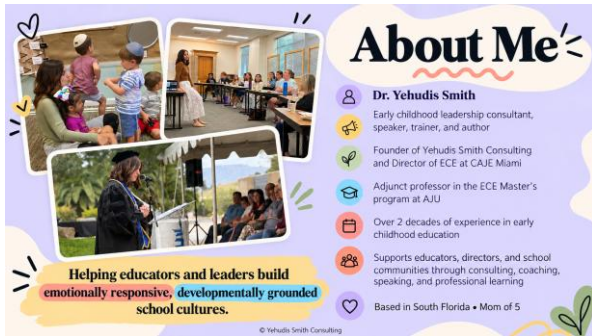
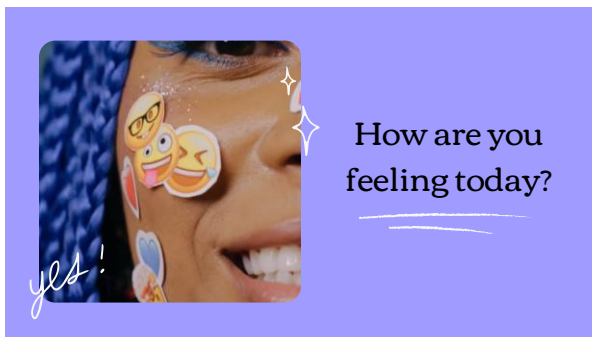








Need help? Check the examples below
to help you identify your current emotion.

ANNOYED	FOND	LIVELY	SKITTISH
✓ ANXIOUS	FRIENDLY	✗ LONELY	SULLEN
CHEERFUL	GLAD	MISTREATED	THOUGHTFUL
CHERISHING	HELPLESS	MORTIFIED	THRILLED
DEFEATED	★ HOPEFUL	OSTRACIZED	UNCOMFORTABLE
DEFENSIVE	INCOMPLETE	OUTRAGED	○ UNSURE
DISTRACTED	INFERIOR	REGRETFUL	WORRIED
ECSTATIC	INTIMIDATED	REJECTED	WITHDRAWN

Goals & Objectives

Today we will explore...

See behavior through a new, communication-centered lens

Understand the role of the nervous system in children's actions and reactions

Use emotionally responsive strategies to support regulation

Strengthen your own regulation so you can build a calm, connected classroom culture

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We're not here to fix children.
We're here to see them
differently.

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Behavior is Communication

Children express: Needs, stress, emotions, skill gaps, sensory overload, relationship bids

Behavior is not the problem—it's the message **beneath the problem.**



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The Game-Changing **Mindset Shift**

When we shift from

"How do I stop this behavior?" to "What is this behavior communicating?"

something profound happens...

...Our frustration decreases

...Our empathy increases

...Our strategies become more targeted

...Our responses become calmer, warmer, and more effective

Children feel seen and safe—and behavior improves naturally

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Poll

When challenging behavior happens, what is your **first instinct** most often?

A. Stop it quickly B. Explain or reason C. Give a consequence

D. Figure out what's underneath E. It depends.

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Behavior isn't the child trying to
give us a hard time.

It's the child **having a hard time.**

And their behavior is the best
way they know to show us.

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Traditional "Behavior Management" Often Falls Short

A child who is overwhelmed **can't access logic.**

A child who is dysregulated **can't follow directions.**

A child whose sensory system is flooded **can't be flexible.**

A child without certain skills **can't suddenly use them under stress.**



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Traditional "Behavior Management" Often Falls Short

Traditional behavior tools work only when the
child is **calm and regulated.**

But the exact moments we need them are the
moments when the child's **nervous system is
least able to respond to consequences.**

That's why behavior management often fails:

We're trying to teach skills to a brain that is **not
available for learning.**



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"Children do well when they can." -Ross Greene

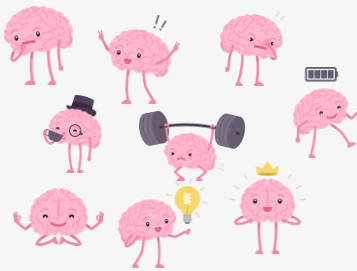
If they're not doing well, **something is getting in the way:**

- Skill gaps
- Sensory overwhelm
- Emotional overload
- Developmental immaturity
- Unmet needs
- Stress or trauma



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Little Brains Walking Around



Young children are:

- Developing nervous systems
- Under construction neurologically
- Highly sensory beings
- Emotion-first, logic-later learners

They are **not** miniature adults.

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A Dysregulated Child CANNOT

...Use words

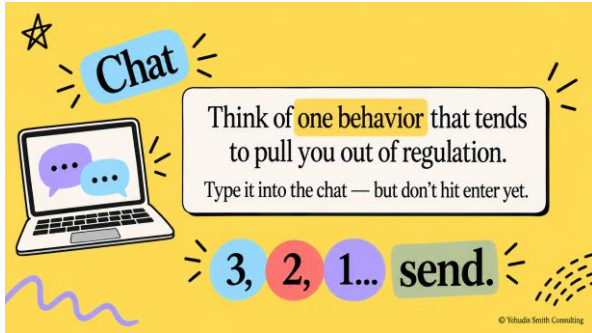
- ...Follow directions
- ...Accept limits
- ...Control impulses
- ...Delay gratification
- ...Stay flexible
- ...Resolve conflict

Not because they **won't**...
...because they **can't**.



Regulate → Relate → Reason

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When a child is overwhelmed, scared, confused, or overstimulated, their nervous system looks for an external anchor.

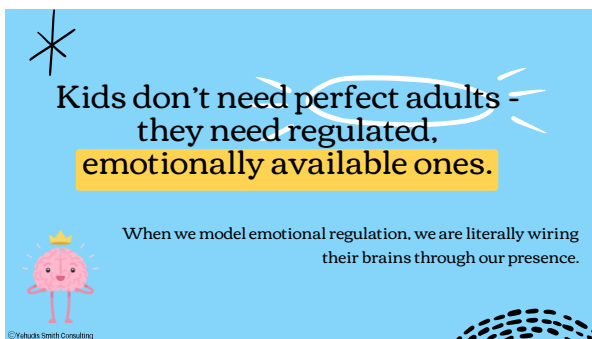
Children borrow:

- our calm
- our breath
- our tone
- our posture
- our steadiness
- our energy

If we're dysregulated, they absorb that.
If we're grounded, they settle into that.
If we're present, they feel safe.

This is why **you** matter so much.

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Why is Connection Important?



- Regulates the nervous system
- Creates emotional safety
- Builds trust
- Opens the brain to learning and listening
- Reduces power struggles

Connection is the foundation for all behavior support.

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Connection Myth-Busting

Connection is not **soft**.
Connection is not **"giving in."**
Connection is **neurological safety**.

You can't reason with a child who doesn't feel safe.

Connection creates the conditions for cooperation.

Only then teaching and limit-setting become possible.

Connection ≠ Permissiveness

Connection means:

- Warmth + boundaries
- Empathy + structure
- Presence + limits

We can be firm and kind at the same time.

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Poll

A child is screaming because another child took a toy. She pushes the child and grabs it back.

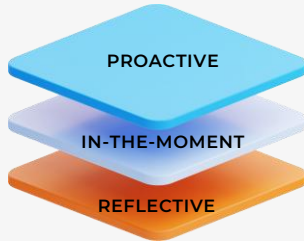
What should happen FIRST?

- A. Explain why pushing is not okay.
- B. Ask her to apologize.
- C. Help her regulate.
- D. Practice what she can do next time.

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3 Layers of Emotionally Responsive Support

Support happens before, during, and after the challenging moment.



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Proactive Strategies [before the behavior happens]



Predictable routines

Children feel safer when the flow of the day is consistent.

Visual Schedules and Cues

Visuals help children understand what's happening now and what's coming next.

Transition Rituals

Songs, short scripts, breathing moments, or sensory cues (like dimming lights)

Sensory Supports

Many behaviors stem from sensory needs—movement, deep pressure, noise levels, or tactile stimulation.

Priming Language

Letting children know what's coming next can prevent meltdowns.

Warm Greetings

Greeting rituals - eye contact, a warm hello, a high-five choice board - help children feel seen and safe from the start.

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In-the-Moment Strategies [during dysregulation]



Soften Your Face & Get Low

A gentle face and lowering your body communicates: "I'm not a threat. I'm with you."

Slow Your Breath

Your breath is contagious. When you slow it, the child's nervous system begins to mirror yours.

Validate the Feeling

Validating the emotion does not mean agreeing with the behavior. This builds emotional literacy and reduces shame.

Hold the Boundary

Boundaries + warmth = safety

Use Fewer Words

When a child is overwhelmed, language becomes noise. Less is more. Pick one phrase and stick with it.

Co-Regulate

Stay close, breathe together, offer grounding. "Let's take a breath. I'm right here."

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Reflective Strategies [After the Behavior]



After the child has returned to calm, we enter the reflective stage...

This is where the learning happens!

Reconnect Rituals

- A smile
- A hug
- A quiet sit-together

This signals:
"We're okay. I'm here. We're still connected."

Teach Replacement Skill

- Asking for help
- Using words
- Taking a break
- Negotiating
- Self-calming strategies
- Waiting strategies

Collaborative Problem-Solving

A brief, simple dialogue:

- What happened?
- What were you feeling?
- What can we try next time?

This develops self-awareness and responsibility.

Redo Moments

Inviting a child to try the behavior again - when regulated - teaches skills without shame.
"Let's practice asking for that toy again."

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Understanding Triggers

Certain child behaviors activate us more than others - not because of the behavior itself, but because of **what it touches inside us.**

Triggers often reveal:

- Our unmet needs (ex: control, order, respect, quiet)
- Childhood messages or lived experiences
- Deeply held values or expectations about "how children should behave"
- Moments where we feel powerless or judged

Triggers are not flaws - they are teachers.



Self-Regulation

A regulated adult becomes a **regulating force** for every child in the room.

Self-regulation means:

- Staying steady, warm, and present - even when children are not
- Responding with intention instead of impulse
- Modeling healthy emotional expression
- Using tools to regulate your body, breath, mind, and energy



In-the-Moment Self-Regulation Tools ☆

- 1 • **Box Breathing:** 4-4-4-4 rhythm
- 2 • **Grounding (5-4-3-2-1):** Engage the senses
- 3 • **Self-Talk:** "I can be the calm."
- 4 • **Micro-Reset:** Turn, inhale, exhale slowly
- 5 • **Soften the Body:** Drop shoulders + unclench jaw
- 6 • **Extend the Exhale:** Longer exhale = calms nervous system

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Responsiveness = intentionality + connection

You feel like you're constantly putting out fires.

It's full of urgency, tension, and control.

Reactive Classroom

Doesn't mean the classroom is quiet or perfect. But it does mean the emotional climate is steady.

Responsiveness creates safety.
Safety creates regulation.
Regulation creates cooperation.

Responsive Classroom

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Where Children Thrive, They Feel...



Safe: Not just physically—but emotionally.
"I'm safe with you when I'm upset."

Seen: "I feel understood. You get me."

Supported: "I don't have to figure this out alone."

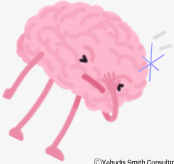
Significant: Not just physically—but emotionally.
"I'm safe with you when I'm upset."

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Think about your classroom...

What **behaviors** feel the most *draining* right now?

- ...transitions
- ...aggression
- ...refusal
- ...running away
- ...whining/yelling
- ...something else?



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Choose **ONE** behavior you encounter often.
Based on today, what is **one thing** you might do differently?

Examples:

- "Use fewer words."
- "Prep transitions."
- "Get lower."
- "Regulate myself first."

Type your answer in the chat.

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When we change the way we see children,
children change the way they show up.

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Let's stay connected

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