

# Visual Supports for Infants and Toddlers

## Emotion Regulation



Visual supports, such as objects, photos, or drawings, add visual information to a learning environment to help children know what to do and how to interact during routines and activities. Visual supports have many different uses and can support children with a variety of learning characteristics.

This special collection of visual supports was designed with **young children between the ages of 16 to 36 months in mind**. The visuals are simple and concrete to match the developmental needs of young children who are just beginning to develop symbolic thought. Each visual support has a guide with information to help determine a child's need for support and what visual cues will be most useful.

Below find the information needed to create and use **emotion regulation** visuals to help infants and toddlers understand how they can regulate their emotions.

### What?

These visual supports show what children can do to help themselves calm down and regulate their emotions. Use these photos to teach very young children ways to manage their feelings or as visual reminders when a child is having big feelings and needs more support to find a way to calm down.

### Why?

Teaching young children many ways to regulate their emotions helps them learn to cope successfully with intense feelings when they feel frustrated, sad, worried, happy, excited, or angry.

You can use emotion regulation pictures to:

- Teach all children coping strategies to manage strong emotions.
- Help a child who needs extra support when they have a difficult time finding a way to calm down.

## How?

1. **Make emotion regulation visual supports.**
2. **Decide how and when you'd like to use the visuals.** Will you use the visuals with the entire group of children? Will you use the visuals for an individual child?
3. **Select which visuals you want to use for the group and/or for an individual child.** Which visuals represent the emotion regulation strategies you want children to use in your environment?

### Tips:

- Engage with families to learn about emotion regulation expectations in their community. Make more visuals as needed.
  - Translate the rules into the languages spoken by the children in your learning environment or make separate visuals for each language
4. **Select the format of the visual support you will use.** These visual supports, which are generic photos of adults and children using emotion regulation strategies and common items used for regulation, will meet the needs of many older toddlers. But to be most effective, visual supports should match the developmental needs of the children in your environment.

For example, some children may benefit from a more concrete visual, such as a real object used for regulation, a photo of an actual object from their environment, or a photo of the children using the regulation strategies themselves.

There are a range of visual support formats, ranging from most concrete to most abstract, including:

- Real object
- Miniature versions of object
- Photograph of real object
- Photograph of non-identical object
- Drawing
- Printed words

**Tip:** If a visual is too abstract and the child doesn't understand the relationship between the symbol and the item or activity, it won't be successful in supporting their participation, independence, or behavior.

5. **Print the visuals.**
  - Use them as a portable "key ring" visual support.
    - Cut out individual photos and laminate them.
    - Punch a hole in the photos and put them on a ring so you can carry them easily with you to use as needed throughout the day.
  - Use them as a chart.
    - Print the entire visual support grid and laminate or place in a sheet protector.
    - Post the chart at children's eye level in different areas of the environment where children interact with one another. Make sure the chart is easy to see and access.

6. **Use emotion regulation visual supports.** Introduce the visuals to children throughout the day to teach emotion regulation strategies. Describe the emotion regulation visuals — label objects in the visuals, such as bubbles or a lovey, model the regulation strategies, and have children practice them.

**Tips:**

- Talk about emotion regulation and practice the strategies when children are feeling calm. It will be easier for them to engage and use the strategies. Don't wait until children are having a big feelings to introduce the strategies and visuals.
- Introduce each regulation strategy separately so children don't become overwhelmed with learning too many strategies at once.
- Ask children with language or communication delays to repeat the strategy or point to the corresponding visual to make sure they understand. Ask the child, "Which picture says, 'Blow bubbles?'"
  - Show children where they can find the visuals and objects when they need them.
- Create a special "calm down spot" or "quiet area" where children can go to take a break and use the strategies when they have big feelings.
  - Throughout the day, notice when there might be an opportunity for a child to use a regulation strategy and show them the visual. Explain, "It looks like you're feeling sad. Should we go get your lovey?" or "You're feeling frustrated. Let's go blow some bubbles."
- Be ready to give more support as needed to an individual child. For example, show a child the emotion regulation visual supports before times when they are likely to get dysregulated. Model the strategies and help the child use them. Give intentional positive feedback when the child uses the strategy and calms down.
- For visual supports to be most useful to infants and toddlers, they should be used consistently each day.



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# Emotion Regulation

Blow Bubbles



Bubbles



Blow Bubbles



Security Blanket



Lovey



Security Blanket



# Emotion Regulation

Pacifier



Cozy Area



Cozy Area



Deep Breaths



Deep Breaths



Deep Breaths



# Emotion Regulation

Deep Breaths



Read a Book



Snuggle with Someone



Hug



Hug or Snuggle



Ask for Help



# Emotion Regulation

Ask for Help



Dance



Yoga



Move



Stretch

