

Supporting Social Awareness, Reciprocal Engagement, and Self-Regulation

Building Blocks: Self-Regulation, Reciprocal Engagement, and Social Awareness Help Refocusing and Cognitively Shifting From One Task to Another	Examples
What you may observe	<p>Staying on one topic for an extended period of time or frequently interrupting lessons for an off-topic response. Asking the same question repeatedly. Continuing to bring up losing a game or a disagreement at recess. Showing disengagement or dysregulation cues.</p>
What the student may be communicating	<p>The student may be having difficulty shifting cognitive focus from one activity to another. It is important to keep in mind that this behavior is not a choice but a moment where the child feels “stuck.”</p> <p>Think about a time you were waiting on important health news—either good or bad. Were you able to focus on a conversation that did not pertain to you directly? Could you carry on a conversation about American history? As much as you wanted to shift your focus, it was difficult to maintain your full thought on the conversation.</p> <p>Our students experience this often for a variety of reasons. They may be neurologically more inclined to hyper-focus on one subject, may not have a clear concept for the passage of time, or may have experienced trauma or a one-time bad experience. Regardless of the reason, the child is telling you that they need help staying in the moment.</p>
Possible interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide warnings of upcoming transitions so the child can wrap up their thoughts and task before moving on. • Use a visual timer during assignments so that students can monitor their own time and understand how time is moving during a given assignment. • Provide visuals that signal the given topic, such as a sign for mathematics, reading, or writing. • Remind students who bring up off-topic ideas of when they can talk about that with you. “Right now, our topic is mathematics. You can tell me about recess at _____.” (Be sure to follow through on this! You can let the child quickly write you a note to remind you to check in with them.) • Offer a safe and quiet space in the classroom where students can go to use their self-regulation strategies if they are having difficulty shifting from an emotional topic. • Refrain from judgement in your redirection. Use simple, direct phrases. • Use a special phrase, gesture, or visual to signal to students that they are off topic. This will save them from the embarrassment of you constantly reminding them in front of everyone, will begin to help them self-regulate by using a visual cue to shift their behavior (that can eventually be done independently), and will build your relationship.