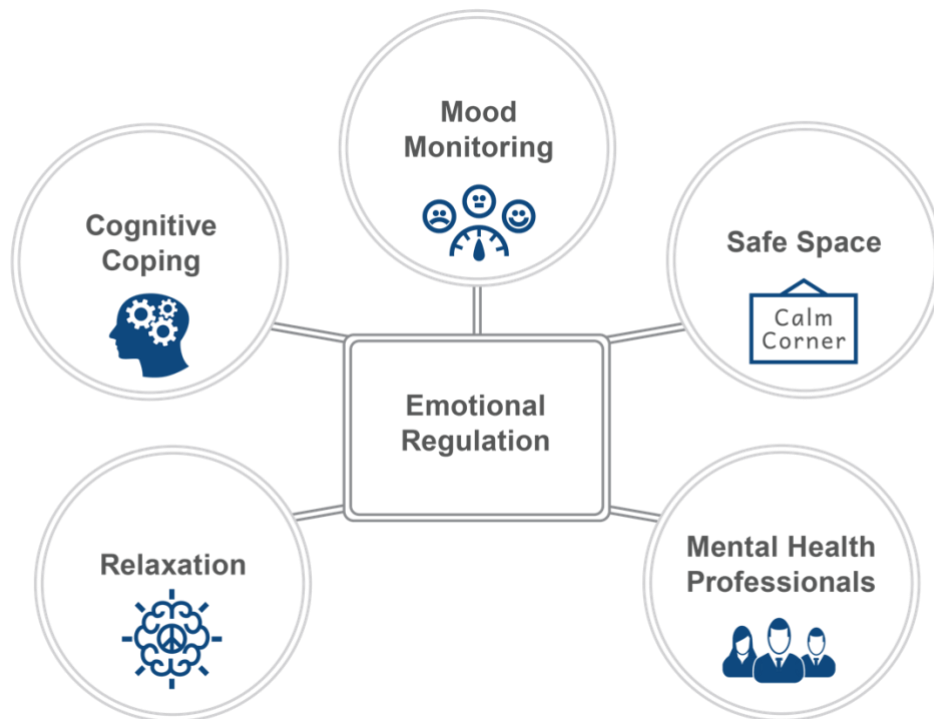




## Strategies for Supporting Students: Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation refers to having the skills to control or manage one's emotions. Students with difficulties regulating their emotions may experience intense fear, nervousness, irritability, and sadness.



### RELAXATION

Deep breathing, counting, or practicing mindfulness can help students, and ourselves, to calm and access their thinking brain. If working with a student one-on-one, it will be important to develop an individualized calming plan the student can use if they start to become dysregulated. Remember for many students these are new skills, and they need the opportunity to learn and practice.

### COGNITIVE COPING

Students often have unhelpful thoughts that contribute to emotion dysregulation. One strategy is to help the student check their automatic thoughts and identify all the evidence surrounding negative perceptions of self or events. For example, examine specific events that led to the student's feelings. "What happened that led to this conclusion? Did anything happen that disputes your conclusion? What else happened in your other classes that day?"

### SUPPORTED MOOD MONITORING

Check in with the student to quantify mood status each day. For example, allow the student to complete a mood scale (10 = very happy to 1 = very sad) each morning. If students are experiencing a negative mood state, like irritability or sadness, encourage them to practice a coping skill like relaxation, mindfulness, or cognitive coping. Over time, keeping a mood log can help the student and the teacher understand what contributes to the student's mood – both positive and negative.

## **ESTABLISHING A SAFE SPACE**

Provide access to a preestablished safe place or calming area where the student can go to calm and collect themselves. Struggling with emotional regulation in front of peers can exacerbate intense feelings and may embarrass the student. Having a preestablished corner in the room or a place in the school building where a student can use their coping strategies is helpful when the student is distressed. The area or room should be as private as possible, have a soothing environment, and be an uncluttered space. Consider including wall posters with calming steps, steps for breathing exercises or other de-escalation strategies, access to headphones with calming music, or calming activities such as coloring books.

## **REFERRAL TO A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL**

Children and adolescents who are depressed may feel hopeless and believe that their life is not worth living, which can put them at risk for suicide. In these cases, it is best to refer to a mental health professional. Depression and expressing hopelessness or thoughts about suicide should always be taken seriously and communicated to someone who can help. Talk to your school's administration and school mental health professionals, such as a school social worker, psychologist, or counselor, on the protocols for referring students with safety concerns.

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