

Puberty & Emotional Regulation

NEURODIVERSITY, PUBERTY, & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Neurodiversity and puberty both impact the way we are able to manage our emotions.

- This handout will help explain why emotional regulation can be tough during puberty and share some helpful tips on how to manage it.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL REGULATION?

Emotional regulation is the ability to notice, understand, & respond to emotions.

- Emotional regulation allows us to respond to emotions in a safe and healthy way.
- Emotional dysregulation happens when emotions feel out of control or unmanageable.

WHAT ARE HORMONES?

Hormones are chemicals that carry messages throughout the body.

- These messages tell the body what to do and when to do it.
- Hormones also affect the brain, which impacts mood and emotions.

WHAT DO HORMONES HAVE TO DO WITH PUBERTY?

Puberty happens when the levels of certain hormones in the body increase.

- These hormones cause changes in our physical bodies and our brains.
- The primary puberty hormones are:

Kisspeptin

LH

FSH

GnRH

Testosterone

Estrogen

Progesterone

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HOW DO HORMONES AFFECT OUR EMOTIONS?

Big changes in hormones cause big changes in emotions.

- Some of the feelings that puberty hormones can increase are:

Fatigue

Impulsivity

Risk-taking

Mood swings

Depression

Competitiveness

Aggression

Sex-drive

WHAT ARE MOOD SWINGS?

Mood swings are sudden changes in your mood or feelings.

- Mood swings are caused by sudden changes in brain chemicals.
- A mood swing often feels like a quick shift from one big emotion to another without a specific reason.

HOW DOES PUBERTY AFFECT EMOTIONAL REGULATION?

Hormonal changes during puberty cause challenging emotions to be more frequent and intense.

- Mood swings are common during puberty because of changing hormone levels.
 - Rapid and unpredictable mood shifts make understanding and responding to emotions more difficult.
- Besides hormone changes, these factors also affect emotional regulation during puberty:

Stress

Busy schedules

Poor sleep

School demands

Family conflict

Increased decision making

Peer pressure

Self-consciousness

Feeling lonely

Physical changes

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Give these activities a try when you're feeling emotionally overwhelmed. Keep in mind that everyone is different, and it might take some time to discover what works best for you.

HEAVY WORK

Do actions that make you use your muscles.

- Pushing (wall push-ups)
- Pulling (stretching putty)
- Jumping (trampoline)
- Chewing (gum)
- Sucking (using a straw)
- Climbing (playground)



DEEP PRESSURE

Do actions that give your body a big squish.

- Bear hug
- Weighted blanket/plushie
- Ball massage
- Arm & leg squeezes



SPECIAL INTERESTS

Engage with your special interests.

- Research
- Play
- Watch
- Organize
- Practice



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Check in with your senses and your surroundings.

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste



SOLO ACTIVITIES

Do activities by yourself.

- Reading
- Music
- Video games
- Art
- Building
- TV & Movies
- Writing



SAFE SPACE

Create a safe space in your home that is just for you.

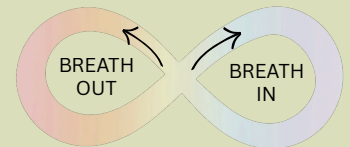
- Cozy corner
- Special interest zone
- Sensory space
- Movement room
- Bedroom



BREATHING

Try out specific breathing patterns.

- Infinity breathing
- Rainbow breathing
- Box breathing
- 5 Finger breathing



STIM

Do actions that soothe you.

- Repeated movements or sounds
- Watching video clips
- Using sensory toys



CO-REGULATE

Use another person to help you regulate.

- Bring you tools
- Talk or listen
- Change the environment
- Provide safe touch

