

3.1.3. Emotion Regulation Station Rotation

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

This is a station rotation/relay with emotional regulation challenges at each station, where players must practice calming techniques before they can move to the next stage. It combines physical movement with emotional self-regulation practice. The activity requires ample running space and clearly marked stations — a playground, field, or large courtyard is ideal. This physically active game supports the development of emotion regulation strategies. As children move through relay-style stations, they are faced with emotional prompts or mini-challenges that require them to recall and apply calming or coping techniques.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Emotional awareness, regulation and communication
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Resilience
 - Empathy

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old	12 to 25 children (team of 4-6)	30-40 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

A relay is a type of team-based activity where participants take turns completing segments of a course or challenge. In this version, however, each child completes the entire course individually, moving through a series of 4 to 5 stations, each designed with a small emotional self-regulation task.

1. **Set up the course:** Arrange 4 to 5 stations in an open space (indoor or outdoor). These can be marked with cones, mats, signs, or simple drawings on the floor.
2. **Introduce the game:** Explain to the children that this is a “Regulation Relay” where they will move through each station one at a time, and at each stop they will be asked to do a quick self-regulation technique before moving forward.
3. **At each station, they will:**
 - Stop and read/listen to the task
 - Do the emotional regulation activity (see examples below)
 - Only when completed, move to the next station

4. Example of regulation tasks at each station:

- Station 1: Deep Breathing – Take 5 slow, deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.
- Station 2: Muscle Release – Tense your fists or shoulders tightly for 5 seconds, then slowly relax.
- Station 3: Emotional Naming – Say out loud (or whisper) one feeling you experienced today.
- Station 4: Shake-Off Dance – Do a 10-second silly dance to release excess energy.
- Station 5 (optional): Visualization – Close your eyes and imagine a calm place for 10 seconds.

5. **Repeat or Reflect:** After each child finishes the course, you may invite them to reflect briefly (e.g., “Which station helped you feel more calm or focused?”).

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

The activity requires ample running space and clearly marked stations — a playground, field, or large courtyard is ideal. Use cones, ropes, or chalk lines to define the relay path and individual stations. Keep visual instruction cards at each station, weighted down if windy. Choose a quiet spot with enough room for safe movement and minimal distractions.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

This physically active game supports the development of emotion regulation strategies. As children move through relay-style stations, they are faced with emotional prompts or mini-challenges that require them to recall and apply calming or coping techniques.

This activity:

- Connects movement with cognitive-emotional reflection,
- Helps children practice identifying emotions in a moment of action,
- Encourages self-regulation in a dynamic, playful format.

Through repetition and team interaction, children internalize strategies like deep breathing, counting, or reframing thoughts, and develop confidence in using them even when under mild stress or excitement.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of this activity, students will:

- be aware the quick and accessible calming strategies
- be more practiced in pausing and regulating emotions during activity
- be aware of the connection of physical energy release with emotional release
- be encouraged to give peer encouragement and support

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

- Deep Breathing Station: The player takes 5 slow, deep breaths. The teacher might say, “Imagine you’ve just had an argument with a friend—how can breathing help you slow down before reacting?”

- **Shake-Off Dance Station:** The player does a quick 10-second dance to release extra energy. The teacher might prompt: “What if you’re feeling too excited to focus in class? Let’s shake off that energy!”
- **Tense and Release Station:** The player squeezes their fists or shoulders tightly for 5 seconds, then slowly relaxes them. The teacher could suggest: “Picture yourself getting nervous before a test. Try this trick to ease the tension.”
- **Name Your Feeling Station:** The player pauses and says aloud (or whispers to themselves) one feeling they experienced today. The teacher can help with a question like: “Did something make you happy or annoyed this morning?”

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Cones to mark stations
- Instruction cards with regulation challenges
- Optional: a timer or whistle

Guiding questions

- What emotion do you think this challenge is connected to?
- When you feel this way, what helps you calm down or feel better?
- Can you name a strategy you've used before to manage this feeling?
- What would you tell a friend who feels this emotion?
- How does your body feel when you're experiencing this emotion?
- What can you do right now to shift from this feeling to a calmer one?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** Some children might rush through the regulation steps without fully engaging.
Tip: The teacher should emphasize that the point is to practice the skills, not just win. The teacher can walk alongside players, modelling slow breathing or calm body language.
- **Challenge:** Other children might get stuck naming emotions, so the teacher can provide a visual emotion chart at each station for support.
Tip: If some children become too competitive, the teacher can shift the focus to team cooperation, encouraging teammates to cheer for each other’s regulation strategies.

Difficulty level tailoring

- **Beginner learners (6-7 years old):** focus on body-based techniques, such as shaking off tension, stretching, or simple deep breathing, without requiring complex emotional labelling. Short, playful stations (like "wiggle your fingers and toes") keep them engaged.
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** include naming feelings as part of each station, asking them to briefly explain what might trigger that feeling. This strengthens emotional awareness alongside regulation.
- **Expert learners (9-10 years old):** include self-talk strategies, such as “I can handle this” or “I’m feeling worried, but I’m okay”, reinforcing positive internal dialogue along with physical strategies.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- Which strategy was easiest for you? Which was hardest?
- Did any technique help you feel calmer?
- How do you know when your emotions are getting too strong?
- When could you use one of these techniques at school or home?
- Why is it important to pause and notice how we feel before we react?