



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 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/BITING
- ☐ 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 IN PARTICULAR WAS A TRIGGER:

STEP 3 - WHAT MIGHT BE UNDERNEATH THE BEHAVIOUR?

GENERAL HEALTH

- ☐ HUNGRY OR THIRSTY
- ☐ TIRED
- ☐ PAIN SOMEWHERE
- ☐ FEELING SICK
- ☐ NEEDS MOVEMENT

SENSORY

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

EMOTIONAL FACTORS

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

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

YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. LOOK FOR
CLUES, TRY SOMETHING, AND SEE WHAT YOU LEARN.

STEP 4 - RESPOND & LEARN

IN THE MOMENT

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD'S REGULATION?

Regulate yourself • Connect • Use fewer words • Reduce stimulation • Offer space or closeness • Hold the boundary

NEXT TIME

WHAT COULD I DO BEFOREHAND TO MAKE THIS EASIER?

*Prepare for transitions • Meet physical needs • Adjust the environment • Offer choices • Allow more time •
Practise skills when calm*

AFTERWARD

WHAT DID I LEARN?

What helped? What didn't? What might I try differently next time?

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