

Emotional Regulation: Mine yours ours

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Sara Richardson

Welcome everybody. I'm Sara Richardson. I'm a Be You National Manager. I'm joining you from Adelaide, Kurna Country, and I'd like to acknowledge Elders past and present and invite you to do so in the chat as well.

Today we're going to have a conversation and consider emotional regulation from the point of view of mine, of yours and of ours together, and the interplay in between what we do as educators and when we're working with children and children's emotional regulation

What we know is that healthy emotional regulation in children and adults will lead to us feeling more confident and capable, and it will support stronger relationships. It will enable us to be able to pay more attention, learn new things, and also cope with the ups and downs of life.

Today I'm really excited as part of this conversation to welcome our panellists, Rebecca Cort, Rod Soper and Lynda Kramer. They'll talk to you more about who they are, where they're from and what they're going to bring to this conversation as we go. They're going to, I'm looking forward to hearing from them because they're going to discuss different forms of emotional regulation, and really strongly talk about some practical strategies that they've used in their different settings. So I'm hoping that you will find that interesting and have some takeaways.

So just a little bit about Be You, you obviously know something about Be You if you're here. But Be You provides educators who are working with children and young people, the knowledge, tools, and resources to create positive, inclusive, and responsive learning communities where every child, young person educator, and their family is empowered to achieve their best possible mental health.

Because Be You and the people who are involved in Be You talk about mental health often, it's really important that we consider as we're having these conversations today about mental health that we think about taking care of ourselves and each other. Sometimes these conversations might trigger feelings and thoughts, and so, while we are talking today, really we'd like to support you, to feel safe and able to contribute. And so we're asking that each of you only share what you feel comfortable sharing either in the polls or in the chat with each other, remember to maintain confidentiality, and also we will be offering some help lines posted throughout the webinar. So access them if you need to, but also, keep in mind and have someone that you can talk to and take or take care of yourself as we have these conversations about mental health today.

So a little bit of housekeeping, I guess, so that you can access these conversations to the fullest. This is a Zoom Webinar, and on the screen you'll see a range of ways that you can be set up able to access and hear what's going on, but also encourage, really encourage you to use the chat function to engage with each other. We've got some of our team in the chat, and so you'll be able to talk with them as well. And you can ask, and they will respond to some of your questions there, either individually or together, and I really encourage you to share resources or thoughts with each other, and we'll be prompting you to do that a couple of times during the webinar.

There's also a Q&A option where you can submit your questions for our Q&A session later. Got a very full webinar, so we won't be stopping to respond to those questions as we go. But we will stay on after the webinar has been finished, and hopefully get to some of those questions there. So we do invite you to stay on after the session with our panellists and then you can also learn a bit more about how Be You operates. If you have got any IT connection questions, then you can ask them in the chat there as well.

So hopefully, you're all set up and we're ready to go. We're going to start off with a poll, so we'll get the poll going. This poll is, we're going to ask you to choose a question which asks you to reflect on how you feel about your level of understanding of emotional regulation, and I guess it's an opportunity for us to kind of get a sense of what people know and understand and how they feel about emotional regulation and get it before we get into the topic proper.

Are we going okay with that, or should we just use the chat? This is called pivoting. And this is what happens online. So the question is, tell us in the chat how you currently feel about your level of understanding, of emotional regulation. So I feel confident, I'm still a bit unsure, oh, hang on, here we go, I'll keep reading, and then you can jump into the poll. I would like to learn more and further my understanding, and also my practice, and I think that's a really important thing we're going to focus on today, or I feel really confident, and I'm implementing strategies to support my own and also others. And probably in particular, children's emotional regulation.

So jump into. If you've already started putting it in the chat all good, that's fine, we can continue with that, but otherwise jump into the poll if you can.

So straight away we can see people, and that's probably why you're here, you want to further your understanding and practice. There are some people who are already pretty confident. And I'm wondering too, one of the things I think about is potentially how we feel about this, or how confident we feel might fluctuate depending on the context and the situation. So some people might feel really confident in being able to support children with their emotional regulation. But perhaps haven't thought about what that looks like for their teams.

One of the things just to draw your attention to too, as part of Be You we have some other online sessions and events which are a bit more interactive than this webinar, and you'll see in the chat that we've put in a registration for a follow up what we call a Spotlight, where you can have a little bit more, it'll be a smaller group, and you can have a conversation.

So we might share the results Trish, before we jump into the next bit. It's very clear that most people will want to learn more. So that's great. And hopefully, the webinar will do that for you. But also, I really encourage you to share with each other in the chat. This is a conversation that we, we're having it today, but it's an ongoing one. So that's great. Thank you so much. We will ask that question again towards the end. So just keep that in mind that that's coming, and hopefully what will happen is, as you've, engaged with some of the content today, and really listened to some of the presenters you will perhaps be slightly, a little bit more confident.

So we're going to start off, I'd like to introduce Rebecca Cort who's the executive leader of wellbeing and enrichment at the Arches Foundation, and Rebecca can talk a little bit more about what that role means and where she's learned about emotional regulation and what it means for her and her work. But I guess what one of the things we're really going to start with is why emotional regulation is important for us and for the children that we work with. So I'll hand over to you, Rebecca.

Rebecca Cort

Thank you, Sara, and thank you everyone for carving out the time today to come into this space and share together about what regulation means for us. And I think that's a really beautiful leading question is, really linking into the lived experience of regulation. And to do that, I want to give us a framework for understanding all of the domains of regulation from the neurobiology of regulation and a developmental lens.

So we know that 90% of a child's brain and nervous system are developed by 5 years of age, and this happens from the bottom to the top, and from the right to the left of the brain. And this is really important for us to understand as educators and early childhood workers, because we have such a pivotal influence on the development of children that we are in relationship with.

And as I go into this, I really want to set the foundation of the neurobiology of regulation through kind of guiding us through that what that looks like from a polyvagal lens. And so from the polyvagal lens, what we know is that the nervous system is constantly balancing our wellbeing. So next slide, if you like.

And this means that we're always scanning our environments for danger, for cues of danger and safety. And this is because we have a natural threat bias which is designed to keep us safe and help us to survive. And part of this threat or survival system, there sits in our brain stem a function that Dr. Stephen Porges, who's developed the polyvagal theory, talks about our neuroception of safety, and it sits right at the base of our brain, and it operates underneath the level of our awareness. And it's always scanning the environment and our relationships for cues that tell us we are safe or we're not safe.

If this system picks up cues that we are not safe, it activates our fight or flight response. And our fight or flight response, as you can see in the slides here, really activates our nervous system away from something we call social engagement. I like to call it the play zone, and the play zone is where we can sit in safety. We're curious. We're open. We can engage with others much like all of us here today. We're here. We're grounded. We're ready for learning. We're ready for play. When we move into fight or flight that can look and feel very different for us.

The beautiful clues about engaging in our environments and in our relationships that Dr. Stephen Porges gives us, is that connection increases our felt sense of safety. But also from this research, we know that children do not have capacity to move into safety on their own, safety is developed through the dyad. So through those key primary caregiving relationships with Mum, Dad or Aunty and Uncle, or Granddad, Grandma, so on and so forth, what we know is, if we are knocked off balance in childhood, we need a safe adult to come and share their safety with us and bring us back to balance.

Now, part of this theory links in to other work that really is quite pivotal and also implemented throughout the Australian education systems, which is the theory of the window of tolerance by Dr. Pat Ogden and co.

Now I love the concept of the river. You can see the little sailboat in the middle of the river, and we're looking at a concept called smooth sailing. Now, when we're in our window, when we're in the middle of the river, we're in that space of being ready to play and ready to learn. We are carrying on with daily life because we're in balance. However, we all know that we can be knocked off balance, and that means our little sailing boat gets carried towards either bank of the river. We can move towards a bank of hyperarousal which is outside our window, where things can start to feel slightly off balance for us. We can feel emotionally overwhelmed. We can even feel panic. We start to feel unsafe, and we see a lot of the behaviours that are communicating the need for connection and to travel back into safety.

On the other side of the river we have hypoarousal, and this looks quite the opposite, and can sometimes be missed by the adults around us. And that can look like a collapse, a feeling of being numb, a feeling of low energy, I can't think, I can't even connect to myself, because I'm disconnected from my body, and this can feel like an internalised state of collapse.

And so what we're really wanting to do is to build the capacity to travel down through the middle, down through the middle of the river.

But unfortunately, in our current systems this has been mistranslated as I need to be calm. And Dr. Lisa Dion would talk to the challenge to that which is, regulation doesn't mean calm. We can still feel states of not being calm and regulate. And I think this is a beautiful invitation. Dr. Lisa Dion says, actually, regulation means to connect, and it is a state of connection with ourselves, and from that state of self-connection we can connect with others.

To add to this lens of regulation, which might be new for some of us in the room, it certainly was new to me when I first started learning about this, we need to explore 4 domains of regulation. And often in the education context, we've heard of maybe one or 2 which is self-regulation and co-regulation, and Dr. Lisa Dion is a play therapist, and she specialises in early learning, and she has some beautiful work on actually, for the first state of regulation we experience is external regulation, and that's in early infancy.

So take your minds all the way back to early infancy, and what we would do if we hear a baby crying. Now, if we hear a baby crying as an adult, we respond. And we respond from this lens of, we need to contain. And we do the work of regulation. What that looks and feels like is we lean in. We lean into the discomfort that we might feel when we hear the baby cry. We lean into holding space, and we notice what arises in us, and we breathe and ground and hold discomfort. As early educators, this might look and feel like, okay, I can hear a child crying, and I know that I'm about to lean in. So the first step I'm going to take is to ground myself and hold myself so I might ground my feet on the floor, I might take some deep breaths. And then I lean in, and I approach the child, knowing that my job is as the container. So I lean in, and I offer containment to a child. I do all of the job of regulation. I hold my own discomfort. I notice what arises in me. I hold that too, and I continue to breathe and to ground and to hold the discomfort. And in this containment we meet the regulation needs of the child.

The next phase of regulation is co-regulation, and this is dependent on the child having had repeated access to external regulation. In this phase, we do all the steps of external regulation, but we join. And this looks and feels

different than approaching and containing. Joining means I have to stay connected to myself, so I have to still have that capacity to connect and hold myself, but the child's capacity of also having the experience of being externally regulated allows them to join me, and I join them. The joining requires authentic connection. So it requires more than me just masking my own dysregulation. And often as early educators and other workers in the sectors, we feel that the dominant need is to be calm, and even if we're not calm we might pretend to be calm, so we might mask our own discomfort and attempt to join with the child. But what we know from the research is that actually it requires an authentic connection. So I have to stay connected to myself, then I can join with child, and in that joining our nervous systems connect, we share our regulation, and we travel back into the window together, and in this traveling back together we have co-regulation.

The next phase of regulation is self-regulation, and this is so interesting because this seems to be almost the dominant emphasis in our education spaces is the capacity to manage ourselves. And what that does for us as educators and for children, is it doesn't name the other 2 steps we have needed to have access to. And we need to be able to travel into to have self-regulation.

Self-regulation requires me to be able to name my own feelings. And this means that I have had to have had enough experience as a child in connection, in external regulation, and in co-regulation to know how to name that feeling. And not only that, to know how to meet the need of the feeling.

So what self-regulation actually requires is for 2 prior steps, external regulation, and enough repeated exposure to that, that I've had the felt sense of what it is to have a container for my big feelings, and to know that the people around me are strong enough and able enough to contain those feelings. And then I need to have had it demonstrated to me how to travel back into my window to come back into balance with a safe adult.

From there, I've had enough practice in co-regulation to be able to do it myself. So when we're talking about self-regulation that looks like I can name my feeling, I can contain that feeling, I know how to meet the need, and that means I know how to connect to myself in that feeling and stay connected, and then I can travel back by myself into my window of tolerance.

Which brings me now to the fourth phase which I have found in my travels around the country working in education spaces that this is still a bit of a gem. It's like a hidden gem, a treasure. And what collective regulation looks like is a global activation of all of the 3 earlier regulation strategies or theories.

Collective regulation is, has been written a lot about by Dr. Lou Cozolino, who is, specialises in social neurobiology. And he talks about the connection we all have with each other, and he talks about the neurobiology of our nervous systems in that each of our nervous systems are designed to move towards each other, and that in and of itself, I think, is a very beautiful thing.

So when we're in a room with others, if we have this awareness that we all have something called a social synapse, the string of connection that connects me to others which communicates our nervous system's energy to each other, and that all of our nervous systems will move towards each other. We call this neural synchrony.

Now, Dr. Lou Cozolino talks about this idea that we can use neural synchrony to form collective regulation, and this looks and feels like the group regulates a group, which is quite a remarkable concept in and of itself. The group regulating the group takes the burden off the educator to have to control individuals in a room. Oh, Dr. Lou Cozolino is the scientist's name. He's actually written some remarkable books on using neurobiology in education.

Now he talks to the fact that if you walk into a room and it feels like it's your job to manage the energy of the room, it's really helpful to understand neural synchrony. We can notice as an educator that we walk into a room, and the energy is really, really high, and it feels very uncontained and you know that part of your job is to move children towards that play zone, or that learning zone which is social engagement, and being ready to learn. Now what we can do in that space is use the earlier theories so we can first ground ourselves using external regulation, knowing that our job is to actually be a container for the room, but then we can join in co-regulation. So we match the energy in the room. We join into that neural synchrony, and then we use play to down-regulate the room so we can allow that play, if we do it well, to naturally move up into that really high level of activation, but then use the play and use neural synchrony or collective regulation to bring the group back down to a state that feels like we're ready to learn, and we're ready to play. Equally if we're an educator and we walk into a room, and the energy feels very low, very

flat, very heavy, that can be a really hard space to inhabit, because equally you have this burden of how do we move children into a space where they're naturally in sync with their bodies and their nervous systems.

But they're also ready to learn and play? We can join, again, the energy where it is, and that means maybe moving into a more down regulated state, become a more grounded space, joining our children there where they are, and again using play to support the upregulation of the room. And this can be really effective in terms of looking after yourself in the room. If you're using all of your own neural energy to manage a room all day, you can leave the playroom by the end of the day feeling exhausted. When we learn to use collective regulation. This is actually a beautiful way to share the burden of regulation. And I recommend using play to not only regulate, but to also support transitions which are 2 really tricky times in an educator's day.

So I hope this has been a nice, maybe, mind opener to actually, that regulation sits across 4 different domains, and we can, as we get better and more skilled at using these theories, support ourselves and our children to move into what I would call a lived felt sense of safety during their day. So thank you.

Sara Richardson

Thank you so much, Rebecca. It was really interesting. As you were talking, I was reflecting on myself coming into this space, and I was probably unregulated, a bit nervous if I'm naming the feeling, and that as you were talking that notion of the group helping to regulate, I think all of us have probably come here potentially from the flurry of our day. And so really, being able to do that regulating together and understanding how the impact of the group is supporting us to regulate, I think, is really powerful, and I love the examples you gave in terms of what that looks like and feels like and is relevant in an early learning context around transitions and play in particular.

So what we might do, what I'm going to do to help me regulate, and the other thing I really want to acknowledge and thank you for is the way that you presented in such a clear and calm way, and I think that also the tone of your voice, and the pace that you went, I was really thinking about that, too. So that has actually really supported me. So really, thank you for that.

So what I'd like you to do before we hear from Rod, who's going to really give us a little bit more about his perspective, and how he understands and builds on those notions of play, and some of the other things we can do, too, is I'm going to take a breath, and I really encourage you to do that, too, but also pop a couple of things in the chat about what you're thinking and wondering about.

Now, just one thing that I probably would like to encourage you to do, to just have a check before you use the chat, because we will want you to share this with each other, make sure that you're sharing with everyone. If you want something directly to go to the host and panellists, that's great, and please do that. Continue to do that. But if you want to share with everybody, make sure you click and open up share with everyone.

So just while we're getting ready to introduce Rod and hear from him, maybe if everybody who's interested in doing that would like to do that. That'd be great. And remember to pop your questions, for later on in the Q&A button function, not in the chat function.

All right. So, I'd really like to introduce now, I really need to remember to take a big breath to help me slow down and be calm and help me manage my nervous, I'm really keen to introduce Rod Soper, who's our next guest speaker. Rod can talk to you a little bit about who he is, where he's from and what he does. But as I said before, Rod, I think it'd be really interesting to hear from you about how you take and apply these knowledges and theories in your setting, and particularly around that notion of play. So I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

Rod Soper:

Thanks, Sara. It's so inspiring to hear some new perspective. I just want to say, thank you, Rebecca, for taking your time to share your insights with us, because it's so interesting and I love it, love different perspectives on things that we can be quite familiar with such as play.

I think there's probably 2 things that I want to share with everybody is, first of all is how play helps us with our emotional regulation, and then to offer a very practical idea of playing with gratitude as a way in which to start to explore some of these things that Rebecca has been sharing with us around emotional regulation.

I think I'm going to go back to my team. I'm sharing my thoughts with you today from my preschool, and I think I'm going to go back to my team and I'm going to tell them that emotional regulation now should be spelt C O, double N E C T, I O N connection. So I think that's really going to be a big sign somewhere in our professional development space to be able to think collectively around that.

I think one of the other things that I really like what Rebecca had said was, it's about, how do we help children and of course, ourselves, because this regulation is about, this session is about ourselves as well as the children, is how do we come back into balance when we get knocked off. And I think one of the things that play, when we pause, and we just think about it is that it's incredibly important for all of us from birth to death. There's a lot of information in the early childhood sector and a lot of research to support how important it is for young children in the developing mind, the first 2,000 days. But there's also quite a lot of research about the importance of play for us as adults.

Stuart Brown is an incredible researcher, and he heads up the Play Institute in the States, and one of the things that his research, and his research team, has discovered is that the opposite of play isn't work as we might think of it as, it is actually depression. So it really connects in with this window of tolerance, whether it's hypo or hyper, what actually happens for us when we don't play. And I think when we're wanting to serve children and the young people that we work along and play alongside each day, we need to make sure that we are well-regulated, that our emotional regulation is sorted, and we have done some strategic work in making sure that we are, we're not dysregulated and that we're able to stay connected as Rebecca has referred to it this afternoon.

I think the thing that also took my breath away from Stuart Brown's work is really around the fact that our brains are, and our bodies form quite differently in the absence of play. And they can, as you, as we all know, we continue to grow, we just seem to get older, but we still need this element of play. We need this element of anticipation, surprise, strengthening wonder, poise. We need this to help our sense of place, our sense of self, our surprise, our delight to be maintained, and these are all the sorts of things that help our emotions stay connected, and for us to stay within our window of tolerance.

So really, I think it's incredibly important that as a team that you go back and you talk to your team about how do you play within the services. as a team? As a cultural perspective, perhaps? But also, how do you play outside of the workplace? What do you do? And I think one of the ways that Stuart Brown talks about it is as you wander and think about it, it's the emotion as you think about the types of things you love to do. It's the emotion that provides the motion. So it's this idea of as we look for something that brings us surprise, delight, joy, pleasure. That's the emotion. And how does it move us forward? How does it build our sense of place, our sense of self, maintain and strengthen our sense of agency?

And I think that is a really critical conversation that we need to have as team members as we explore these areas, of how do we maintain our ourselves within the window of tolerance as well as how we help those children develop that for themselves.

I think the other thing that Rebecca said that really I'm very, very passionate about is young children need to learn from us how to play. They, yes, they have an intrinsic desire to be curious and to wonder. But it's about how do they stay regulated? Where do they learn that? How do they learn to stay regulated through play? So it really comes down to our intentionality. So how do we play with the children and young people that we come alongside, we come face-to-face with and we're in a relationship with each day? And I think that's a really powerful question to be asking our team. Is it just through a learning or teaching experience? Is that our primary focus, or is there more to it? And I think, after what we heard just before, there is significantly a lot more to it, and we need to really dive deep into those 4 types of regulation just as a beginning to even understand what play means for you across the lifespan, to be able to talk about that, and to be able to then share that with families, but also to be able to understand how that influence of play is shaping the brain, the emotional connection for those children and young people that you're working with.

So one of the very practical ways in which we do it, and we have done it here at in my preschool, is we use The Playing with Gratitude Project. And The Playing with Gratitude Project is now, I'm very happy to say, is one of Australia's biggest wellbeing projects, and that QR code there on the screen will take you to some information about the project, and it's a way in which we, through practitioner inquiry, explore the notions of play, as well as the notion of gratitude. And of course, gratitude is such an incredibly interesting and yet life-changing tool that we can use.

Robert Emmons is the world Professor in this concept of understanding the influence of gratitude on ourselves and in our community, and he talks about it from 3 different perspectives. Gratitude changes us from a social perspective. His research says that those people who practise gratitude are more helpful and generous, and more outgoing and forgiving, but I think what's really interesting particularly is the children and young people in our services now, the people who practise gratitude, they actually experience less loneliness and less isolation. And in the world in which they're growing up in this is something that I think is I'm seeing, and we need to do something about it. So I think just a simple act of finding a place, a person, or a thing to be able to be grateful for is a super easy way, and over a period of time, this is the social change that we start to see.

Another area that Professor Emmons talks about is our psychological perspective. And he talks about that there's high levels of happiness and optimism. There's a higher sense of joy, surprise, delight, pleasure, and positive emotions. And again. As we practise gratitude, and this is being spontaneously listed from within ourselves as a team, but also our children, wow, what a positive impact that can have, particularly on building our regulation, whether it's collective, It's something that we're doing together, or it's external, It's something that we're modelling, and then we're coming together through that co-regulation experience.

The last thing and the last area that Robert Emmons talks about in regards to gratitude is the physical, and that those people that practice gratitude they have a stronger immune system. Now that's pretty powerful, that's a big claim. So I made a bit of an effort to jump in and dig deep to really see what that meant, and sure enough, through his extensive research, he was able to demonstrate that our immune system actually improves when we are being grateful. He talks about feeling better about ourselves, and therefore taking on more agency around doing exercise and movement to keep ourselves healthy, and of course, and are happier as a result.

So I think there are 2 ways that we can practically think about this notion of emotional regulation, or as Rebecca's been encouraging us with is this idea of how do we connect, whether it's connecting externally or together in relationship as co-regulation. Then, as a result of that knowledge and building that capacity, then we can start to understand what looks like for ourselves. And then to be able to go out and regulate with our friends. And I think, using that and building upon that knowledge of play and its significance for us across the lifespan and understanding how important it is for you and I to keep playing because it builds our wellness, and then to take that knowledge and that experience into our play spaces, and to be able to share that with the children, and let that be their foundation, is giving and providing space for this wellbeing and this concept of wellness to be able to thrive.

I think, when it all comes together, I just love that notion of upregulating, and I certainly know that as I'm going to be going back into my play space, and we talk about this delightful topic of regulation and the 4 types, my team are going to be upregulated with my passion and enthusiasm for the amazing information that we've learned today, so thanks, Sara.

Sara Richardson

Thank you so much, Rod. I'm smiling and nodding away, and no one can see me, but thank you so much. I think if our takeaway from Rebecca is C O double N E C T connect, then my take away from you is it's the emotion that provides the motion. And I was thinking about that as you were talking, and I'm like, what emotion are we bringing, because if it's the emotion that provides the motion, then we could be bringing in an emotion that provides a motion that doesn't go in a good or a helpful direction for us, but also for the children and the families that we work with, too. So that's my little note that I wrote down about yours. But thank you. I think you helped us understand how we can reframe that and bring the right kinds of emotions. I'm not sure if that's the right words. But using gratitude to really bring emotions that are useful and helpful. So thank you so much.

Great. All right. Well, let's have a little moment to transition. Keeping in mind what Rebecca said as we transition, it's really one of those moments where we need to, we can support each other and help ourselves manage into the next space, and I'm really excited to be hearing from Lynda Kramer, who's going to talk to us a little bit more about what that might look like, as we work with children, and one of the things we wanted to do, so pop your thoughts or feelings or ideas in the chat, or if you need to take a breath and or wriggle shoulders, or do a quick body scan, all of those things are really helpful to help us regulate ourselves. I think one of the things we really wanted to do in this webinar was acknowledge that all of us need to consider our emotional regulation and the interplay between how we, as educators and adults, regulate and the impact that that has on children. And it's a dynamic thing that goes backwards and forwards. So I think, that's something that's we really wanted to make sure we highlighted here.

So as I said, pop your thoughts and feelings now in the chat, if there's any ideas that you've got, or anything that you're feeling right now, if you can name those feelings, that's a really helpful thing to do, and for us to practise that too, and I think often, maybe being a bit playful is also part of that, how can we continue to play as adults and be playful in our interactions with each other would be great. So remember, if you've got questions for the panellists, you can pop them in the Q&A. And if you've got thoughts to share with each other, please keep doing that, because that's part of what we wanted to do here is create a community where we help each other and understand each other as well.

So I'm really, really now keen and excited to introduce you to Lynda Kramer. She's the director of Mayfield Nature Kindergarten, Lynda's done some work with the window of tolerance, and also in their setting what they've done to support emotional regulation. And hopefully, we've provided a safe and co-regulated space for you too Lynda because I know coming in has been a little bit challenging, but we're really looking forward to hearing from you.

Lynda Kramer

Thank you, Sara. Thank you, everybody. My name's Lynda Kramer, and I'm actually the Director from Mayfield Nature Kindergarten. We're based on 155 acres, so we're very fortunate to have all the nature around us every day to explore. I guess what I've come on today for is to just to try and share what regulation or self-regulation can look like for you and your service, and what things we use, strategies, here to help our little legends self-regulate and what we use as educators to self-regulate and co-regulate with each other.

I guess the starting point would be for us is setting those relationships with the children. It's probably the first start of anything really is to ensure that you have a relationship with the child. Are you truly connected? Do you know them to the level of what their likes are, their dislikes are, what their fears are? How are they walking into your service? Are they walking in nervous, have they had a bad morning, and what are you doing to help that child to come into your service to obviously have a brilliant day, that magical day that you hope that they would have?

So I guess as a starting point would be the regulation, the relationships. In our service, we have a few areas set up. So we've got our welcome box that I've got set up in the foyer, so this is an area that the children can just self-select their little teddies or a little book, and we've got bits of material in there if they're highly sensitised, and they need that sensory. So it's just that welcome box to say, welcome, and we are so happy that you're here, and we're grateful that you are here, we can't wait to have a play.

So, having all those little settings there, you've got the breathing boxes and sort of like a highly sensitised box where they can touch, feel, they can even smell things in those boxes. Which they might just need that little bit of a play with those items to help them to regulate in the space in the morning or during the day. It's always open for any child to go to whenever they need it in our service.

So I guess the other thing would be, to be present. As an educator your day can get very busy. We are so passionate about our jobs and what we do each day that sometimes we get lost in the moment of what really matters in that moment, and slowing it down, because this then allows things for the, for you to see things through the child's point of view, there you can watch their feelings without judgment, and things. Having sensory items around your service, things that they can feel, they can touch, those bits of nature they can just walk past and touch those little plants, the clay where they can use their fine motor and gross motor to push, to punch, to exert that little bit of energy that they need to exert, water for that sensory, it's a total different feeling touching water to clay, having pine-cones and

sharp, little spiky seed pods around, because that's a different sensory experience the children might need in that moment.

Allowing the child to have that space to regulate is highly important. It's a space that they can just go to, like they have a nook. We have many nooks around our spaces, so they, if they feel overwhelmed, or they just need to take that breath, we offer those spaces where they can be by themselves if they choose, or with us, or with a friend. But just a space where they can take that breath is really important, and they can start self-regulating, or we can co-regulate with them in this space.

So in those spaces obviously you would have items such as obviously the pillows and cushions and things that they can sit on, and they can relax on, a quiet area is ideal. Even a bit of soft music in the background if you have a space or opportunity to do that for the child. The children need a moment to move away from that stress that could be, if it's in a play space, it could be something stressing them out. So, they need that space where they can actually disconnect from and just regulate in if they need that. So those nooks are those spaces that you would provide for them.

We have the zones of regulation that we go with the inside out strategy. I'm not sure if you know that strategy, but it's a fun one to have, not just with the children, but with the staff. You've got your green zone, your yellow zone, your blue zone, your red zone. So you would introduce this with the children, and that helps them identify what zone they're in. So sometimes the children will, more than most times, the children don't understand what their feelings are, and we have to be there for them to help them to understand what their regulation is at that moment in time, and to understand those feelings that they're feeling. So they've got that language of this is what sad feels like. This is what angry feels like. And they have that, I guess that word that they could use next time once they've learned that regulation to use that to say, express how they're feeling.

Having those areas to touch with nature, we quite often take the children around the space that we have, but not everybody has what we have around our cottage, but you could bring the nature into your space. So it's having those opportunities of those baskets and those beautiful play items that they can connect with to take those breaths with.

There's Dr Chris Mosunic, who has a strategy approach of the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and what his approach is, is the grounding exercise which, we find 5 things that we can find, then we have 4 things that we touch, then there's 3 things to hear, 2 things to smell, and then one thing to taste would be something obviously in their lunch box or something like that, or if you have citrus fruits around there, or a garden you can go to that, you can pick a carrot if you've got a carrot there, or something like that. And this actually helps shift their focus of anxiety-provoking thoughts to the present moment, so it helps them regulate that little bit easier.

You also have that being in nature of the breeze, the sounds that they might hear, that time that they can just be amongst nature, and nature actually reduces the level of cortisol in your brain. So there's less stress and less anxiety for that child. So and again, it's slowing down in those environments and stopping that rush, and really connecting with it yourself as educators. I highly recommend that you if you can have a tree around you, give the tree a hug. Because it's just showing, obviously role modelling those things to children as well of how we can self-regulate is going to benefit them as well.

And then there's another 3 by 3, 3 3 3 approach that you can do from Dr Chris Mosunic. He's the, this is what we do a lot of breath work in the nature environment. So it'll be 3 things that you can see 3 things that you can touch, and then we take 3 breaths. So it's just teaching the children to slow down. And when they're so over-emotional it's time that we need to step in and co-regulate with them. Also, when you're in those moments, and they can be quite tricky, always lean out to your other fellow educators. Look for that support. Don't think that you're sort of doing it on your own. It's something that you do as a team. Look for the why. Why is that child not regulating? Why is it an overstimulating environment? Is there something missing in this environment for this child? So yeah, sort of like, a lot of little points there that can hopefully help you. They help us, extremely, every day. So thank you.

That's so great Lynda, and there's lots of people grateful for your tips and ideas and in the chat as well. So I'm not sure if you've had a look. But people are really, been really inspired by, I think by some of the things you've been talking about.

Lynda Kramer

And if you can take your shoes off, take your shoes off.

Sara Richardson

Yeah, someone said barefoot.

Lynda Kramer

Out in the rain, that's what we do here, just being with the children and enjoying that play and that true connection. And once you have that true connection with the child, then you'll understand what they're, you'll see those moments and remember those check-ins. So once a child's sort of like, had that meltdown, then always go back and do that check-in to see how they're traveling for that day. And do your own check-in on yourself, or check-in on your co-workers as well. So that's all important as well.

Sara Richardson

And I think what you've done, too, is being able to draw in some of the concepts that Rebecca talked about, that notion of connection is really powerful. And you talked about knowing children really well. And the other thing you talked about was being present, and in the moment, and at one point you said, just be, and I'm like, no let's cross out just, because actually we don't want to minimise that at all. Being is actually powerful and critical to this work. So let's take out just, and we're going to be.

Lynda Kramer

Can I just, can I give you one quote?

Sara Richardson

Yes.

Lynda Kramer

I have this beautiful quote that might inspire others like it inspires us here. That when children's emotions are high, their logic and language are low. So in a meltdown, don't reason with the children. Connect, hold space and be. So that's what we have. And we read that. And it's one of the quotes that's deep to my heart.

Sara Richardson

It's lovely because it ties all those ideas that we've been talking around together, too. So if you want to just stay on screen, we're getting towards the end of, I can't believe it's gone so fast, we're getting towards the end of our webinar. We're going to launch the poll again though now, and find out how the rest of the team are feeling about emotional regulation. And look if you're still wanting to further, I think that's exciting, because I think hopefully,

what this has not only done is give you some information and some ideas, but maybe some inspiration, and I know right at the beginning lots of people were asking about are we going to get a copy of the recording so that I can share it back with my team, and we really encourage you to do that. Yes, there will be a recording. So take this away and stop and start it and talk about it together, and really think about it. So, while people are filling this in, we have got one little question that's come in the chat. They want that beautiful quote again. So do you want to just, Lynda, can you?

Lynda Kramer

I'm doing it now.

Sara Richardson

Yeah, are you going to put it in the chat?

Lynda Kramer

Yeah, is that alright?

Sara Richardson

Yeah, absolutely. Please do.

Lynda Kramer

Ok, alright

Sara Richardson

And I will also, while you do that, I might get Rebecca and Rod to come back on screen, too, because, and before we finish the poll, I guess I would like to ask each of you if there's one thing that you, and this is a little bit of a question without notice, because we've got time, what's the one thing you've learned today, or that you've gone oh, that's interesting. Or you've been curious about today, and what's one thing that you also might encourage or want to share with people that they can take away? So that's actually 2 things. But Rebecca, would you like to go first?

Rebecca Cort

Yes, it's this beautiful invitation to invite nature in to our practice. We have reflected this in our own wellbeing team. So I manage a therapeutic team of specialists, and we support over 200 staff to stay well in their work with complex young people, and we often forget the power of nature, that it just has this beautiful, profound impact on our nervous systems.

We recently did a wellbeing day with our teams, and what we noticed after the wellbeing day had concluded, was that, I don't know if you are familiar with the term glimmers. Glimmers are those beautiful micro moments in a day that help us feel joyful. And it might be like you're making a morning coffee, and you feel the sunshine filtering through the window onto your skin. Something as simple as that can be a glimmer, and what we noticed was nearly all of our team, their glimmers were nature bound. And so for us this week we're exploring how do we bring nature in? How do we invite people to connect back into nature to support their wellbeing? So thank you, Lynda. That was such a beautiful session. Thank you.

Lynda Kramer

Thank you.

Sara Richardson

Thanks, Rebecca. What about you, Rod?

Rod Soper

I think the thing that I'm always excited by is when you see nature just doing its thing. And I think, as I was looking at all of those beautiful images of what Lynda's shared today. I was just reminded that when we get out there and we take our shoes off, we actually ground ourselves in it. That in itself, is part of that, it helps us to regulate our emotions. I was reminded of one of my team was saying that she loves to be able to just sit down by the beach where she lives, and think about the feeling of the breeze on her skin and hair, and I thought to myself, well gosh I haven't actually done that, I was just, ever. And I was thinking to myself, how exactly how she describes is what you've described. So again, it's just for the children and for us. It's just very precious.

Sara Richardson

Thank you. And back to you Lynda, have you got anything?

Lynda Kramer

Look, I'm just grateful for everything. It's I think, for me, and what we do here for the team is the biggest thing that we do is we focus on what we are coming in every day, and what we're bringing every day to the children, like that energy, Rebecca, you were talking about, and then obviously embracing everything else that comes with it through the day. So it's that flow. Always just remember that flow. There's no rush. There's no, oh well in my, our service, we don't have an agenda to make sure we tick all these things through the day. It's about just being in the moment being present with children and play, and just have fun.

Sara Richardson

Thank you so much. We might share the poll results now, because I got distracted by listening to all those wonderful things, and we'd like to hear from you about what you thought. And it's interesting now. So people still are looking for wanting to further their understanding and practice, and we would hope that that would be the case. We've heard lots, well I've certainly heard lots of different things today that I perhaps hadn't thought of before, or perhaps heard something that I, and this is often what happens.

When you hear something, you think about it differently, because you've heard it in a different context. So we really encourage you to continue these conversations with your colleagues, but also, really happy for you to join with us in Be You and have conversations about what this means.

Because all of these elements are really important to thinking about and building foundations for good mental health for us, but also for the children we work with. And it's really interesting from the poll results too that people now feel a bit more confident in their understanding. But also how that there's some strategies that they have, too. So I really appreciate the strategies that you have all provided today. Cause they've been really practical. So and I really love the way you've grounded that in research and theory and concepts, but then brought it into the reality of what it's really like. And I think that's so important. To be able to do that. And I'm pretty sure that from the chat that

people have, they're still looking for more. And they still want to know who was that person? Who was that person? We can support that as we go.

So yes, just really want to say as we finish up, really want to thank each of you for your insights, for your contributions, for your, as I said, your practical strategies, and bringing some really great concepts and ideas. I want to thank the team behind the scenes, the people in the chat, and the tech support people as well from the Be You team. I want to thank everybody for joining today and for your contributions, and for coming together so that we can have this conversation and learn together.

As I said, we do want to continue the conversation, and perhaps you might want to stay now in the Q&A Afterwards. But remember, there's also a Spotlight in Be You that you can join, so I will say goodbye now, and thank you all for coming, and we will finish the webinar. We look forward to seeing you in the Q&A. But before we do, if you could respond to the poll, your feedback would be fantastic so that we can build more webinars like this and provide you with some things that you are interested in, and that would work for you. So thanks everybody for coming. The poll's on the screen now. So before you leave, please do that, and if you are going to move to the Q&A and stay with us, we are going to turn our cameras off, we'll go and have a wriggle, and then we'll see you in the Q&A. So thank you all for now.

[END]