



PSYCH HACKS

Five Ways to Promote Self-Regulation in the Classroom

Self-regulation refers to one's ability to modulate their attention, thoughts, feelings and behaviors when working toward some type of a goal. Classrooms are filled with situations that require a student to draw upon their self-regulatory abilities. Students who struggle with self-regulation likely have a hard time following classroom rules, suppressing impulses, or completing work in class. Fortunately, teachers are in a unique position to help children foster greater self-regulation abilities. Below are five ways teachers can help their students foster greater self-regulation.

#1: It Starts with Self-Awareness

Students who struggle with self-regulation have trouble monitoring their own behavior. This means they often possess minimal awareness as to how their behavior is perceived by others. Teachers can help foster greater self-awareness in students by having the student periodically evaluate their own behavior or work productivity. For older students, it may be helpful for the teacher to have a non-verbal "cue" to discretely signal to the student for them to stop and evaluate their behavior.



#2: Carrots over Sticks

When we see a student off-task and struggling to regulate their attention or behavior, our instinctual response as teachers is to provide corrective feedback. There is nothing wrong with doing this, but it is important to understand that such students respond far better to positive reinforcement. It is recommended that teachers strive to "catch" the student exhibiting behaviors reflective of self-regulation (e.g., working quietly, following classroom rules). It is also important to keep in mind that students with self-regulatory difficulties likely need a much higher frequency of positive reinforcement.

#3: Make Time Tangible

Students who struggle with self-regulation have a difficult time keeping track of time without an external indicator (i.e., clock). This makes it challenging for students with poor self-regulation to manage their attentional resources when completing any type of a time-sensitive task. Making time tangible through a clock or other timing device makes it far easier for the student to organize and manage their mental resources when completing an academic task.



#4: Bring Information to Life

Bringing information to life means making it external. Students with self-regulatory difficulties struggle to regulate their behaviors on the basis of internally represented information (i.e., information stored in memory). Whether its classroom rules, materials needed for a particular task, or teacher expectations, having external representations (e.g., signs) of information will make self-regulation easier.

#5: Breaks, Breaks, Breaks!

The power of breaks cannot be understated. To use a metaphor, students with self-regulatory concerns often do not have the best gas mileage. In other words, the mental fuel they need to power their regulatory abilities needs to be replenished often. Providing such students with frequent breaks, especially on tasks that require sustained mental effort, improves attention span and leads to greater productivity.



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