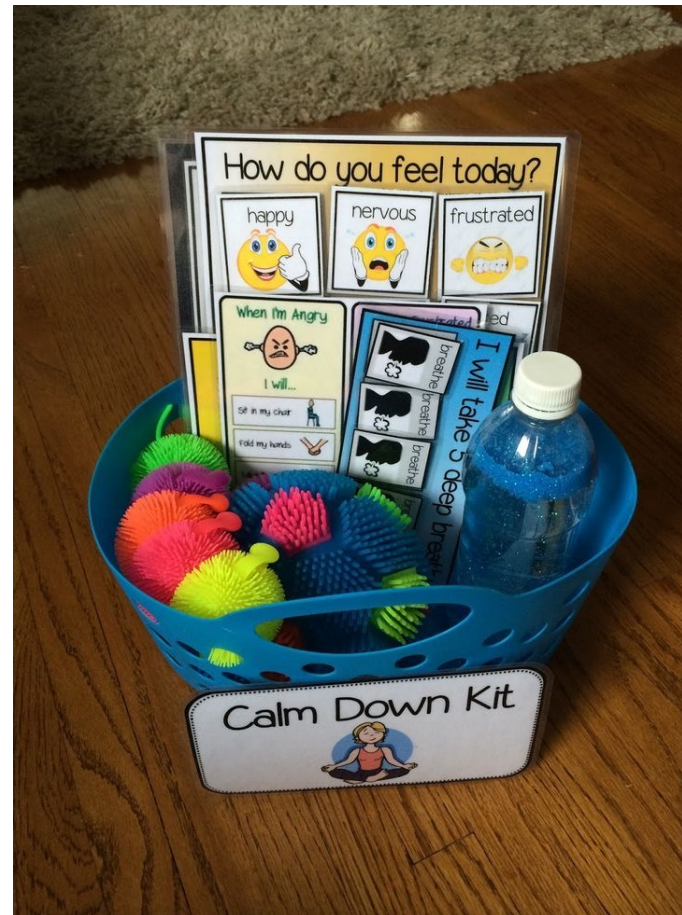- ▶ Identify Replacement Behaviors
  - ▶ 4 Square Breathing

SQUARE
BREATHING

1 2 3 4
breathe in for 4 seconds

4   hold for
3   4
2   seconds
1

1   hold for
2   4
3   seconds
4

breathe out for 4 seconds
4 3 2 1

How to Regulate

- Identify Replacement Behaviors
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Tense face muscles including forehead, cheeks, mouth, upper neck. Release.
2. Gently roll head from side to side, with awareness of the tightening muscles. Release.
3. Tighten shoulders. Release.
4. Tense right arm, from shoulder to fingers without making a fist or lifting arm off of floor. Tense left arm. Release.
5. Gently tense chest muscles and abdomen, without holding the breath. Release.
6. Tense right hip and buttock Release.
7. Tense right leg down through feet and toes. Release
8. Tense left hip and buttock Release.
9. Tense left leg down through feet and toes. Release.
10. While no longer tensing any muscles, allow attention to drift back up through legs, abdomen, chest, arms, and back to the face.

How to Regulate

- Identify Replacement Behaviors
  - Calm Area / Safe Haven

Calming Routine
## (Hume, et al., 2020)

Calming Routine

1. Take 4 deep breaths

2. Clench fists 4 times

3. Count to 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Good job!

How to Regulate

- **Identify Replacement Behaviors**
  - "I can feel _____ AND I can stay calm and safe."
  - "I notice I'm thinking _____ AND I can keep my body calm and safe."
  - "My feelings are angry/stressed/frustrated AND I'm going to be flexible by using my words, keeping my hands to myself, and asking for help."
  - When language/cognitive skills are lower, use more visuals
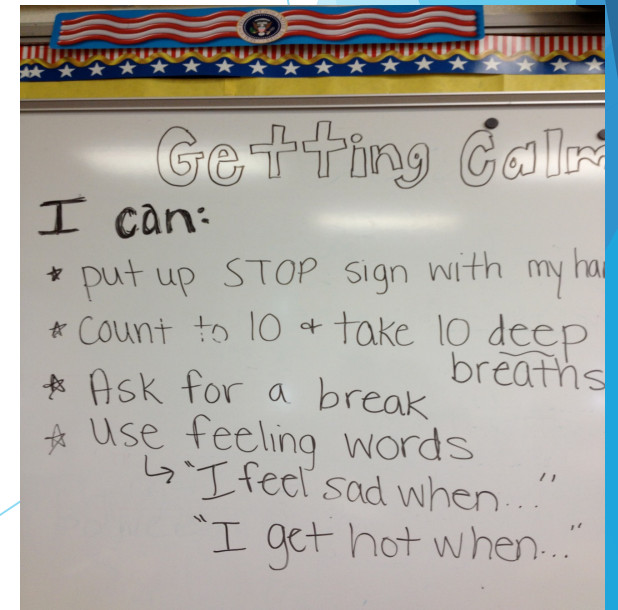
Situations in a Hat Activity

▶ *Situations in a Hat Role Play:* trigger situations listed on cards and placed in a hat for children to choose one at a time. Discuss the situation, state the problem, state the feeling ("I feel ___"), discuss possible solutions, choose a solution and put the solution in place; act out the situation from start to finish and provide behavior specific feedback

   ▶ "I'm getting ready for school, and I can't find my library book."

   ▶ "I want to go to soccer practice, but it is raining."

   ▶ "I really want to watch tv, and it is time to go to bed."

Social Autopsies (Myles & Adreon, 2001)

- Designed to get students to objectively analyze their social mistakes/difficulties

- Questions to ask while problem-solving

  - What happened?

  - What was the social error?

  - Who was hurt by the social error?

  - What should be done to correct the error?

  - What could be done next time?

Confrontation-Time Rules

▶ Everyone sit down

▶ Use soft "inside" voice

▶ Take turns speaking (speaker power)

▶ Listen to each person

▶ Try to understand one another's perspective ("It sounds like you are feeling / saying...")

▶ Write out feelings if screaming occurs

▶ Find a good time to discuss feelings

▶ Use "I feel" statements rather than blaming "You" statements

▶ Problem-solve together possible solutions, then evaluate each based on whether it is safe, fair, how each person would feel, and whether it would work

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