# DECE Item Guide to the Adapted Teaching Style Rating Scale (A-TSRS)

New York City Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education
2021-2022 School Year

# What is the A-TSRS?

The Adapted Teaching Style Rating Scale (A-TSRS) is an observational measure designed to capture all classroom staff-specific teaching practices and strategies that have been shown to contribute to children's self-regulation and social-emotional development.

New York University and the NYC Department of Education have adapted the A-TSRS in order to capture practices that are targeted in the 3-K and Pre-K for All Professional Learning Series.

The A-TSRS:

- **Observes teaching strategies that support self-regulation and social-emotional skills**
- **Captures teaching practices that are targeted in 3K and Pre-K for All Professional Learning**

The Division of Early Childhood (DECE) will use A-TSRS in conjunction with each CLASS assessment that is completed in early childhood programs.

# What does the A-TSRS tool measure?

**The A-TSRS:**
- Captures specific teaching behaviors as a complement to other tools, such as the CLASS tool;

- Emphasizes behaviors that have been linked in prior research to children's self-regulation and social-emotional development;
- Captures staff behaviors and strategies across two modules, which are further divided into 10 items.

Information about the organization of the A-TSRS tool is provided below:

| A-TSRS Modules | Classroom Structure and Management | Supporting Social and Emotional Skills |
|---|---|---|
| A-TSRS Module Descriptions | Captures staff behaviors and strategies that create a positive, well-functioning classroom and support children's self-regulation and attention. | Captures staff specific behaviors and strategies that support children's ability to identify emotions in self and others, express and regulate their emotions, empathize and take another's perspective, and navigate conflict or other problems with peers. |
| A- TSRS Items | <ul><li>Classroom Awareness</li><li>Positive Behavior Management</li><li>Attention Support</li><li>Consistency/Routine</li><li>Preparedness</li></ul> | <ul><li>Emotion Modeling</li><li>Emotion Expression</li><li>Emotion Regulation</li><li>Social Awareness</li><li>Social Problem-Solving</li></ul> |

# How does the Early Childhood Framework (EFQ) align with A-TSRS?

The DECE developed the Early Childhood Framework for Quality (EFQ), which describes our shared vision for high-quality early childhood programming in New York City. Programs use the EFQ to guide their practice in a way that advances positive outcomes for all children and families. DECE staff use the

EFQ as the foundation for the quality support provided to programs, including on-site support and professional learning. This resource ensures that all DOE early childhood programs, regardless of setting or location, are held accountable to the same standards and supported to meet the same expectations of quality.

The EFQ is comprised of six Elements

1. Respect and value differences.
2. Create safe and positive environments.
3. Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction.
4. Promote families' roles as primary caregivers, teachers, and advocates.
5. Work collaboratively towards continuous quality improvement.
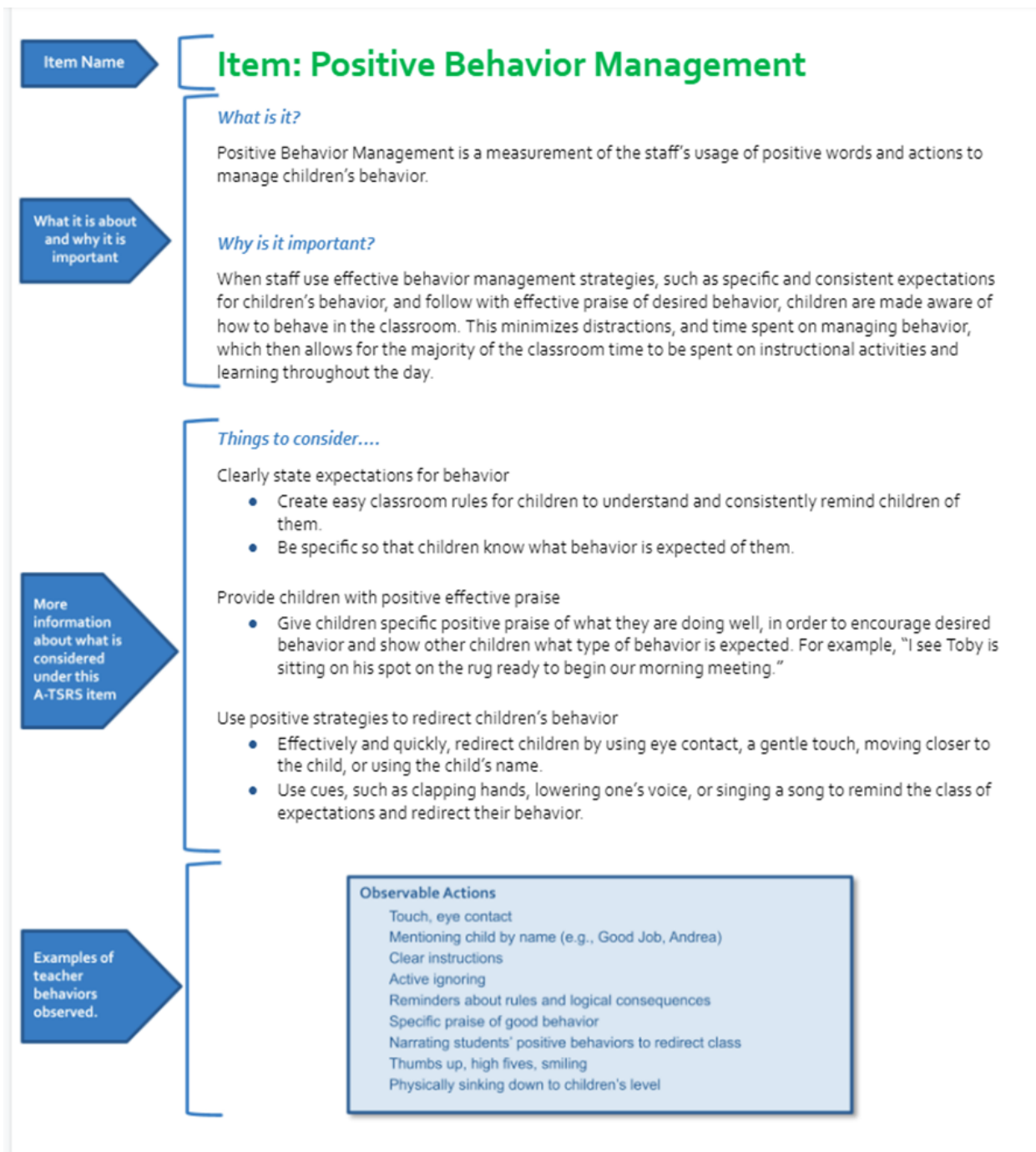6. Demonstrate strategic leadership.

Information about the alignment between EFQ and A-TSRS is shown below

| A-TSRS Modules | Classroom Structure and Management | Supporting Social and Emotional Skills |
|---|---|---|
| A-TSRS Descriptions | Captures staff behaviors and strategies that create a positive, well-functioning classroom and support children's self-regulation and attention. | Captures staff specific behaviors and strategies that support children's ability to identify emotions in self and others, express and regulate their emotions, empathize and take another's perspective, and navigate conflict or other problems with peers. |
| Connection to NYC DECE Early Childhood Framework for Quality | **Create safe and positive environment**<br>Program leadership teams and teaching teams create healthy, nurturing, and predictable environments for all children, families, and staff.<br><br>**Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction**<br>Program leadership teams and teaching teams engage children in a variety of play-based and developmentally appropriate learning experiences and ensure that instruction is based on children's individual strengths, interests, and needs.<br><br>**Work collaboratively towards continuous quality improvement**<br>Program leadership teams and teaching teams use data to improve program and classroom quality in partnership with families and communities. | |

# How to use the A-TSRS Item Guide?

This guide is designed as a resource for programs to understand the 10 items in the A-TSRS. Overall requirements for each item are explained in general terms. This guide includes 2 module pages and 10 item pages.

**How the A-TSRS Item pages are organized:**

Item Name →

# Item: Positive Behavior Management

## What is it?

Positive Behavior Management is a measurement of the staff's usage of positive words and actions to manage children's behavior.

What it is about and why it is important →

## Why is it important?

When staff use effective behavior management strategies, such as specific and consistent expectations for children's behavior, and follow with effective praise of desired behavior, children are made aware of how to behave in the classroom. This minimizes distractions, and time spent on managing behavior, which then allows for the majority of the classroom time to be spent on instructional activities and learning throughout the day.

## Things to consider....

Clearly state expectations for behavior
- Create easy classroom rules for children to understand and consistently remind children of them.
- Be specific so that children know what behavior is expected of them.

More information about what is considered under this A-TSRS item →

Provide children with positive effective praise
- Give children specific positive praise of what they are doing well, in order to encourage desired behavior and show other children what type of behavior is expected. For example, "I see Toby is sitting on his spot on the rug ready to begin our morning meeting."

Use positive strategies to redirect children's behavior
- Effectively and quickly, redirect children by using eye contact, a gentle touch, moving closer to the child, or using the child's name.
- Use cues, such as clapping hands, lowering one's voice, or singing a song to remind the class of expectations and redirect their behavior.

Examples of teacher behaviors observed. →

**Observable Actions**
Touch, eye contact
Mentioning child by name (e.g., Good Job, Andrea)
Clear instructions
Active ignoring
Reminders about rules and logical consequences
Specific praise of good behavior
Narrating students' positive behaviors to redirect class
Thumbs up, high fives, smiling
Physically sinking down to children's level

# Explanation of Terms Used in this Guide:

<u>Self-Regulation:</u>  Self-regulation is the process that children's brain goes through that gives them the ability to control their behaviors and emotions in response to a particular situation. It's having the skill to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in environment or expectations, and to handle frustration without outbursts. When children share, listen to others, or wait their turn, they

are practicing self-control. [1]

**Play-Based Learning:** Opportunities provided to children to actively and imaginatively engage with people, objects, and the environment. Symbolic representation is a critical aspect. When playing, young learners may be organizing, constructing, manipulating, pretending, exploring, investigating, creating, interacting, imagining, negotiating, and making sense of their world. It promotes the holistic development (physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative) of a child and depending on how it is utilized, may also support a broad range of literacy and numeracy skills. [2]

**Responsive Instruction:** Instruction based on children's individual strengths, interests, and needs. [3]

**Active Ignoring:** Purposely not paying attention to minor behaviors, such as pouting, talking back, making noises, etc., in order to make them go away. Active ignoring can quickly stop many types of problem behaviors as children learn that they are ignored following the behavior. Active ignoring is the consequence of problem behavior. It does not cause any emotional harm to children. [4]

**Positive Emotions:** Pleasant or desirable situational responses, ranging from interest and contentment to love and joy. [5]

**Negative Emotions**: An unpleasant or unhappy emotion that is evoked in individuals to express a negative effect towards an event or person. Examples include sadness, fear, anxiety, etc. [6]

# Module: Classroom Structure and Management

# Purpose:

[1] Wells, B. (2017, December 7). *Self regulation strategies*. PBS. Retrieved from https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/strategies-for-teaching-kids-self-regulation.

[2] Berg, Mann, & Ogan. (2006). *Age-appropriate pedagogies play-based learning*. Retrieved from https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/earlyYears/Documents/age-appropriate-pedagogies-play-based-learning.PDF.

[3] *Early childhood framework for quality (EFQ)*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/early-childhood-framework-for-quality.pdf.

[4] University College London. (n.d.). *Active ignoring parent handout - UCL*. Retrieved from https://www.ucl.ac.uk/child-health/sites/child-health/files/active_ignoring_parent_handout.pdf.

[5] Cohn, M. A., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2009, July 30). *Positive emotions*. Oxford Handbooks Online. Retrieved from https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195187243-e-003.

[6] Mead, E. (2021, May 17). *What are negative emotions and how to control them?* PositivePsychology.com. Retrieved from https://positivepsychology.com/negative-emotions/.

The goal of the Classroom Structure and Management module is to capture staff behaviors and strategies that create a positive, well-functioning classroom and support children's self-regulation and attention.

**EFQ Alignment:**
Element 2: Create safe and positive environments
Element 3: Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction

# Items:

- Classroom Awareness
- Positive Behavior Management
- Attention Support
- Consistency/Routine
- Preparedness

# Item: Classroom Awareness

### What is it?

Classroom Awareness measures staff's awareness of the classroom environment and proactivity in managing children's behavior.

### Why is it important?

When staff is consistently aware of the classroom, they are able to respond supportively to each child when they need it the most, intervene before situations escalate, and help children problem-solve. This minimizes disruptions, and intensity of behavioral problems, allowing children to spend more of their time in instructional activities and enjoy being in the classroom more.

### Things to consider [7]

Be proactive
- Anticipate moments when misbehavior is likely to occur, plan ahead and respond quickly to prevent problems from escalating. An example includes redirecting a child to a different space if certain areas are too crowded.

Scan your classroom often
- Frequently scan the classroom and actively monitor the classroom environment even when working with a small group of children.
- Be aware of children's body language and facial expressions that indicate they may be struggling in order to respond appropriately.

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**Observable Actions**
- Visually scanning the room, eyes in all places
- Actively listening to classroom environment
- Communicating with students the teacher is not directly working with (e.g., during centers or small group time
- Moving a student's seat before student has meltdown
- Redirecting child to different space if certain areas are too crowded

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# Item: Positive Behavior Management

### What is it?

Positive Behavior Management is a measurement of the staff's usage of positive words and actions to manage children's behavior.

### Why is it important? [8]

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[7] Pianta, R., M., L., & Hamre, B. (2011). pg. 8 & 12. In *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (class) Dimensions guide pre-k*. essay, Teachstone Training.

[8] Pianta, R., M., L., & Hamre, B. (2011). pg. 12. In *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (class) Dimensions guide pre-k*. essay, Teachstone Training.

When staff use effective behavior management strategies, such as specific and consistent expectations for children's behavior, and follow with effective praise of desired behavior, children are made aware of how to behave in the classroom. This minimizes distractions, and time spent on managing behavior, which then allows for the majority of the classroom time to be spent on instructional activities and learning throughout the day.

### *Things to consider*

Clearly state expectations for behavior
- Create easy classroom rules for children to understand and consistently remind children of them.
- Be specific so that children know what behavior is expected of them.

Provide children with positive effective praise
- Give children specific positive praise of what they are doing well, in order to encourage desired behavior and show other children what type of behavior is expected. For example, "I see Toby is sitting on his spot on the rug ready to begin our morning meeting."

Use positive strategies to redirect children's behavior
- Effectively and quickly, redirect children by using eye contact, a gentle touch, moving closer to the child, or using the child's name.
- Use cues, such as clapping hands, lowering one's voice, or singing a song to remind the class of expectations and redirect their behavior.

> **Observable Actions**
> Touch, eye contact
> Mentioning child by name (e.g., Good Job, Andrea)
> Clear instructions
> Active ignoring
> Reminders about rules and logical consequences
> Specific praise of good behavior
> Narrating students' positive behaviors to redirect class

# Item:
# Attention Support

### *What is it?*

This item measures the staff's usage of clear cues and strategies to obtain and maintain the attention of the class.

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*Why is it important?*

When staff uses clear cues and strategies to obtain and maintain children's attention, children are more likely to stay involved in activities and engage in smooth transitions and routines. Verbal and non-verbal cues support young children's developing attention and behavioral regulation.

*Things to consider*

Consistently use clear cues and strategies

- Use cues and strategies, such as ringing a bell before giving directions,  skipping a word for children to fill in, to maintain their attention throughout activities and interactions.
- Attention support strategies can be used to get children's attention (when they're switching tasks or losing focus) or to maintain attention and engagement throughout activities/the day.

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**Observable Actions**

Call and response activities such as "1,2, eyes on you"

Instructional strategies such as using a timer, pointing to words, and skipping a word for children to fill in

Non-verbal instructional gestures or hand signals

Walking around the room

Ringing a bell before giving directions

Using children's names

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# Item: Consistency/Routine

### What is it?

Consistency/Routine is a measurement of the staff's usage of rules and routines to regulate the class and create a sense of teamwork/community.

### Why is it important?

When staff consistently have the classroom operating smoothly, children's exposure to learning opportunities and involvement in meaningful activities increases. When children know what is expected of them and how to go about doing it, less instruction time is lost. From a trauma-informed perspective, consistency/routine provides children with a safe and predictable environment. In addition, providing consistency/routine is important from a trauma-informed perspective.

### Things to consider [9]

Develop regular routines
- Create and consistently follow a daily classroom schedule to help children know what is expected throughout the day and to create a sense of teamwork/community.

Quick and effective transitions
- Provide children with simple and clear instructions to let them know what is expected of them during routines and transitions.
- Consistently remind children of rules and expectations.

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**Observable Actions**

Count-down routines
Songs and chants
Turn and talks
Routine hand signals
Line-up routine (e.g., count down with clapping)
Classroom routines (e.g., clean up, helper, bus, bathroom, centers)
"1,2,3 eyes on me"
Using a large timer
Posting, reviewing, and referring to rules and/or daily routines

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# Item: Preparedness

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[9] Pianta, R., M., L., & Hamre, B. (2011). pg. 14-15. In *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (class) Dimensions guide pre-k.* essay, Teachstone Training.

*What is it?*

This item measures the staff's preparedness in terms of instructional activities, delivery of instructions, and anticipation of student engagement.

*Why is it important?*

When staff are prepared with clear, detailed plans, have materials ready and accessible, and deliver instructions clearly, children are more likely to spend most of their time engaged and little instructional time is lost.

*Things to consider [10]*

Plan Ahead
- Prepare for instructional activities in advance.
- Have all materials ready before a lesson and/or activity.
- Review lessons ahead of time.

Have all materials available and accessible
- Keep materials organized and accessible.
- Keep children's materials where they can reach them.

> **Observable Actions**
>
> Seating arrangements (groups, pairs, etc.) planned ahead of time
> Materials are ready
> All details of lesson plan are ready

# Module: Supporting Social and Emotional Skills

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[10] Pianta, R., M., L., & Hamre, B. (2011). pg. 14-15. In *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (class) Dimensions guide pre-k*. essay, Teachstone Training.

# Purpose:

The goal of the Supporting Social and Emotional Skills module is to capture specific staff behaviors and strategies that promote social and emotional development, including

- children's ability to identify emotions in self and others,
- children's ability in expressing and regulating their emotions,
- children's ability in empathizing and taking another's perspective,
- children's ability in navigating conflict or other problems with peers.

**EFQ Alignment:**
Element 2: Create safe and positive environments
Element 3: Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction
Element 5: Work collaboratively towards continuous quality improvement

# Items:

- Emotion Modeling
- Emotion Expression
- Emotion Regulation
- Social Awareness
- Social Problem-Solving

# Item: Emotion Modeling

## What is it?

Emotion Modeling measures the staff's usage of emotion labeling in order to teach children about emotional experiences (including both positive and negative emotions).

## Why is it important?

When staff finds opportunities to teach children about emotions by identifying and labeling children's emotional experiences, children are provided with a wide vocabulary of emotional language to help them pinpoint what it is they are experiencing. Children are then able to identify and communicate their feelings, and develop self-awareness around what calms and soothes them.

## Things to consider

Find Opportunities to use feeling words (e.g., happy, sad, scared, angry, surprised, calm) throughout the day

- Discuss/Label emotions in naturally occurring situations, such as "I see that you are very upset about leaving your teddy bear at home."
- Discuss/Label their own emotional experiences. For example, staff might share their emotions by stating, "I am so happy to see everyone this morning."
- Discuss/Label emotions during instructional activities. For example, during a read-aloud, staff might point out that a character is feeling nervous about meeting new friends. Staff might then ask children to share a time they felt nervous.

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**Observable Actions**

Emotion vocabulary/naming in a book

Naming own emotions through "I" statements (Teacher only)

Activity about emotions (e.g., using a Feeling Tree)

Defining or describing an emotion (What does it mean to be sad? What does it look and feel like when you are sad? What makes you feel sad?)

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# Item: Emotion Expression

### *What is it?*

Emotion Expression is a measurement of the staff's acknowledgment and validation of children's emotional experiences (positive and negative)

### *Why is it important?*

When staff provides emotional support to children, they become comfortable expressing their feelings and know their teacher will be a source of support. When children are encouraged to share their feelings, they learn that their feelings and experiences are valid. Children who have experienced trauma might experience difficulties expressing how they are feeling and will need the support and tools necessary to express their emotions.

### *Things to consider*

Acknowledge children's emotions so they know they are heard.
- Identify positive emotions, such as "It sounds like you are very excited to play with the new toy."
- Identify negative emotions, such as "I know you wanted to play with the blocks, too, and you're feeling mad right now."

Encourage children's expression
- Comfort children when needed, so they know you are a source of support.
- Offer to help them, when they are having a hard time expressing themselves.
- Ask children questions that help them develop and express how they feel.
- Join in when children display enthusiasm

Be aware of non-verbal cues
- Look for facial expressions and body language to identify how children are feeling.
- When children are having a hard time using words to express their feelings, try describing their thoughts and emotions for them until you understand enough to respond appropriately.

> **Observable Actions**
> Asking children to share how they're feeling during morning meeting
> "I notice you look frustrated can you tell me what happened?"
> Appropriately responding to a child who is displaying emotions (positive or negative)
> Responding positively or joining in when children express joy or excitement

## Item:
## Emotion Regulation

This item measures the staff's use of effective techniques and strategies to support children's emotion regulation (positive and negative)

*Why is it important?*

When staff acknowledges children's emotional arousal and uses strategies to help children regulate their emotions, they are able to help children calm down (or amp up) in the moment and learn strategies for regulating emotions (positive and negative) in the future. This includes providing strategies and techniques that children can use to calm down when in distress as well as raise energy levels when needed.

*Things to consider [11]*

Be proactive and preventative
- Identify when a child is showing signs of distress, and provide techniques to help them calm themselves down.
- Identify when children's energy levels are low and provide activities that help them raise their energy levels.

Be consistent in supporting children's emotion regulation
- Effectively cue children to calm down and/or amp up each time a child is experiencing negative or positive emotion displays.
- Consistency provides children with opportunities to acquire the skills and techniques they need to learn how to regulate their emotions.
- Suggest strategies that meet children's emotional needs.

Find opportunities to help children calm and soothe themselves
- Model or demonstrate techniques to calm down, such as self-talk and taking deep breaths

> **Observable Actions**
>
> Cool down spot, cozy corner, or spot in the room where child can decompress
>
> Self-talk such as, "I am going to take some deep breaths to help me to help me calm down. I am going to inhale and exhale."
>
> Deep breathing, such as prompting children to take deep breaths when upset).
>
> Stopping and slowing down
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> Leading a movement break such as jumping jacks, song, chant, or activity designed to raise children's energy

# Item: Social Awareness

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[11] Public Broadcasting Service. (n.d.). *Social skills: Social problem solving at age 4*. PBS. Retrieved November 23, 2021, from https://www.pbs.org/parents/learn-grow/age-4/social-skills/social-problem-solving.

*What is it?*

Social Awareness is a measurement of the staff's efforts to draw children's attention to others' emotions and the interpersonal consequences of behavior.

*Why is it important?*

By being socially aware, children can understand the perspectives of other children and become accustomed to the environment around them, which builds perspective-taking skills and empathy. Children are also able to build strong relationships by connecting to other children and are more open to learning from others. When children are socially aware, they are less vulnerable to stressful situations and have a more positive outlook on life. [12]

*Things to consider*

Challenge children to understand everyday situations
- Draw children's attention to the thoughts and feelings of their peers in everyday interactions
- Help children identify verbal and nonverbal social cues to help them understand how certain words and reactions can make others feel.
- Ask children questions that allow them to identify the feelings and thoughts of others and how they would feel if they were in a particular situation.
- Talk with children about their peers' feelings or what they could do to help them feel better.
- Encourage children to work through their conflicts with peers to develop strategies for interacting with peers as well as understanding someone else's perspective.

Be a role model
- Model compassion and empathy towards children when they are sad or upset.
- Model perspective-taking skills when social situations occur.

> **Observable Actions**
>      Asking child to consider how others are feeling; could also include book characters, historic figures, etc.
>      Asking child to think about how their actions affect others
>      Explaining to child how other children may be feeling
>      Asking child to think about how they would feel if they were in a peer's position

# Item: Social Problem-Solving

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[12] How Career Counselling Benefits High School Students | By Chrysalis High. (2019, August 1). *Blogarama.com.* Blogarama. Retrieved from https://www.blogarama.com/education-blogs/1347947-career-counselling-benefits-high-school-students-chrysalis-blog/34374639-importance-social-awareness-for.

*What is it?*

Social Problem-Solving is a measure of the staff's usage of intra- and interpersonal problems as opportunities for learning and problem-solving.

*Why is it important?*

As children are learning to take turns, share materials, and share ideas, they sometimes encounter conflicts with their peers. When children have the skills to problem-solve, they are able to cooperate, collaborate, communicate, negotiate, self-advocate, and respect others.[13]

*Things to consider*

Promote Problem-Solving
- When children have conflicts with each other, encourage problem-solving without solving the problem for them.
- Use active listening to facilitate children's communication and collaboration in generating possible solutions.

Help children make amends
- Help children think about how they can make a situation better.
- If a child has hurt a peer's feelings, help them think about how they can help their peer feel better.

Talk about cause and effect
- Help children draw a connection between their actions, their feelings, and the feelings of others.
- Help children think about how better choices will change the way they are feeling or how their peers are feeling.

**Observable Actions**

Asking children to explain what happened during a conflict

Calmly directing children to listen to each other

Supporting child to enter a peer group or navigate other social problems

Asking children how they think a problem should be solved

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[13] Public Broadcasting Service. (n.d.). *Social skills: Social problem solving at age 4*. PBS. Retrieved November 23, 2021, from https://www.pbs.org/parents/learn-grow/age-4/social-skills/social-problem-solving.