

Regulation Detective checklist

*When behaviour is challenging, let's get curious
about what's happening beneath it.*

Use the questions below to slow down, gather the clues, and explore what might be happening beneath the behaviour. You can use them to better understand your own experience or to help you understand what a child or teen may be experiencing and what they might need.

If you're reflecting on someone else's behaviour, it can also be helpful to talk through the questions with other adults who were present.

STEP 1 - DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIOUR WITHOUT JUDGING IT

WHAT HAPPENED:

BEHAVIOUR:

- ☐ CRYING
- ☐ YELLING
- ☐ HITTING
- ☐ REFUSING
- ☐ RUNNING AWAY
- ☐ SHUTTING DOWN
- ☐ OTHER: _____

STEP 2 - WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE BEHAVIOUR?

- ☐ A DEMAND/INSTRUCTION WAS GIVEN
- ☐ AN ACTIVITY HAD TO STOP
- ☐ SOMEONE SAID NO
- ☐ THERE WAS A TRANSITION
- ☐ THE ENVIRONMENT WAS DISRUPTIVE
- ☐ THERE WAS A CONFLICT
- ☐ SOMETHING CHANGED
- ☐ SOMETHING BAD WAS ANTICIPATED
- ☐ SOMEONE ELSE WAS DYSREGULATED

EMOTIONS BEFORE:

WAS IT ALREADY A BAD DAY? WHY?

ADVANCE WARNING SIGNS:

EXPAND ON THE DETAILS AND RECORD IF ANYTHING SAID WAS A TRIGGER:

STEP 3 - WHAT MIGHT BE UNDERNEATH THE BEHAVIOUR?

GENERAL HEALTH

- ☐ HUNGRY OR THIRSTY
- ☐ TIRED
- ☐ PAIN SOMEWHERE

EMOTIONAL FACTORS

- ☐ FEELING OVERWHELMED
- ☐ DIFFICULT TO MANAGE FEELINGS
- ☐ NEEDING CONNECTION/SUPPORT
- ☐ FEELING MISUNDERSTOOD
- ☐ FEELING POWERLESS
- ☐ SOMETHING FELT UNFAIR, DISAPPOINTING, OR UPSETTING
- ☐ DIFFICULTY RECOGNIZING OWN FEELINGS OR NEEDS

SENSORY

- ☐ NOISY ENVIRONMENT
 - ☐ BOTHERSOME SMELLS
 - ☐ TOO MUCH VISUAL STIMULI
 - ☐ SOMETHING ELSE WAS BOTHERSOME THAT THE BRAIN HAD TO FILTER OUT:
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SITUATIONAL FACTORS

- ☐ FACING SOMETHING DIFFICULT
- ☐ COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTY
- ☐ TOO MANY DEMANDS AT ONCE
- ☐ NOT ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE
- ☐ LACKING A SKILL NEEDED TO HANDLE THE SITUATION
- ☐ ASKED TO DO SOMETHING REQUIRING A LOT OF EFFORT

STEP 4 - WHAT MIGHT BE NEEDED NEXT TIME?

BEFORE: PREVENT & PREPARE

- ☐ PROVIDE SENSORY SUPPORT
- ☐ PREP FOR TRANSITIONS/CHANGES
- ☐ BREAK TASKS INTO SMALLER STEPS
- ☐ OFFER CHOICES
- ☐ MAKE SURE BASIC NEEDS ARE MET
- ☐ PRACTICE SKILLS/RESPONSES WHEN EVERYONE IS CALM

DURING: SUPPORT & REGULATE

- ☐ PAUSE & REGULATE MYSELF FIRST
- ☐ REDUCE DEMANDS & GIVE MORE TIME
- ☐ ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS
- ☐ USE SIMPLE & FEWER WORDS
- ☐ USE A CALMING OR REGULATING STRATEGY WITH THE CHILD

AFTER: REFLECT & LEARN

- ☐ WHAT HELPED: _____
- ☐ WHAT DIDN'T HELP: _____
- ☐ WHAT SKILL COULD WE PRACTICE: _____
- ☐ WHAT CAN WE TRY DIFFERENTLY: _____

What more support? Subscribe to my YouTube channel @EmpokoroParenting or join my mailing list for practical ideas to build regulation and connection.