

When I Feel Myself Getting Overwhelmed

A Guide to Regulating in Hard Moments

Why This Matters

Children rely on adults to help them regulate emotions, but adults cannot offer calm when their own nervous systems are overloaded. Stress, fatigue, time pressure, and repeated challenges can make it difficult to respond with patience and clarity. Losing calm just means we're human.

Supporting adult regulation is essential because children sense adult stress immediately. When adults slow themselves first, children are more likely to settle and feel safe. Regulation is not about staying calm all the time; it is about recognizing stress early and responding intentionally.

Early Signs I'm Getting Overwhelmed

- Tight shoulders or jaw
- Faster or louder voice
- Feeling rushed or irritated
- Wanting to control the situation quickly
- Difficulty listening or thinking clearly

What Helps in the Moment

- Place both feet on the floor and slow your body
- Lower your voice instead of raising it
- Take one slow breath with the child
- Reduce words and use short, calm phrases
- Stay physically close rather than sending the child away

If I Lose My Cool

No adult stays regulated all the time. What matters most is repair.

Helpful repair language includes:

- "That was a hard moment. Let's try again."
- "I got upset, but I'm still here."
- "We both had big feelings."

Repair teaches children that relationships remain safe, even when emotions run high.

Reflection

What helps me feel grounded when moments get hard, and how can I use that sooner?