

Strengthening Young Children's Self Regulation Through Emotion Focused Practice

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Abstract

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) is central to children's wellbeing, learning and school readiness, yet early years practitioners frequently identify challenges in embedding self regulation and emotional literacy consistently across daily provision. This virtual presentation shares practice based evidence from the implementation of an Early Years PSED programme designed to strengthen children's emotional understanding, social skills, and capacity for self regulation within an EYFS setting.

The programme combined practitioner professional development with structured, play based classroom approaches, including storytelling, explicit teaching of emotional language, daily feelings check ins, small group interventions, and sensory regulation strategies. A strong emphasis was placed on reflective practice, consistent assessment, and the intentional integration of PSED opportunities across free flow provision. Parental engagement was embedded through workshops, stay and play sessions, and ongoing communication to promote continuity between home and school.

Impact evidence demonstrates improvements in children's emotional vocabulary, turn taking, empathy, conflict resolution, and independent regulation strategies. Quantitative tracking showed increased proportions of children meeting expected PSED outcomes, while qualitative observations highlighted greater confidence, problem solving, and peer support. Practitioners reported enhanced professional confidence, improved leadership and coaching skills, and deeper understanding of emotional development.

The presentation reflects on key enablers, challenges, and adaptations made throughout delivery and considers how a layered, whole community approach to PSED can be sustained and scaled. Practical strategies and transferable insights will be shared for early years educators seeking to strengthen inclusive, emotionally responsive practice in diverse contexts.

Keywords: Early Years; Social and Emotional Learning; Self Regulation; Emotional Literacy