



"Repeated cycles of emotional upset, followed by relaxation after the caretakers calming intervention, provide the basis for developing a sense of trust and safety in the world, in caregivers and in themselves."
~Bessel van der Kolk

Instructions for a regulation tool box to practice and build skills for managing states, feelings and behaviors

WHAT is a "Cool Down Box"?

A portable collection of specific toys for youth to access on their own, with encouragement and along side safe, competent and compassionate caregivers. Use this important tool to develop and **practice self-regulation skills.**

Dr. Daniel J. Siegel defines **Self-Regulation** as "the way the mind organizes its own functioning, fundamentally related to the modulation of emotion. **Emotion regulation** is initially developed from within **interpersonal experiences (co-regulation)** in a process that establishes self-organizational abilities to develop."

"at the core of traumatic stress is the breakdown in the capacity to regulate internal states such as fear, anger, and sexual impulses."
~Bessel van der Kolk

HOW / WHEN is a "cool down box" used?

A "cool down box" is most effectively used when the child or adult **observes state changes** that indicate reduced function or access to executive function. When adults attune to early signs of stress / distress or when a prediction of threat or emotional sensitivity is observed, a caregiver may calmly, kindly, non-verbally offer the box to youth. This **empowers the child** to go to a designated quiet spot, use the pleasing and soothing contents of the box to reset and re-integrate, until they are ready to return or the caregiver observes a **calmer, de-escalated state.**

State Change - Dr. Bruce Perry explains "When children experience repetitive activation of the stress response systems, their baseline state of arousal is altered. The result is that **even when there is no external threat** or demand, they are physiologically in a state of alarm - "fight or flight."

"The most significant consequence of early relational trauma is the loss of ability to regulate the intensity and duration of affects."
~Dr. Allan Schore

WHY is a "cool down box" effective?

A "cool down box" allows children with a sensitized nervous system to easily and repetitively **practice co-regulation** with safe, caring adults AND **transition toward self-regulation** as they build on and can access the skills to do so. Over time, reaching for a cool down box becomes a go-to healthy **coping skill** at the onset of **overwhelm** and **high stress.**

Dr. Bruce Perry on **Co-regulation:** "Infants do not have the ability to regulate their emotional arousal and need the soothing presence of caretakers to **help them manage arousal, fear, frustration, and anger.** They calm by experiencing their caretaker's voice tone and having their physical needs attended to. From a developmental perspective, effectively **meeting the needs** of young children can be understood as a process of co-regulation."

"Complex trauma can impair the development of thinking, relationships, self-worth, memory, health, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life."
~Bessel van der Kolk

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For the highly sensitized nervous system, there are **3 Primary Regulating Activities** to prioritize.

Protein Snack + Hydration

Integrative Activity (blowing / sucking)

Repetitive Rhythmic Activity

I recommend identifying activities in these three categories that are fun, soothing and can be done in connection with safe, caring adults or independently every 2 hours, or in dose response, in order to build a platform for SAFETY PREDICTION and to increase REGULATORY FUNCTION.

Please see the following ideas for starting your Cool Down Box and visit <https://xparenting.com/regulating-activities> for more information or Regulating Activity, ideas for toys to include in Cool Down Boxes for all ages or to order R.I.S.E. Cool Down Boxes

Protein Snacks + Hydration	Integrative Activity (Blowing / Sucking)	Repetitive Rhythmic Activity
Meat Sticks/ Beef Jerky Cheese Sticks CLIF Z Bars Plus Protein Nut Butters (check for allergies 1st) Hard Boiled Eggs Water bottle with built in straw or Silly Straw with water in a cup	Floating Ball Pipe Kazoo Harmonica Balloons Pinwheel Box Breathing Calm Strip	Paddleball Yoyo Swinging Jumprope Coloring Drumming Dancing Listening to Music Karaoke Walking Hopscotch Hand Clapping Games

I recommend a few items in each category are kept in a Cool Down Box for Kids and adults store the box for them in an easily accessible location. When they ask for it, or adults observe a state change, adults offer the box outlined.

****NOTE:** I recommend adults keep a separate larger container for toys they accumulate to rotate out in order to keep the box fresh and interesting for the child.

