

A Quick Guide to **Self-Awareness and Regulation Practices**

Self-awareness involves understanding your emotions, thoughts, and values, and recognizing how they influence your actions. Afterschool programs provide an excellent opportunity for young people to build the skills necessary for both self-awareness and self-regulation.

- Build a vocabulary around emotions (naming and intensity)
- Build body awareness
- Acknowledge emotions without judgement
- Start with safety and belonging
- Build in intentional activities and reflection around self-awareness
- Practice gratitude for yourself and others

Reflection

What do you observe about yourself when you are overwhelmed by intense emotions or feeling out of balance? Which strategies do you find effective during those moments? Who provides you with support during those times?

When do you notice dysregulated or disruptive behaviors most in your program?

What activities or resources does your program offer that can be utilized to enhance self-awareness and regulation practices?

What practices are familiar to your participants? Which strategies are helpful, and which ones pose more of a challenge?

How can programming address the diverse needs of both staff and participants?

Who in your workplace or community has expertise in practices that are unfamiliar to you?

Reflecting and Modeling

Use these sample questions to help young people connect activities with their physical and emotional experiences. One or two prompts are enough to build reflection and self-awareness. You can also model self-talk with sample phrases, showing how to notice, name, and respond to feelings and sensations to develop an inner dialogue for self-regulation.

Example Questions

Example Self-Talk

Breathwork



- What do you notice in your body right now?
- Do you feel any difference in your heart rate or your muscles compared to before we started?
- Where in your body do you feel calmer or more relaxed?
- Did your thoughts slow down, speed up, or stay the same?

- I'm noticing my heart is beating a little faster, so I'm going to take a few deep breaths with you.
- I feel my shoulders are tense. Let's roll them back and notice how that feels.
- I'm noticing my thoughts are racing, so I'm going to focus on my breathing for a moment.
- I feel calmer after taking a few slow breaths. How does your body feel now?

Your 5 senses



- What stood out to you most—something you saw, touched, heard, smelled?
- How did paying attention to your surroundings make you feel inside?
- Did focusing on your senses change your emotions in any way?

- I hear the birds outside—listening to them helps me feel more present.
- I notice the chair under me and the floor beneath my feet. That helps me feel grounded.
- I'm smelling my coffee (or a candle) and it's helping me slow down.

Artistic expression



- What feelings came up for you while you were creating/listening/writing?
- Did anything surprise you about what you noticed in yourself?
- How does your body feel now compared to before we started?
- If this activity were a color or sound, what would it be for you?

- I'm feeling frustrated, so I'm going to write down what's on my mind.
- This song makes me feel calm—I notice my body relaxing as I listen.
- I feel proud of what I created, even if it's not perfect. How do you feel about yours?
- I'm noticing excitement as I draw—my hands feel energized!

Physical movement



- How does your body feel after moving—energized, calm, tired, strong?
- What emotions showed up while you were stretching/dancing/walking?
- Do you notice any change in your breathing or mood?

- I'm feeling a little low energy, so I'm going to stretch and notice how my body feels afterward.
- I feel tense, so I'm going to walk around for a few minutes and see if that helps.
- This music is upbeat, and it's helping me feel more energized.
- After moving my body, I notice my mind feels clearer and calmer.

General awareness



- I'm noticing how I feel right now—my body and my thoughts. Naming it helps me make a choice about what to do next.
- I'm feeling nervous about this activity, so I'm going to pause, breathe, and remind myself it's okay.
- I'm going to try one of the strategies we practiced and notice how it affects me.