

# SELF-REGULATION

## Topic 3: Managing Arousal

A third skill required for self-regulation is the capacity to manage arousal.

Most people are familiar with the idea that there is an optimal level of alertness or arousal for each task.

Clearly different kinds of arousal have different effects on self-regulation (eg, being highly aroused with anger will have different effects from being very excited). But there is also a quantitative element to the management of arousal, whereby too much or too little arousal of any kind will potentially compromise self-regulation. Someone who is insufficiently alert will fail to engage fully with the task; similarly somebody who is overly aroused may fail to settle to the task.

In ideal circumstances a child's level of arousal will be a response to the demands placed on the child by the task at hand. Of course, in the real world there are many other factors determining the child's level of arousal. In order to be successful the child must learn to keep their overall arousal within workable limits in spite of less than ideal internal and external influences.

On a given day factors may converge in one direction or another eg. a fight with a parent before coming to school, followed by some recess time flirting with a prospective boyfriend, and an extra cup of coffee might converge to mean that a student is unable to dampen down arousal sufficiently to settle to a task.

