

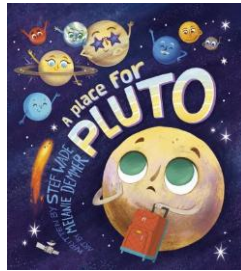


My Little Library

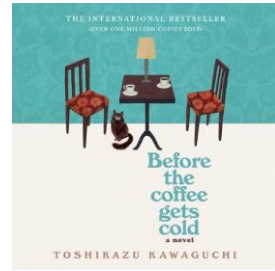
On My Nightstand




Just Closed



On My Shelf



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Sensing the Possibilities

Jenne Amell
February 26, 2026

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anatomy









8 senses



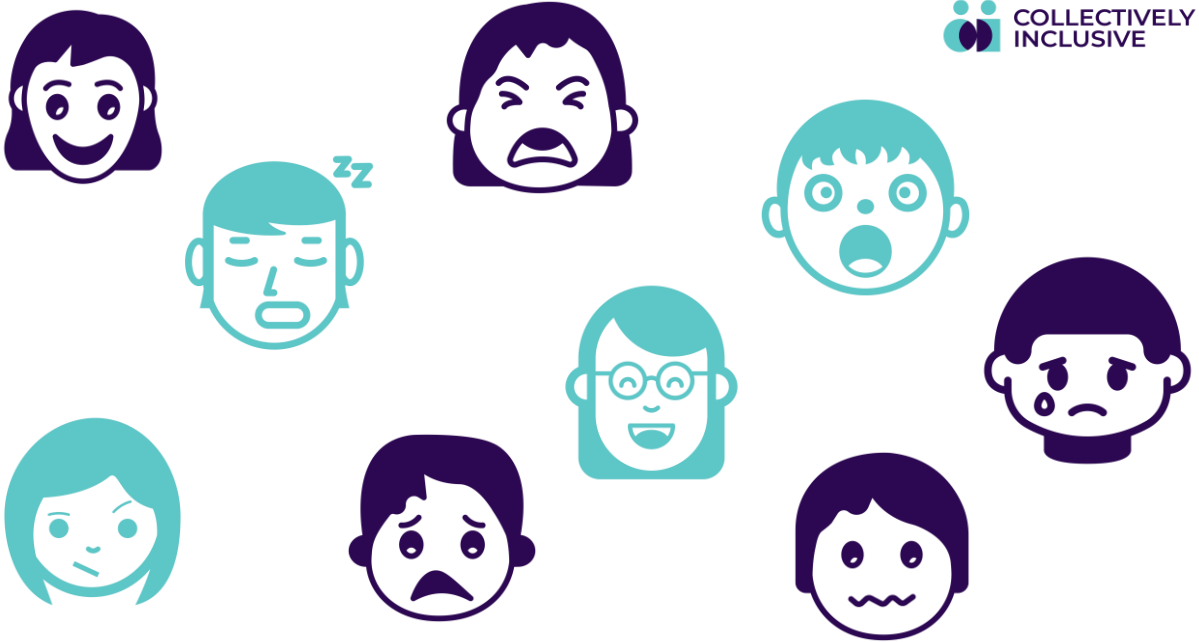
tips & tools

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Learning Objectives

-  1. Differentiate the upstairs and downstairs brain and explain how stress affects learning, behaviour, and engagement in libraries.
-  2. Identify signs of regulation and dysregulation.
-  3. Practice 3 self-regulation strategies and identify when to use them in a library context.
-  4. Describe co-regulation in libraries and name 2 ways staff or environments can support it.
-  5. Connect the 8 senses to practical regulation strategies suitable for library spaces.
-  6. Evaluate your library through a regulation lens by identifying one current strength and one new opportunity.

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About the brain

Upstairs brain – cortex

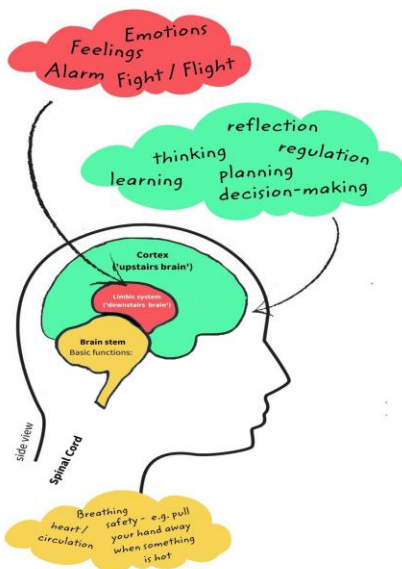
Thinking brain

- Library office
 - Planning

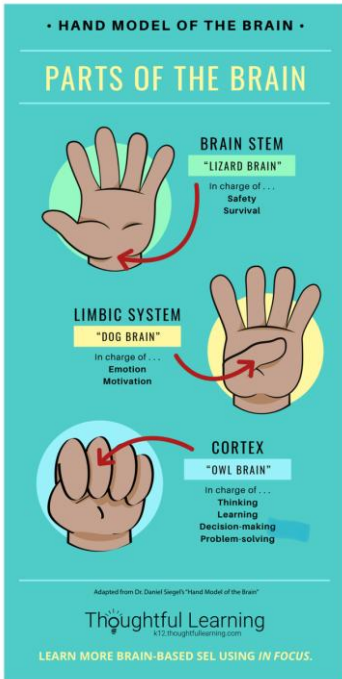
Downstairs brain – limbic system & brain stem

Reactive brain

- Library IT system
 - Runs automatically in the background



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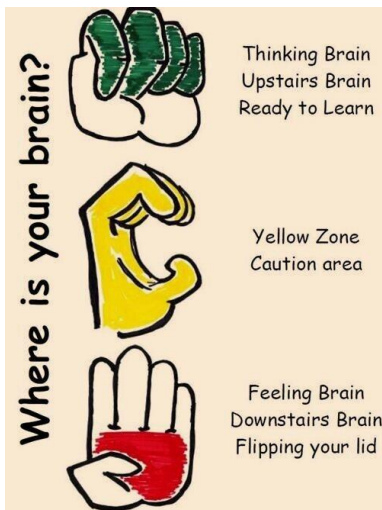


"Flipping our lid"



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Zones of Regulation

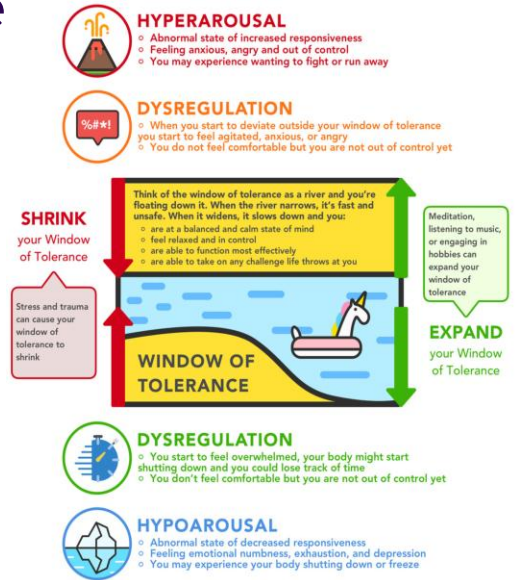


<p>Blue Zone</p> <p>Sad Bored Tired Sick</p>	<p>Green Zone</p> <p>Happy Focused Calm Proud</p>	<p>Yellow Zone</p> <p>Worried Frustrated Silly Excited</p>	<p>Red Zone</p> <p>overjoyed/Elated Panicked Angry Terrified</p>

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Window of Tolerance

- Hyperarousal
- Hypoarousal
- Dysregulation
- Shrink window
- Expand window



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Autism Level Up!

Energy Needed (Match for the Activity)	My Energy (Where I Am)
	Maxed Out / Frenzied
	Amped Up / Fidgety
	Single Stream / Flowing
	Settled / Calm
	Sleepy / Still
	Asleep

- Energy matches
- Up-regulating
- Down-regulating
- Individual energy profiles

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Co-Regulation

- Creating calm
- Building trust
- Establishing connection
- Promoting regulation



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Self-Regulation

- Balance
- Personal
- Notice
- Respond



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Grounding the Senses

- 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 

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Practice of Sharing



think



share

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SENSES

Opportunity to access and explore

Foster authentic participation, being, and belonging

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Tactile (Touch)



Receptors in the skin detect pressure, temperature, pain



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Auditory (Hearing)



Receptors in the ears detect sound waves



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Gustatory (Taste)

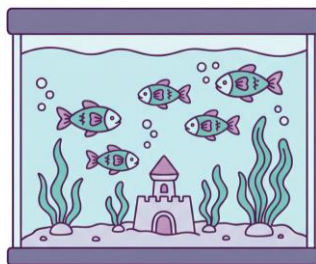
Receptors in the tongue detect flavours



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Visual (Sight)

Receptors in the eyes detect light, colour, spatial orientation



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Olfactory (Smell)

Receptors in the nose detect chemicals in the air



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Proprioception (Body Awareness)

Receptors in muscles and joints detect body position & movement awareness



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Vestibular (Balance & Movement)

Receptors in the ear detect spatial orientation & contribute to balance & movement



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Interoception (Internal Sensations)

Receptors in the internal organs detect hunger/fullness, thirst, temperature, bladder fullness



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Integration

- 👤 Dedicated
- 👤 Flexible and adjustable options
- 👤 Consistent availability
- 👤 Universally accessible
- 👤 Integrated

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Regulation Resources



Regulation Inclusive Environment and Programming Checklist

Tactile	Gustatory	Visual	Proprioception
Washable/Wipeable Fidgets □ Articulate (slugs) □ Tangle/Twist □ Stretch (tubes) □ Pops (t, tea pool) □ Resistive (gel/foam/dough) □ Magnetic □ Infinite/rotate □ Spin □ Squash (mochi, puff ball) □ Snap □ Wiggle (fluid/bead filled) Discrete Fidgets □ Texture (calm, velcro, ring) □ Mobile (mesh marble) □ Smooth (focus stone) □ Keychain Multi-surface Fidgets □ Kneadable eraser □ Spinner pen □ Jewelry (pops, spins, twists) □ Toy (Go Jit Zu) □ Interactive smart lighting	□ Flavour □ Salty □ Sour □ Tangy □ Spicy □ Umami □ Bitter □ Minty □ Sensation □ Temperature □ Carbonate □ Texture (crunch, soft, chewy, hard)	□ Contrast □ Fluorescent light covers □ Red lighting □ Signage and Posters □ Flexible lighting (dimmable, colour changing) □ Light table □ Interactive lighting □ Text □ Projector light display (fields) □ Bubble tube □ Disco ball Olfactory □ Scents (lavender, vanilla, chamomile) □ Scratch and sniff stickers/books □ Scented things (face bags, play dough, sensory bin items, clothing collar/sleeve, leaves, flowers) □ Familiar scents (plushy, blanket) □ Nature smells (leaves, flowers, plants) □ Scent-free zone	□ Resistance & Deep Pressure □ Weighted ball, lap animal □ Bean bags □ Massager □ Resistive putty & dough □ Resistive bands □ Chewing gum □ Blowing bubbles □ Body Sock □ Floor seating □ Movement □ Climbing structure □ Floor Mat □ Plasma car □ Scooter board □ Tunnel □ Pylons □ Mirror □ Obstacle courses □ Parachute □ Movement scarves

Key Questions

- Are the items or regulation spaces accessible for those who want or need to use them?
- How do people find out about the options available to them?
- Are there ways for people to access regulating environments and items which do not require them to interact with others, if they need to?

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Regulation Inclusive Rubric

Sense	Not Inclusive 1	Minimally Inclusive 2	Moderately Inclusive 3	Highly Inclusive 4
Tactile	No flexibility/adjustability, no tactile options, no availability, no accessibility.	Flexible/adjustable with significant effort, limited tactile options (choice) with limited availability, accessible to some.	Flexible/adjustable with effort, multiple tactile options (choice) that are occasionally available, accessible to most.	Dedicated, flexible/adjustable, abundant tactile options (choice) that are consistently available, universally accessible, and integrated into the space and programming.
Auditory	No flexibility/adjustability, no auditory options, no availability, no accessibility.	Flexible/adjustable with significant effort, limited auditory options (choice) with limited availability, accessible to some.	Flexible/adjustable with effort, multiple auditory options (choice) that are occasionally available, accessible to most.	Dedicated, flexible/adjustable, abundant auditory options (choice) that are consistently available, universally accessible, and integrated into the space and programming.
Gustatory	No flexibility/adjustability, no gustatory options, no availability, no accessibility.	Flexible/adjustable with significant effort, limited gustatory options (choice) with limited availability, accessible to some.	Flexible/adjustable with effort, multiple gustatory options (choice) that are occasionally available, accessible to most.	Dedicated, flexible/adjustable, abundant gustatory options (choice) that are consistently available, universally accessible, and integrated into the space and programming.
Visual	No flexibility/adjustability, no VISUAL options, no availability, no accessibility.	Flexible/adjustable with significant effort, limited VISUAL options (choice) with limited availability, accessible to some.	Flexible/adjustable with effort, multiple VISUAL options (choice) that are occasionally available, accessible to most.	Dedicated, flexible/adjustable, abundant VISUAL options (choice) that are consistently available, universally accessible, and integrated into the space and programming.

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SENSING THE POSSIBILITIES
at the library

Tactile

Auditory

Gustatory

Visual

Olfactory

Proprioception

Vestibular

Interoception

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BUILDING A REGULATION BIN
at the library

Why are regulation bins important?

- Engage senses & stimulate nervous system
- Promote regulation through self exploration
- Introduce foundational cognitive skills
- Build attention through engagement
- Give opportunity for pretend play
- Strengthen neural pathways
- Reinforce learning through play
- Promote autonomy and sense of control
- Learn and grow through play

Consider clear bins to...

- Provide visual clarity to reduce uncertainty and promote nervous system safety through predictability

It's more than just a bin

- Match the sensory items with exhibits, themes, celebrations, and seasonal changes
- Search and Find items
 - That are found in a displayed book
 - That are clues to explore the library space
 - To assemble a puzzle or build a structure
 - By rolling a dice

What about the MESS...

- Dry rice/beans/sand are easiest to vacuum
- Plastic/wooden items are wipeable/washable
- Low cost/life span: cotton balls, pompoms, shredded paper, craft feathers, pipe cleaners

A note about safety

- ▲ Post guidelines for users: If the object fits inside a toilet paper roll, it is too small for unsupervised play under 3 years old
- ▲ Avoid breakable and round/hard items

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Regulation Resources

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Closing

Imagine a library ...

That fosters the magic of authentic being, engagement, and belonging through nervous system regulation

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Building your Regulation Library

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Learning Resources

- [Kelly Mahler OT – Interoception](#)
- [Laura Petix OT – Sensory Detective](#)
- [Daniel Siegel – Hand Model](#)
- [Play Spark](#)
- [Andy Putt SLP](#)
- [Meg Ferrel OT](#)
- [Matt Lowry Psychology](#)

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References

- Slide 6: About the brain
 - <https://www.startnowcornwall.org.uk/feeling-and-emotions/brain-science/>
- Slide 7: Flipping our lid
 - https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/blogpost/connect-sel-brain?srsId=AfmBOophSQkjZymCW0V0Vd5JJYAMLVCKJ02F_99j12_r02YRXO9D0Zjn
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbBVCy5VpYs&list=PLIBkmQjYMLgqZNH5tc9FKg8ONt7iacUsz&index=3>
- Slide 8: Zones of Regulation
 - <https://www.thebehaviorhub.com/blog/2020/10/12/the-brain-in-the-palm-of-your-hand-dan-siegels-hand-model>
 - <https://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/media/1001858/Zones-of-Regulation.pdf>
- Slide 9: Window of Tolerance
 - <https://www.mindmypeelings.com/blog/window-of-tolerance>
- Slide 10: Autism Level Up
 - <https://www.autismlevelup.com/#tools>

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