

Chapter and Case Study Activities

Chapter 3: Effective Emotion Regulation: Managing Emotions for Improved Learning and Teaching

In this chapter, we focused on how educators' abilities to regulate their emotions influences teaching and learning; we also reviewed strategies to support emotion regulation. We learned how observing, documenting, and reflecting on one's emotional responses, along with physical signs of stress and negative thoughts can help educators regulate their emotions. Use the following case study from Chapter 3, along with the questions below, to reflect on how concepts and key takeaways from the chapter apply to your professional work and setting.

Jada, a second-year teacher, arrives at the Explorations Early Learning Center already tired. She was up late the night before with her toddler, trying to soothe him through his struggles with asthma. When Jada arrives, the room is already bustling with children—Maria, her co-teacher, was first to get there this morning. As Jada hangs up her coat, she recognizes an above-normal level of commotion in the room. Maria is trying her best to console two children who are already crying, and the sink in the corner seems to be clogged again and perhaps about to overflow. Jada notices that breakfast still needs to be put out—her first move should be to remedy that situation, however she has one more thing to do to get ready to lead circle time.

Jada's body begins to feel tense, her heart starts to beat a little faster, and she realizes she is beginning to feel overwhelmed. "This is going to be a hard day," she thinks to herself while also realizing only she can turn it around. As she tries to think of how to best relieve the mounting tension, she hears a loud crash. Jada turns to see that Anthony, a student who always seems to know how to push her buttons, has knocked down the castle Peter was working so hard to build. To make things worse, Anthony doesn't appear remorseful; Jada feels her resolve to stay calm and focused begin to dwindle. Thinking about her next steps to de-escalate the situation, Jada approaches Anthony. This is just as he is swinging a block over his head, narrowly missing another child. "NO!" Jada yells, startling the children around her and causing one little girl to burst into tears.

Questions for Leaders to Consider

If you walked into this classroom and saw Jada yelling at Anthony, what would you think? How would you respond to the situation? What would you say to Jada? What would help you stay calm in this moment?

How can you positively influence this classroom in your role as a leader? What knowledge, systems, or strategies does Jada need from you to cope with these types of situations? What decisions could you make at the leadership-level to bring positive change to her classroom, and other classrooms like it in your setting?

Resources for Implementation

The Early Education Leader's Guide

Case Questions for Leaders to Use in Professional Learning Discussions

- Why does Jada get so frustrated with Anthony? What events influenced Jada's response to Anthony? What circumstances or behavior create this type of reaction for you?
- In this chapter, we read, "early educators' emotional responses directly reflect how the children interact with one another, particularly with regard to how the more vulnerable children are treated." In this situation is Anthony a "vulnerable child"? Why or why not? How does Jada's response model to children how to treat Anthony? When have you seen this in your own experience?
- This chapter explains how educators can observe, document, and reflect to develop awareness and understanding of their emotions. When is the best time for Jada to begin this process? What strategies described in the book would be particularly helpful for Jada? What strategies would be helpful for you?
- How can Jada recover from this situation? What does she need to do immediately to manage her emotions and address the physical signs of stress? After regaining control, what can Jada say or do to acknowledge the situation and create a teaching moment from this experience?
- We notice Jada begins to feel overwhelmed and thinks, "This is going to be a hard day." Think of a time you were in a similar situation as Jada- overwhelmed and managing a stressful situation. What was on your mind? How did that influence your perspectives and experience that day?
- We read how our thoughts are often inaccurate (i.e. I'm a terrible teacher!) or distorted (i.e. These children never clean up!) when dealing with stressful situations. When do you experience inaccurate or distorted thoughts? How do you challenge those thoughts? What tools from this chapter might help you?

Self-Study Activity

This discussion highlighted strategies to manage and build awareness of emotion. As we saw in the case example, this is particularly important in stressful situations, especially when someone "pushes buttons."

- What scenarios in your job "push your buttons"?
- Which of these strategies- observe, document, and reflect or addressing physical signs of stress and negative thoughts- could help you manage your reaction when someone pushes your buttons?
- Write down how you plan to use this strategy in a stressful situation.