

Down-regulate

Down-regulating means giving ourselves sensory input that brings our arousal level down into our **Just Right State** so that we are able to attend to, concentrate on and perform the tasks we want to. When we down-regulate, we give ourselves sensory input and do activities that bring our arousal level down into our Just Right State so that we can do the things we want to do. For example, if I am having computer difficulties and I can't make the computer do what I want it to, I start to feel hot and sweaty and my head begins to itch. These sensory signals tell me I am becoming stressed and need to take action to down-regulate myself – I leave my desk and go out into the garden, take some big, deep breaths and throw a stick for the dog for a few minutes. After this down-regulating routine, I am back in my Just Right State and ready to go back to my desk to try to solve my computing problem. A good tip is to remember that *physical exertion down-regulates*. Similarly, if I am having a discussion with a colleague about politics and we start to disagree with each other or I feel I have been misunderstood, I can sense myself becoming activated and realise that I have to do something to down-regulate myself. I might squeeze one hand in the other, look away, count to ten in my mind and take some deep breaths, in through my nose and out through my mouth. This down-regulates me and allows me to continue the discussion without it escalating into an argument. In both examples, the sensory experience of frustration acts as a cue to self-regulate, to take action that will down-regulate

me. Although most of us know what we need to do to down-regulate ourselves so that we can do the things we want to do, children with additional learning needs may find it difficult to down-regulate themselves and get into the Just Right State. As a result, these children may spend some, much or all of their day in a state of distress and **dysregulation**. They are likely to experience reduced distress and dysregulation over the course of their day if their caregivers are able to support them by means of **co-regulation**.