



# Acknowledgements

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For a reports, resources and briefs, visit OPRE’s SARHM page:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/self-regulation-training-approaches-and-resources-improve-staff-capacity-implementing>

The Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Series can be found at

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/self-regulation-and-toxic-stress-series>



# Co-Regulation Strategies: Practical Tools for Program Staff to Foster Youth Self-Regulation

May 12, 2021

Aly Frei, MN RN - Public Strategies

*Presentation based on the **SARHM Project**: Self-Regulation Training Approaches and Resources to Improve Staff Capacity for Implementing Healthy Marriage Programs for Youth. Contract # HHSP233201500114I funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) and Office of Family Assistance (OFA)*

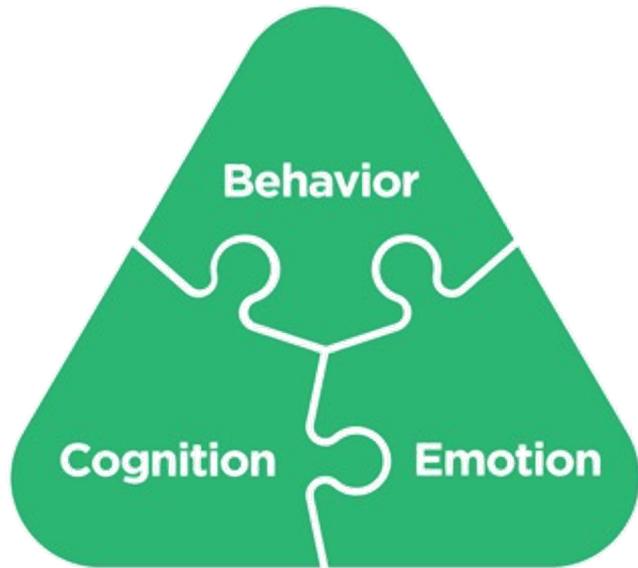


# What is Self-Regulation

*And why does it matter?*



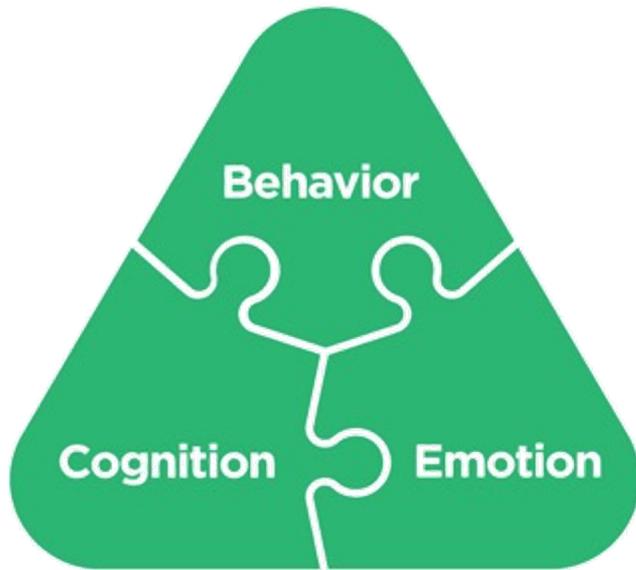
# Self-Regulation is...



...the *act* of managing our thoughts and feelings so we behave in ways that help us reach our goals.



# Self-Regulation enables us to...

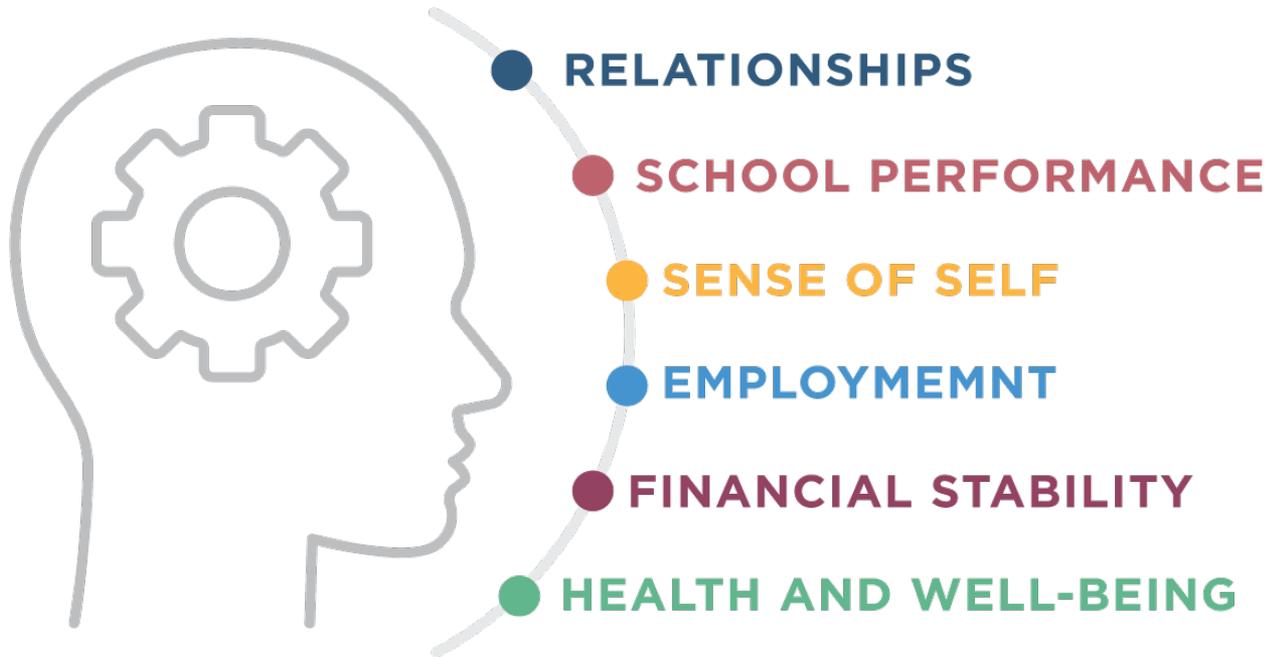


- Handle stress in our jobs and relationships
- Resist immediate gratification
- Stay focused on the task at hand
- Avoid quick decisions we later regret
- Make short and long term plans
- Solve problems
- Be more effective partners, parents, and practitioners



# Why does self-regulation matter?

Self-regulation is foundational to individual and collective well-being. It is malleable, making it a powerful target for change.



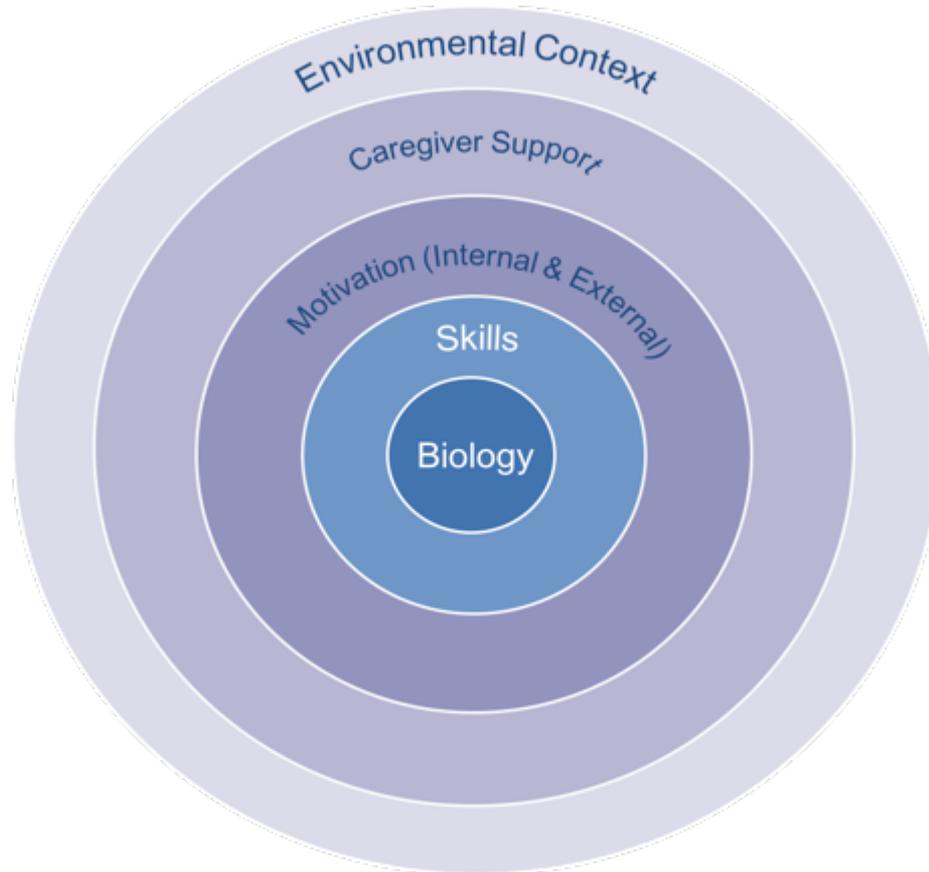


# Self-Regulation develops over time





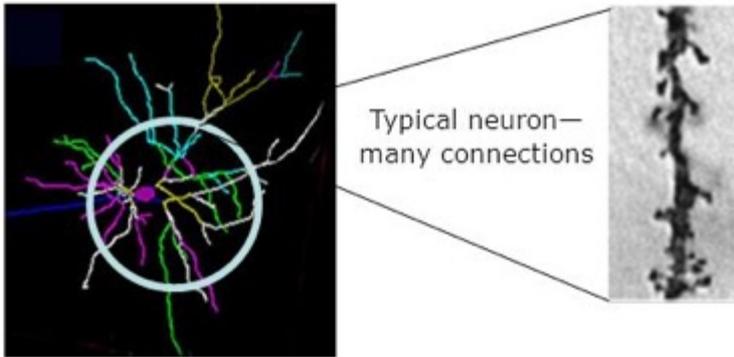
# Self-Regulation development: an ecological framework



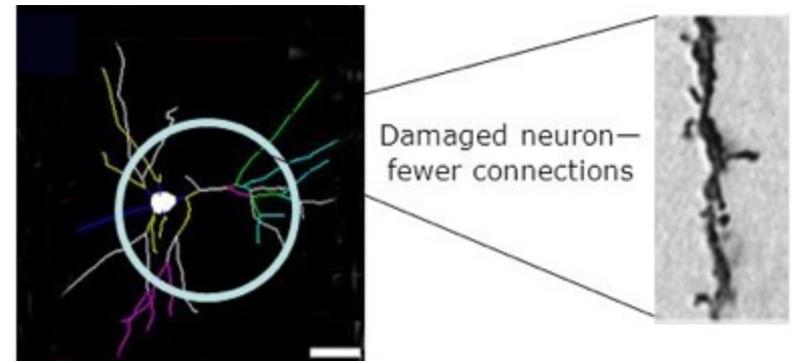


# Experiences shape our self-regulation abilities and skills

Healthy Nerve Cell



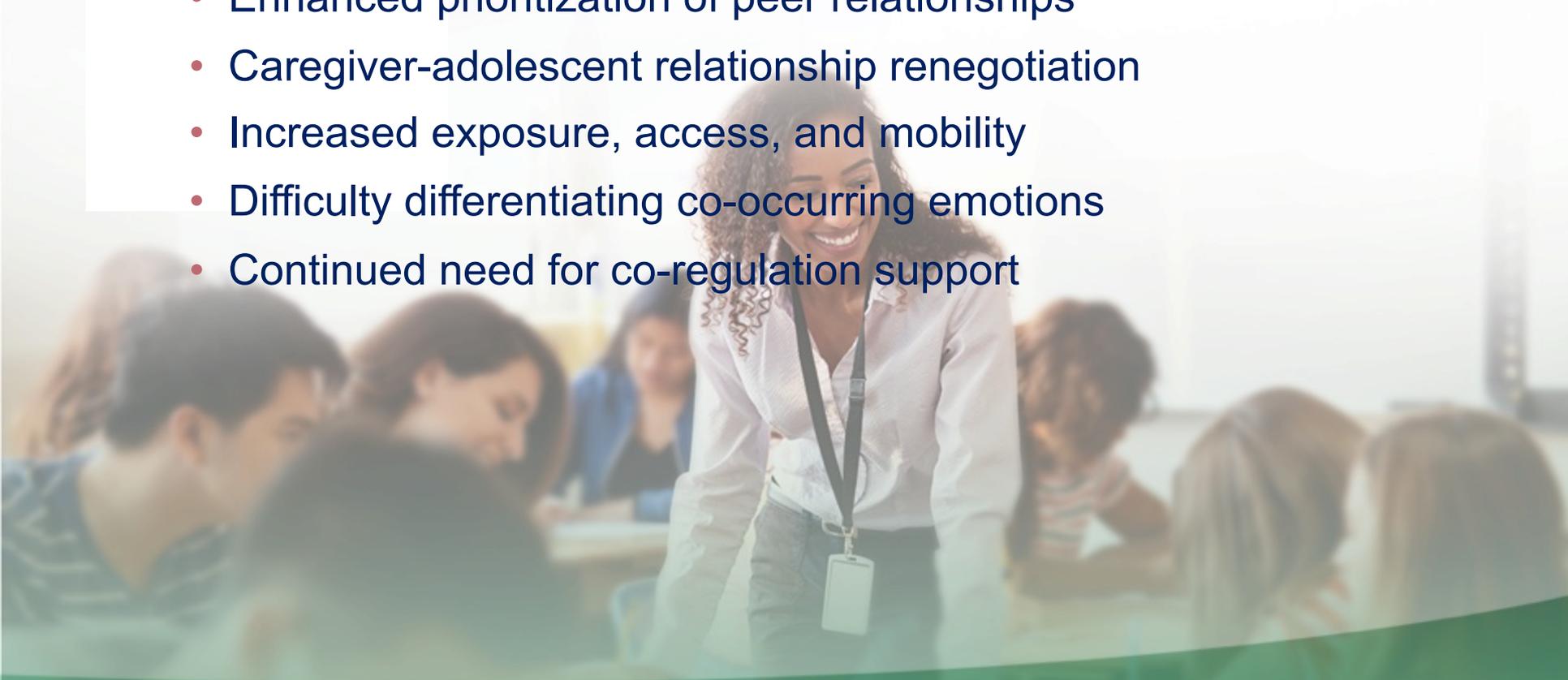
Affected Nerve Cell





# Adolescence – a window of opportunity

- Increased independence and autonomy
- Identity development
- Enhanced prioritization of peer relationships
- Caregiver-adolescent relationship renegotiation
- Increased exposure, access, and mobility
- Difficulty differentiating co-occurring emotions
- Continued need for co-regulation support





# OPRE's Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Series - Reports, Briefs, Snapshots, & Tip Sheets

**OPRE** **Duke** **THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL**

**Current Gaps and Future Directions for Self-Regulation Intervention Research**

*In the process of developing a series of reports on stress, self-regulation, and self-regulation in the base were identified. Research shows the work that remains are many unanswered questions. This brief examines in a recent literature review. In...*

**theory to date.**

**Limitations of adolescent self-regulation interventions.** The interventions for adolescents examined in our review are more diffuse and briefer than those for younger children, and do not appear well-aligned with current developmental neuroscience. In addition, there is limited focus on addressing emotion regulation in interventions for adolescents, which appears to mirror a gap in more basic research on emotion regulation for this age group. These limitations may help explain why intervention effects appear more variable and have lower average impact at older ages than younger ages in many areas.

**Limitations of young adult interventions.** Compared to other developmental groups, relatively few self-regulation interventions were identified for young adults. This is likely due to several limitations. In particular, few volunteers using narrowly defined criteria are likely why there has been a dearth of research on self-regulation in young adult populations outside of college settings. Thus, although several significant findings have been reported, their representativeness and mea...

**Figure 1. Number of Studies in each Developmental Group**

Developmental Group	Number of Studies
Birth-2	27
Preschool	75
Elementary School	134
Middle School	78
High School	37
Young Adult	23

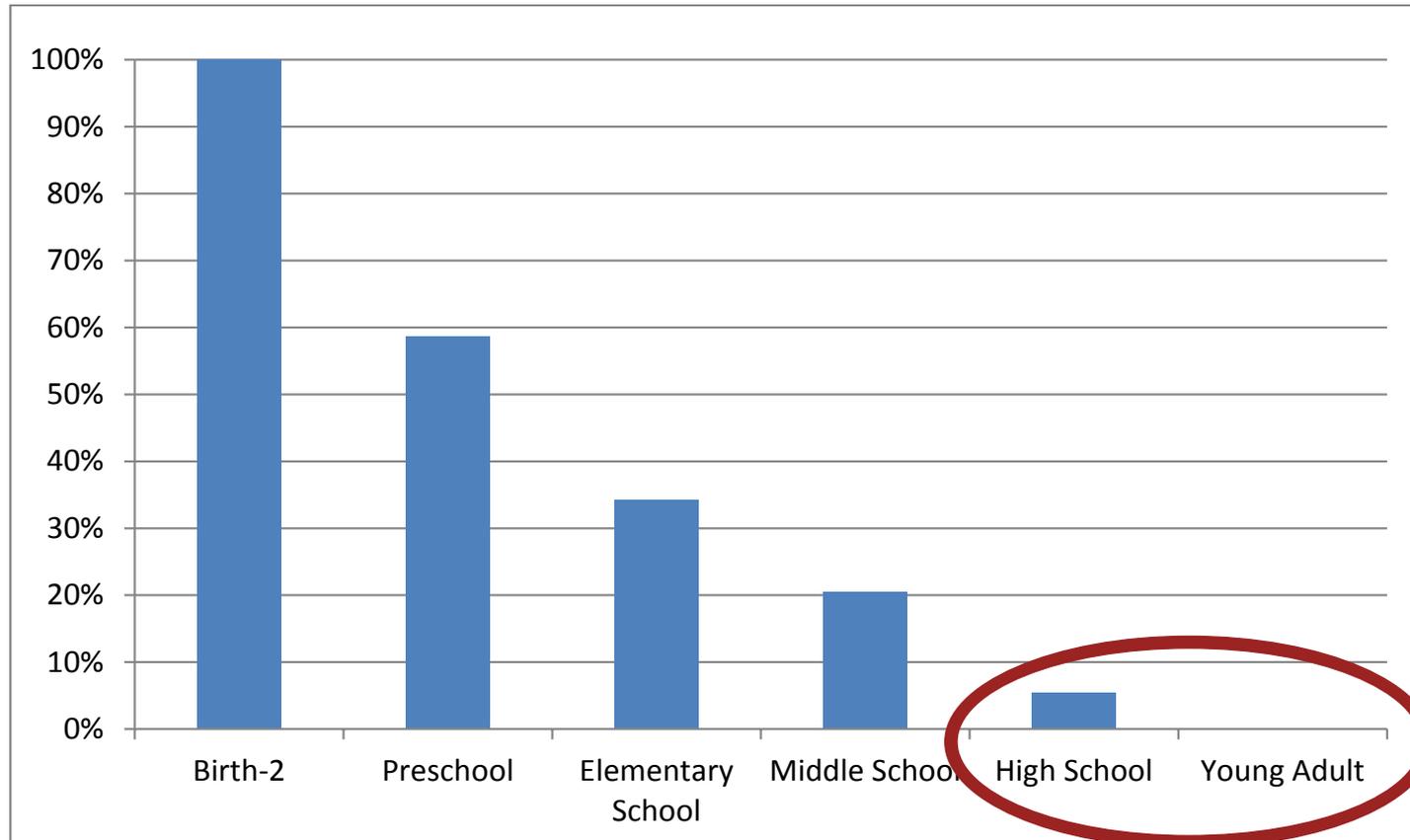
*Note: The same study may be included in more than one age group*

Figure 1 taken from Murray, 2016, multiple OPRE-funded publications 2015-2017



# Percent that targeted Co-Regulation

Figure 8. Percent of Studies Targeting Co-Regulation, by Developmental Group





# SARHM Partners = Two federally-funded Relationship Education Grantees

Implementation Characteristics	Site A	Site B
Target population	14–15 year old students, predominantly Latinx and African American, universal	17 to 23 year old young adults, predominantly African American, formerly in foster care
Setting	Required health class in four high schools in urban, southern city	Volunteer program at two community-based locations in urban southeast
Curriculum	Relationships Smarts + (12 50-min weekly classes)	Love Notes (13 monthly group workshops)
Facilitation	9 facilitators external to school; 3 eight-week learning cycles	8 program staff at community center and residential facility; 3 sequential learning cycles



# Pause and Reflect



## IN CHAT:

What is one piece of information you have heard so far that you want to keep in mind going forward?



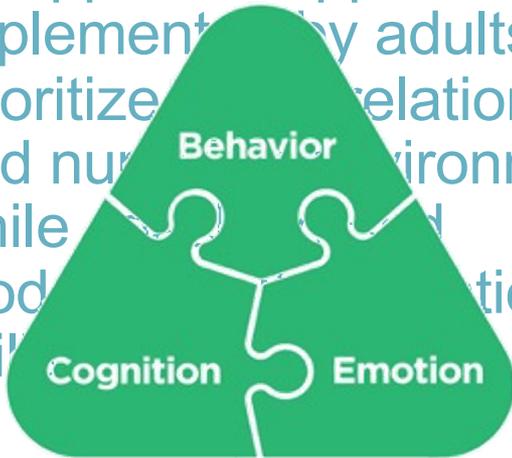
# What is Co-Regulation

*And why does it matter?*



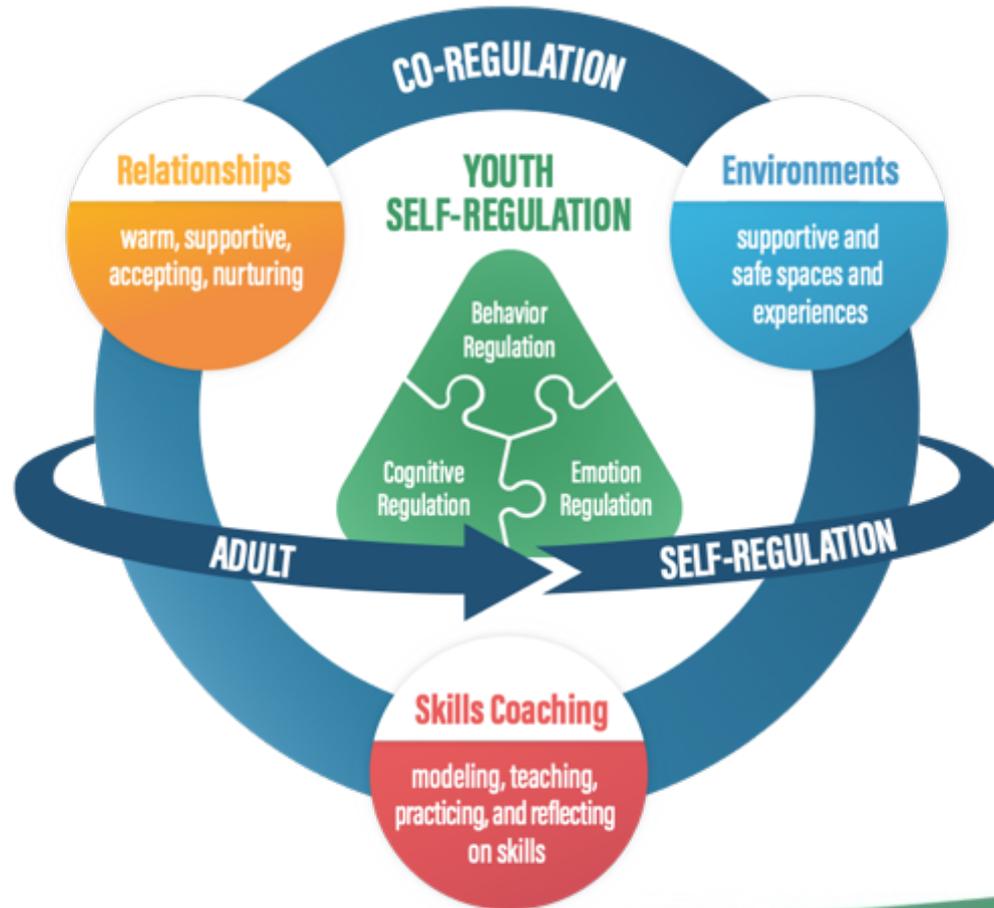
# Co-Regulation

A supportive approach implemented by adults to prioritize relationships and nurture environments while modeling and teaching skills.





# Literature review yielded a co-regulation framework to guide the project



\* The evidence-based co-regulation framework is an adaptation of existing models of self-regulation (Murray et al., 2019) and co-regulation (Rosanbalm & Murray, 2017).



# Adult Self-Regulation

Aware

- Of your feelings and responses in stressful situations

Notice

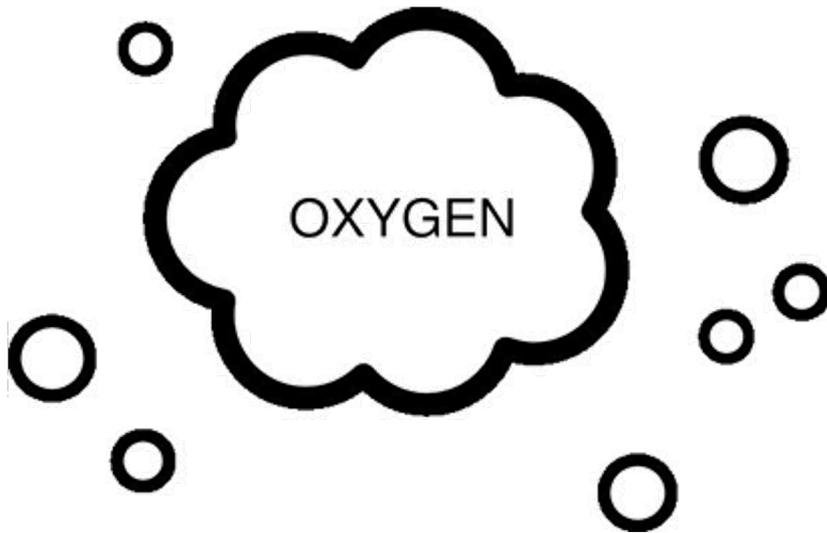
- Your assumptions, thoughts, and beliefs about the behavior of youth and their implications

Use

- Strategies to remain calm and respond with compassion, even when stressed, angry, or upset



## Successful Co-Regulation begins with our own Self-Regulation as adults



How do I fill my own tank?

How can I ensure I come to work with a “full” tank?

What will help me model self-regulation in front of youth even if I’m under stress?

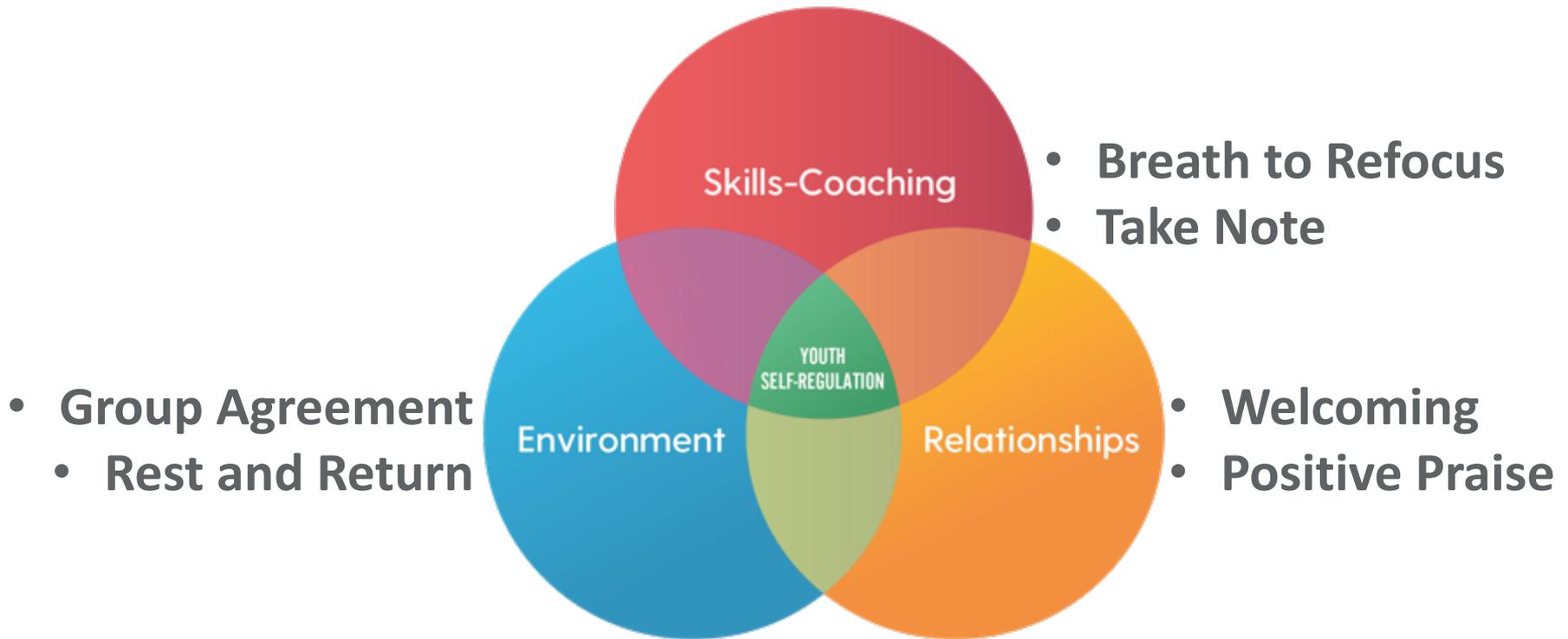


# Adult Self-Regulation

- **Mindfulness (consider an app)**
- **Healthy personal habits: sleep, exercise, eating**
- **Check your narratives (the stories in your head about the youth you serve)**
- **Set SMART goals related to your own self-regulation**
- **Structure your work environment for focus, efficiency, sense of calm**
- **Support one another as a team with positive feedback**
- **Manage stress**
- **Practice self-compassion and a growth mindset**



## Examples of strategies to foster self-regulation, each targeting one component of co-regulation





# Warm, Responsive Relationships

Relationships

- Respond with warmth and affection, avoid harsh, judgmental or shaming remarks
- Validate feelings; offer support during intense emotion
- Share your perspective; allow youth to make decisions and experience natural consequences
- Show and encourage compassion for self and others

# The Welcoming Strategy



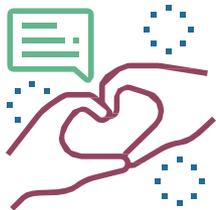
## 1 SHEET

Youth complete a worksheet that helps them feel known.



## 2 GREET

Warmly welcome each youth to create a sense of belonging.



## 3 MEET

Connect 1:1 with youth, and follow up to form an authentic, responsive connection.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CALL ME  
HELLO MY NAME IS  
CALL ME  
CALL ME

I'd like you to call me:

ABOUT ME  
ABOUT ME  
ABOUT ME  
ABOUT ME

Something I'd like you to know about me is...

I LIKE IT  
I LIKE IT  
I LIKE IT  
I LIKE IT

In class, I like it when you...



# Safe, Supportive Environments



Environments

- Co-create group values that promote safety and positive program climate
- Incentivize good choices (e.g. those who enact skills receive a reward)
- Offer anticipatory guidance as youth navigate different environments
- Offer space and time to calm down in times of arousal, conflict, or stress (e.g. create a refuel zone)
- Provide prompts for skill use (e.g. posters)

# Rest and Return

## In the Classroom



1 EXPLAIN IT



2 SUPPORT IT

Sometimes we need permission to tend to our feelings.

## In the Workplace



1 LOCATE IT



2 LABEL IT



3 EQUIP IT



4 PRIORITIZE IT



5 USE IT



# Self-Regulation Skills Coaching

Skills  
Coaching

**Chat:**

**How is Teaching different  
from Coaching?**



# Self-Regulation Skills Coaching





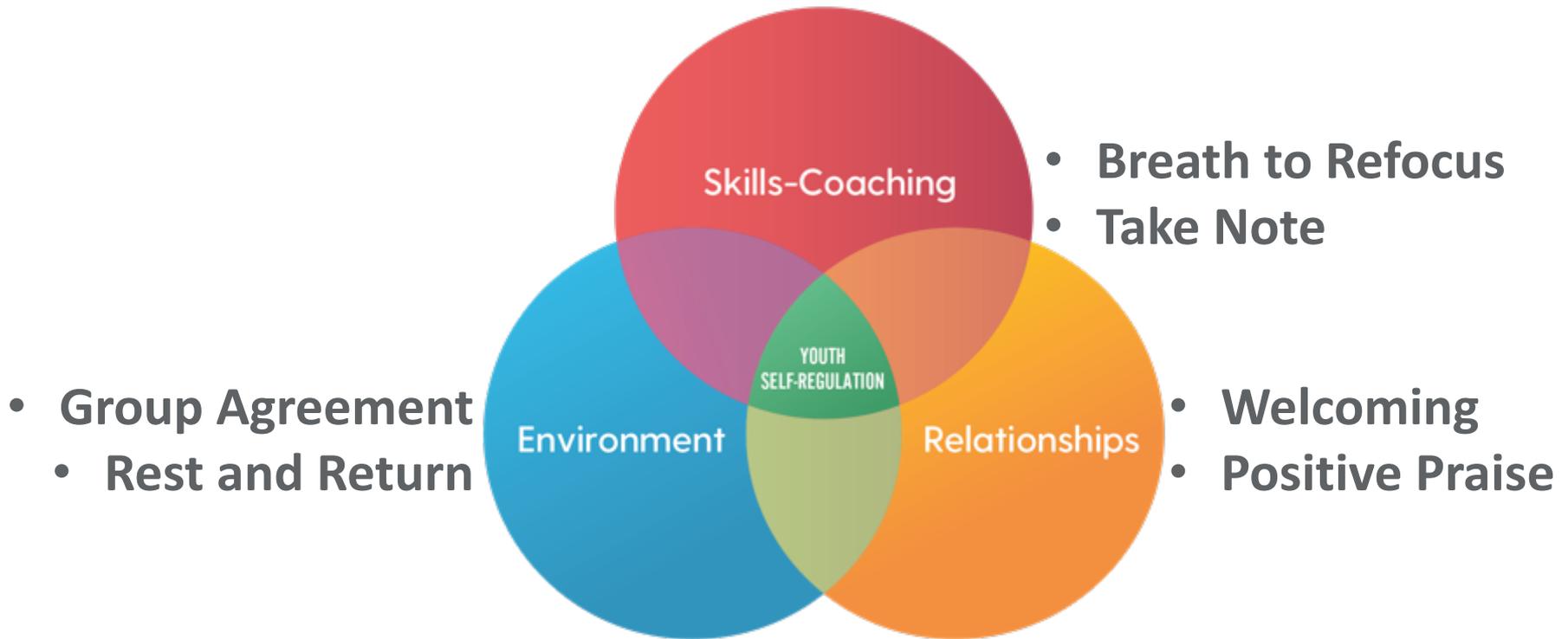
# Self-Regulation Skills Coaching

Skills-  
Coaching

- Coach awareness of and labeling emotions and discuss their value
- Coach stress management and distress tolerance; model self-calming
- Encourage help-seeking
- Support goal-setting and monitor progress; support persistence
- Coach problem-solving and healthy risk-taking
- Coach decision-making that aligns with youths' values



## Co-Regulation involves all 3 components working together





# Being a Co-Regulator: a coaching mindset





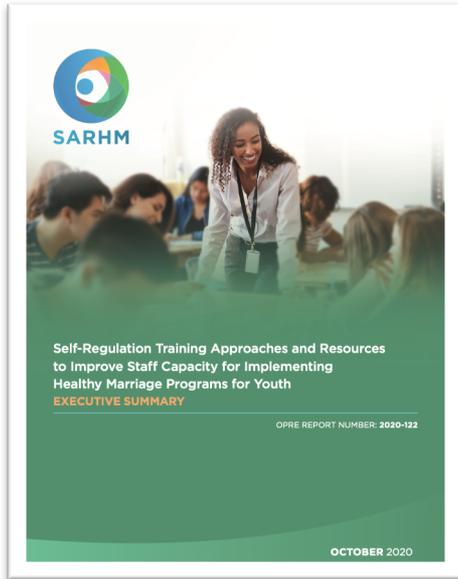
# Lessons Learned from the SARHM Project

- Integrating co-regulation strategies into youth programming is feasible and shows promise for supporting implementation and youth engagement.
- It is important to infuse co-regulation and self-regulation principles at all levels of the program: in the workplace, in staff-supervisor relationships, and in interactions with participants.
- When developers and practitioners work together, adding co-regulation to current programming is practical and sustainable.

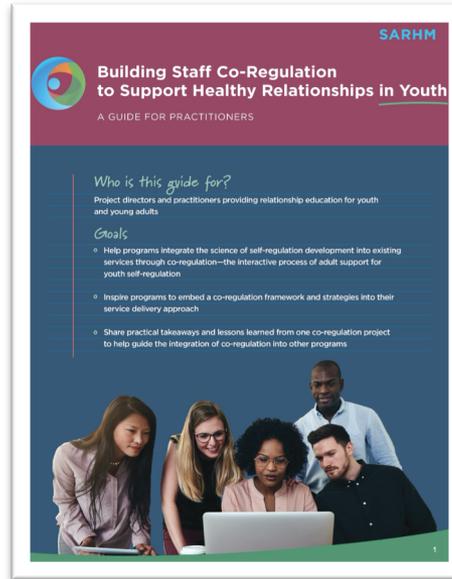




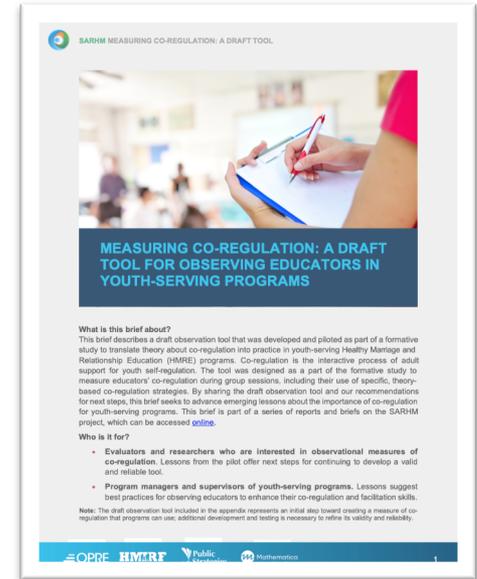
# Additional Resources



The full SARHM report and executive summary



A brief for practitioners to integrate co-regulation into their program



A draft co-regulation measure for programs or researchers

Additional resources will be published at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/self-regulation-training-approaches-and-resources-improve-staff-capacity-implementing>



# For more information

More detailed information is available in the SARHM Final Report:  
Baumgartner and Frei et al., 2020, OPRE

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