

10 Emotionally-regulating Ways to Start the Day



1. Warm, Individual Greetings

Greet each child with eye contact, their name, and a choice of connection (hug, high-five, wave). This builds felt safety and strengthens attachment.

2. Emotion Check-In

Use simple visuals (happy/sad/tired faces) to help young children identify their emotions. Co-regulate by validating their feelings: "I see you're feeling sad. I'm here with you."

3. Soft Start with Comfort Objects

Allow children to hold a familiar toy, blanket, or fidget item as they transition into the day. Providing sensory grounding helps with emotional regulation.

4. Gentle Movement

Engage in simple, rhythmic movements like rocking, stretching, or bouncing to support nervous system regulation and readiness to engage.

5. Calming Music or Humming

Play soft, familiar songs or hum gently to create a regulating auditory environment and reduce sensory overwhelm.

6. Predictable Morning Song

Sing the same "Good Morning" song daily to support co-regulation and provide a predictable rhythm for transitioning into the day.

7. Deep Breathing Together

Model simple, intentional breathing strategies: "Let's smell the flower... now blow out the candle." This supports self-regulation skill-building through co-regulation.

8. Cozy Storytime or Lap Sit

Read a short board book in a cozy space, offering gentle touch (pat on the back, holding a hand) for those needing extra sensory connection to regulate.

9. Kindness Connection

Guide simple social interactions like handing a toy to a friend or giving a "gentle touch." Strengthening social-emotional reciprocity builds connection and emotional resilience.

10. Teacher Self-Regulation Check

Before the day begins, take a moment to breathe, set an intention, and center yourself. Your regulated presence supports the co-regulation needs of your young children.

PEDALS TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

By prioritizing emotional safety, predictability, connection, and co-regulation, we create a strong foundation for secure, engaged learning for children.

Co-regulation is especially important for young children because they are still learning how to manage and understand their emotions. At this stage, young children don't yet have the tools or brain development to regulate their emotions independently. When adults or caregivers help guide them through strong feelings—like frustration, anger, or fear—they feel supported and secure. This helps young children learn how to calm themselves over time. Through co-regulation, young children begin to understand the connection between their feelings and actions, which is crucial for their emotional and social development. It also builds trust in their caregivers, helping young children feel safe enough to explore the world around them, try new things, and engage with others. This early support sets the foundation for healthy emotional growth, empathy, and positive relationships in the future.

