



Workshop Description: This workshop includes practice for understanding the relationship between emotion regulation, or managing responses to situations and emotions that can produce negative responses, and positive youth development. Successful implementation of this workshop will ultimately help youth program staff to reflect on how they can support youth’s emotion regulation to strengthen the program overall.

This workshop guide will ask participants to examine their emotion regulation strategies in order to better assist youth in developing healthy strategies. Participants will also learn when it is time to call in another helping professional when a youth’s inability to manage emotions becomes an issue beyond the expertise of staff.

Preparation Time: The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Emotion Regulation and Positive Youth Development website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 70 to 80 minutes to complete all activities within this guide. If you do not have time for the full workshop, only use the most relevant activities to make the workshop fit within your timeframe. Be sure to keep the reflection portion of the activities and workshop as this is where staff should consider how the activities and knowledge apply to their work.

Materials:

- Printed copies of the Worksheet: *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire*
- Printed copies of the Handout: *Extra Help Scenarios*
- Writing utensils for each participant
- Construction paper
- Two large blank white sheets of paper or a whiteboard

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Emotion Regulation and Positive Youth Development website, specifically the content related to Understanding Emotion Regulation. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide, gather all necessary materials, and prepare for the activities.

In this series of workshops, youth program staff will learn skills that build on one another in a specific sequence. We recommend you complete this set of workshops the workshops in the following order:

1. *Understanding Emotion Regulation,*
2. *Development of Executive Functioning,*
3. *Understanding Peer Relationships*
4. *Understanding Emotion Regulation – Staff,*
5. *Understanding and Practicing Active Listening,*
6. *Understanding and Practicing Inquiry,*
7. *Understanding and Practicing Acceptance,*
8. *Understanding and Practicing Problem-Solving, and*
9. *Understanding and Practicing Cognitive Reappraisal.*



Knowledge: Understanding and Responding to Emotions

Emotions are a complex pattern of physical and mental changes that include physical feelings, thoughts, expressions (including face and posture), and specific behaviors made in response to a situation perceived as personally significant.⁵ Emotions are the biological, behavioral, and cognitive processes through which individuals respond to what is happening around them.

Two important and related concepts to emotions are emotional development and emotion regulation. Emotional development can be defined as our ability to recognize, express, and manage feelings at different stages of life and development,¹⁶ while emotion regulation refers to the processes we use to increase, maintain, and decrease positive and negative emotions.⁸ In general, emotion regulation relates to our ability and attempts to control which emotions we experience, when we experience these emotions, and how we display these emotions.⁹

As youth transition from childhood to adulthood (approximately ages 10 to 20 years old), they have to learn how to navigate emotions that come with biological changes (i.e., puberty), new interpersonal interactions (i.e., dating), and expanded environments (i.e., jobs).¹ As they develop, many youth begin to spend more of their time in activities beyond school, like youth programs, where program staff have an opportunity to help them understand and express their emotions in ways that support their positive development.

Positive youth development is a strengths-based approach to understanding and nurturing healthy growth among youth.^{2,3} This approach can be used in programs to help youth to make meaningful connections and manage their emotions in healthy, sustainable ways.

Objectives:

- Develop youth program staff understanding of emotion regulation
- Examine emotion regulation strategies and explore how youth program staff develop those strategies
- Develop youth program staff understanding of how their emotion regulation can assist youth to develop emotion regulation skills
- Identify scenarios in which youth program staff may have to call on the expertise of another helping professional to assist youth in developing healthy coping regulation strategies

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Describe emotion regulation and how it contributes to the success of the program.
 - What to say: “Today we are going to talk about how an understanding of emotion regulation can be used to improve program quality. Most people can guess that emotion regulation has to do with the management of feelings, but an important aspect of emotion regulation is whether an individual knows how to manage strong emotions through healthy or unhealthy strategies.”
- Transition into Prior Knowledge activity:
 - What to say: “To start, we are going to gauge how familiar you are with the concept of emotion regulation.”

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):



- Ask the participants if they have anything to add to the definition of emotion regulation you have given (i.e., management of strong emotions). You may need to assist with these definitions using the background information provided for you to jumpstart the conversation. Record these responses on a large sheet of paper or white board so participants can see.
- Ask the participants if there is anything they are unsure of in regards to emotion regulation or if there is anything they want to learn through this workshop. Again, record responses.

Activities:

Activity: *Describing Emotion Regulation* (10 minutes)

- Describe the *Describing Emotion Regulation* activity:
 - What to say: “When working with a new or complicated idea like emotion regulation, it is sometimes helpful to come up with examples of what it looks like in real-life. First, let’s work together to list a set of emotions that can be considered strong. These emotions have clear physical expressions and can lead to changes in behavior. For example, anger may often have clear physical expressions like balled fists, raised voice, or even tears.”
- Lead the *Describing Emotion Regulation* activity:
 - Make a list of the strong emotions on a large sheet of paper or white board so participants can see.
 - Once you have a list, say, “There are both healthy and unhealthy ways to manage emotions. One healthy way to manage a strong negative emotion might be to try to think about what caused the emotion from a different point of view. For example, if a friend says something that hurts you and makes you angry, you could think about reasons why your friend might have made the comment and try to understand the situation from their point of view. What are some other ways, both healthy and unhealthy, that you have tried or seen others use to try to manage these emotions?”
 - Make a list of the healthy and unhealthy strategies on a large piece of paper or white board so participants can see.
 - After the list is complete, lead a short discussion of whether or not the participants have seen youth in the program ever use these or other strategies to manage their emotions. The point of this discussion is to help make the connection between their own experiences with emotion and emotion regulation and those of the youth.

Activity: *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* (20 minutes)

- Describe the *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* activity:
 - What to say: “We are going to complete a questionnaire to gauge our own emotion regulation abilities. The goal of this exercise is to have you identify where you use healthy and unhealthy emotion regulation strategies and how you can use this knowledge to support youth in developing healthy emotion regulation strategies.”
- Lead the *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* activity:
 - Hand out the Worksheet: *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* and a writing utensil to each participant.



Emotion Regulation Workshop

Understanding Emotion Regulation

- Instruct the participants to answer the questions as truthfully as possible. Ask them not to think too much about whether their response to a particular question indicates use of healthy or unhealthy strategies.
- After everyone has had a chance to complete the questionnaire, point out that each of the questions describes a healthy or unhealthy strategy. Lead a discussion with participants to identify which of the questions are strategies that may be healthy or unhealthy. Ask the youth program staff how they might draw on their own experiences of emotion regulation to help youth develop healthy strategies.
- After the discussion, ask participants to total their scores for Questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 and total responses for Questions 2, 4, 6, and 9.
 - Instructor Note: A higher score for the first set of questions (beginning with 1) indicates use of healthy coping strategies. A higher score for the second set of questions (beginning with 2) indicates use of unhealthy coping strategies.
- Once you have discussed and reflected on youth program staff's emotion regulation and ways to support youth development of healthy emotion regulation, transition into the next activity by asking participants to think about how they can determine when youth development of emotion regulation is beyond the scope of their expertise.

Activity: Extra Help Scenarios (25 minutes)

- Describe the *Extra Help Scenarios* activity:
 - What to say: "Some youth will require extra assistance in developing healthy emotion regulation strategies, and it is important to recognize the signs of this need and get help from professionals qualified to give that assistance. You must always get professional help when you believe a youth may intend to harm themselves or others."
- Lead the *Extra Help Scenarios* activity:
 - Provide the participants with a few examples of what it looks like when youth are not developing healthy emotion regulation strategies in line with the development of other youth. These examples may include having problems in multiple areas of life (academic, family, etc.), expressing hopelessness, engaging in negative behavior more frequently, employing repetitive destructive behaviors such as hair pulling or skin picking.
 - Ask the participants to get into groups of three to four people. Provide each group with a piece of construction paper and pens or pencils.
 - Instruct the participants to think about any experiences they have with youth who seem to consistently use unhealthy strategies.
 - Have group members share their experiences with one another and write down these instances on the construction paper in front of them.
 - Then, give each group a copy of the Handout: *Extra Help Scenarios*, and ask them to discuss whether or not extra assistance is required in each of the scenarios on the handout, marking each scenario with a "Y" for scenarios youth program staff should be able to address and "X" for those scenarios where extra help is needed. Ask each group to be prepared to briefly share their reasons.
 - Then, have volunteers share what their groups wrote on the construction paper.
 - Finally, compare what the groups decided for each of the scenarios and their reasoning. Discuss any discrepancies between the responses.



- **Instructor Note:** Draw attention to examples of when youth program staff help youth identify emotions and generate solutions for youth. Highlight participants' responses that reflect their own identification of emotion and generation of solutions. Guide participants in a discussion of how these skills can be transferred to youth. For example, if a workshop participant mentions that to stop thinking negative thoughts they think of a calming location (i.e., a beach, waterfall, vacation destination, etc.), ask how they know they are thinking negatively. Point out the change in thought as a solution. Tell participants that youth can't always tell when they are thinking negatively and that identifying this for them is a first and very helpful step.

Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the participants' responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the participants what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as "What part of the activity made you realize that?" and "How could you use these strategies with youth?"

Resources:

Worksheet: *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire*

Instructor Resource: *Scoring Guide for Emotion Regulation Questionnaire*

Handout: *Extra Help Scenarios*

Sources:

Worksheet: *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* and Instructional Aid: *Scoring Guide for Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* adapted from

Emotion regulation questionnaire. (n.d.). Fetzer Institute. Retrieved from:

https://backend.fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/stories/pdf/selfmeasures/Self_Measures_for_Personal_Growth_and_Positive_Emotions_EMOTION_REGULATION.pdf

11 signs your child may need to see a therapist. (2017). Children's Health Team. Retrieved from:

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/11-signs-your-child-may-need-a-therapist/>



Instructions and Items:

The following are some questions about your emotional life—in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life. One is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside. The other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave. Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways. For each item, please answer using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree			neutral			strongly agree

1. ____ When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I’m thinking about.
2. ____ I keep my emotions to myself.
3. ____ When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I’m thinking about.
4. ____ When I feel positive emotions, I’m careful not to express them.
5. ____ When I’m faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.
6. ____ I control my emotions by not expressing them.
7. ____ When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I’m thinking about the situation.
8. ____ I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I’m in.
9. ____ When I feel negative emotions, I make sure not to express them.
10. ____ When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I’m thinking about the situation.



Emotion Regulation Instructional Aid

Scoring Guide for Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

Instructions:

Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 make up the Cognitive Reappraisal facet. Items 2, 4, 6, and 9 make up the Expressive Suppression facet.

Scoring is kept continuous.

Each facet's scoring is kept separate.

A higher score in the Cognitive Reappraisal facet indicates healthy coping strategies. A higher score in the Expressive Suppression facet indicates unhealthy coping strategies.



Instructions: As a group, discuss whether or not extra assistance is required in each of the scenarios below, marking each scenario with a “Y” for scenarios youth program staff should be able to address and “X” for those scenarios where extra help is needed. Each group should be prepared to briefly share their reasons.

1. A youth in the program has recently been informed by their parents that they are getting a divorce. Since then, the youth has had trouble performing well in school and has withdrawn somewhat from friendships with other youth in the program.
2. A youth in the program has begun to react very negatively to feedback, especially wrong answers on tests and lower grades in school. You are not aware of any major changes at home for the youth. They talk frequently about how “stupid” and “worthless” they are. When you tell them things will improve if they work and study hard, they say things like “What’s the point?” They seem very anxious in the days preceding tests or project due dates at school.
3. A youth shows up to the program looking very tired, and the youth’s mother informs you that they have not been eating as much lately or sleeping through the night. You also notice the youth pulling their own hair and scratching themselves when they feel they have done something wrong.
4. A youth talks about how little people care about them frequently. They say things like “No one would care if I were gone” and “I wish I was never born.”
5. A youth has explicitly mentioned intentions to hurt themselves or commit suicide.
6. A youth slaps himself when he feels he has done something wrong, and when he doesn’t get his way, he hits his head against doors or walls.
7. Other youth have brought to your attention that a youth has been pushing them around and calling them names. This youth never engaged in this sort of behavior before, but you know that there was a recent death in their family. Furthermore, this youth has withdrawn from activities they used to enjoy.