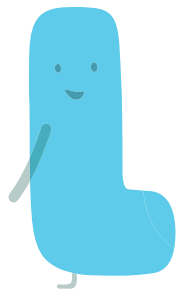
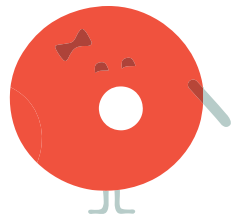


The Alert Program® Engine Analogy: A Guide to Self-regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to change how alert we feel and the inner drive that moves us through the day. The Alert Program® teaches that just like a car, we need to have our “engine” in the right “gear”, which changes depending on the situations or challenges we are faced with every day. Sometimes, our engines go up into high gear (hyper or overexcited) or into low gear (droopy or lethargic) and sometimes our engines run “just right” (attentive and focused). Everybody has an “engine” (adults and children), yet some go a bit higher or lower than others and some need more support to change gears than others. By using the engine analogy to teach self-regulation, we are helping children learn what to do and how to shift gears, if they are in a non-optimal state of alertness.

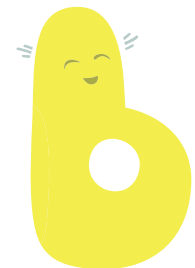
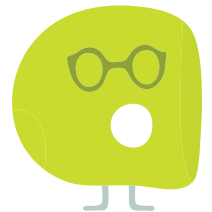


Children can learn to use engine strategies if, for instance, their engines are in low gear and they need to focus on learning a new math skill or, if their engines are in high gear, but they need to get ready to sleep at night. Through the Alert Program®, children learn how to choose and expand the use of these types of self-regulation strategies at school and at home to be in an optimal state for learning, playing, or interacting with their friends, family and peers.



The Alert Program® teaches children that there are five ways to change how alert we feel: put something in the mouth, move, touch, look or listen. Samples of ways to change engine levels could include taking a deep breath (mouth category), stretching (move category), squeezing a stress ball (touch category), watching the sunset (look category), or listening to music (listen category).

We all use strategies to regulate our engines throughout our day, but rarely do any of us talk about it. For example, think about what you did for your engine this morning to get up and get going. To start your day, did you drink a hot cup of coffee or drink a cold fruit smooth (mouth category)? Before work, did you go for a jog or walk the dog (move category)? Did you take a steamy hot shower or pet your cat (touch category)? Did you watch TV (look category) or turn on the radio (listen category)?



You can help children learn about self-regulation by talking about your own engine. If your engine is in a low speed when you are trying to read a book, or if it goes up into a high speed when rushing to get to an appointment, share that with children. Encourage discussion while using strategies to support self-regulation so your engine and children’s engines can run just right!

Source: This has been adapted with permission based on “What’s All This Talk About Engines?” article ©2007 TherapyWorks, Inc. To learn more about how to support self-regulation and the Alert Program® developed by Mary Sue Williams and Sherry Shellenberger, to go www.AlertProgram.com.