

## Supporting Preschoolers' Cognitive Self-regulation

Gail Joseph: Hi, everyone, and welcome to Teacher Time. I'm Gail Joseph.

Dawn Williams: Hi. And I'm Dawn Williams. And we are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. And we're so excited to have you here with us today on the second preschool episode of our new season of Teacher Time. And I would also like to call your attention to the viewers guide. You'll find it in the resource widget. And if you are new to Teacher Time, the viewers guide is for you. You can download the guide and use it throughout our time together for taking notes, reflecting and planning how you'll use the Teacher Time practices in your own settings. And then the resource guide also has resources if you want to dive deeper into that topic. OK, I think that's all for logistics. Let's get started.

Gail: Let's get into this. We are very excited to be focusing this season of Teacher Time on supporting young children's self-regulation and learning. Supporting self-regulation and learning is also referred to as approaches to learning, that first blue column of that Head Start ELOF or early learning outcomes framework.

Dawn: And in the October episode of Teacher Time, we focused on emotional and behavioral self-regulation skills. And today, we are focusing on cognitive self-regulation

Gail: Let's dive a little deeper and learn about cognitive self-regulation ELOF goals for preschoolers. Remember, there are some for infants and toddlers and some for preschoolers. This subdomain is made up of five goals. It has quite a few goals there. The child demonstrates an increasing ability to control impulses. Goal six is that the child maintains focus and sustained attention with minimal adult support. Goal seven, the child persists in tasks. Goal eight, the child holds information in mind and manipulates it to perform tasks. And goal nine is that the child demonstrates flexibility in thinking and behavior.

Dawn: And today, our focus is going to be goal five, child demonstrates an increasing ability to control impulses.

Gail: That's right, which is really a lot about self-regulation skills and about executive function skills. Executive function and self-regulation skills, like they're the mental processes that enable us, all of us, to plan, to focus our attention, to remember instructions, you know, with multiple steps and to juggle multiple tasks successfully. We think about the executive functioning as like an air traffic control system at a busy airport that safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircrafts on multiple runways. The brain needs this kind of skillset in order to filter distractions, prioritize tasks and achieve goals and control impulses. I really like to think about that as like, OK, that's my air traffic control system in my mind. These skills, as you can imagine, are really crucial for learning and development. They also enable positive behavior and allow us to make healthy choices for ourselves and our families, like stopping doing something and starting doing something else.

Self-control is just one type of executive function skill, and it enables us to set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses. And sometimes we think about these as hot and cold executive function or self-regulation skills. Hot executive function skills refer to the self-management skills we use in situations where our emotions are running high, like wanting a turn with a toy that someone else has, as you can see in that picture. And cool or cold executive function skills refer to the skills we use when emotions aren't really a factor. Things like raising a quiet hand and waiting to be called on, versus blurting out the answer. That is something I'm still working. Or waiting for the food to be passed to you instead of just grabbing it. You might know from personal experience how hard it is and it can be to resist temptation, or to stay focused on a boring task without being distracted, or to break an old habit, or to stop from responding and anger in the heat of the moment. I definitely know that I do in both those hot and cold situations. All of those are examples of deliberate self-regulation, and they require some concerted or conscious effort to accomplish. And this is definitely the same for young children.

Dawn: You may have heard of the marshmallow experiment, which was conducted by the late Walter Mischel. In this classic study, children were given one marshmallow and told that they could eat the marshmallow now, or if they waited for the experimenter to leave and come back, they could have two marshmallows. Let's watch a video about the experiment. And while you're watching, imagine how this relates to your life and the children you work with.

[Video begins]

Instructor: This is a bell, OK?

Walter Mischel: It's called the marshmallow test. We tried to set up situations in which young children make a choice between two of something that you prefer later, or one of something that you prefer a little less now.

Instructor: If you had to choose, would you like to have one marshmallow? Or would you like to have two marshmallows?

Walter: The whole point of the experiment is to set up an intense conflict between the two.

Instructor: Now, here's how we play this game. I'm going to leave the room. While I'm gone, if you can stay here and wait for me to come back without eating the marshmallows, then you get two marshmallows.

Child: OK.

Instructor: But if you don't want to wait, you can make me come back right away by pressing the bell. But then you get one marshmallow, not two marshmallows.

Child: I won't ring the bell.

Instructor: You won't ring the bell? OK.

Walter: The conflict for the child is very heavy. It's that about half will go one way and half will go the other.

Instructor: Oh, you made me come back.

Walter: It's like a little window into willpower for dilemmas that everybody faces. What we found is a very simple and direct way of measuring the confidence that seems to make an important life difference. The longer they were able to wait at age four, the better the ratings of their ability to control themselves and to pursue their academic and other goals.

Child: Please come back.

Walter: The kids who are able to delay gratification are increasingly learning ways of managing frustration, ways of managing distress. In middle life, there's less drug use, higher educational level attainment, much less likely to have lowered self-esteem, to engage in bullying behavior with other people. And correlations are clearly statistically significant. But that in no way means that a youngster who at age four didn't wait a long time is in any way doomed.

[Video ends.

Gail: All right. I love that video. And before we go on, I want to thank Ellen Galinsky and the Mind in the Making group for lending us that video of the late Walter Mischel and having him here about his classic experiment. I don't know about you, Dawn, but I like watching the children and the strategies they were using to resist that.

Dawn: Yes.

Gail: Oh my gosh. I want you all to think about like what you saw. Like I love like the one that was like controlling her hand. You know, walking around, self-talk, we heard some self-talk, we heard some removing from the stimulus, some trying to distract with other things. So many great strategies. And I want you to think about for yourself for our Teacher Time viewers, what are your marshmallows in life? What are things that really tempt you? And enter those into the Q&A now. What are some things that you are having – I'm going to look here in the Q&A and see some of these responses that are coming in. Some marshmallows people have in their life, shopping, chocolate, sweets, cookies, coffee, oh, online shopping, Netflix.

Dawn: Oh, all the time. All the time.

Gail: I see jelly beans, leftover Thanksgiving pie.

Dawn: Like a candy store.

Gail: I'm seeing some of mine in here. Buying books. Oh my gosh, yes. Yes. Like wanting to talk, interrupting someone to talk. Yeah. So many things. All right. I feel like – should we ask them our next question here?

Dawn: Yeah. Then what are some of the strategies to keep yourself from engaging in these impulsive behaviors?

Gail: Yes, let's see. All right, we've got – we've got lots of examples of things of our marshmallows. And now we want to see what are some of the ways that you stop yourself? Get your mind busy on something else.

Dawn: Avoid.

Gail: It's hard to just avoid, but yeah, avoid. Look away. Cleaning. Yep. Putting it out of site. Yep, I do that too. Like I say, "I might give myself this, but first I'm going to do the dishes," and then maybe it goes away after I've done that. OK, self-talk, dance or singing, waiting, taking a walk. That's good. Drinking water instead. I like that. That's a good one. Brushing teeth. Oh, that's nice. Yeah.

Dawn: Oh, that's a great idea.

Gail: Don't go to the store or online shopping. I wish it was that easy to just not go. Whoever that was, how have you stopped doing that. What are ways that you are thinking? Oh, first and then. Like first I'll do this, and then I can have that. That's nice. That's nice.

Dawn: Yeah.

Gail: Setting a limit, that's great. Setting a limit. Chewing gum instead. Doing something else instead, distracting yourself, kind of coming up with – using your marshmallow if you will as a reward for doing something that you don't really want to do.

Dawn: Right. I love that. Target is so hard. Target is hard.

Gail: These are great things. And I know you can't all see what people are writing. But our Q&A staff will start kind of sending those out as they come in, so that when you're writing things in, everyone can see what you're writing. We'll just have our behind-the-scenes support here that's so great just kind of starting to push those out for everyone.

Dawn: Excellent. We heard a little bit about why self-regulation skills are important from Walter Mischel's work with the marshmallow test. Additionally, dozens of researchers have confirmed and expanded his work related to executive function and regulation skills. They have found that children's ability to regulate these emotions facilitates their transition to kindergarten and school readiness by supporting the ability to acquire academic information. It's also really important to know that children aren't born with these skills. They are born with the potential to develop them.

Gail: That's right, and we're going to talk all this session about how these develop and how we can help to support them. We're going to look right now at the developmental progression of cognitive self-regulation. And one of the great things about the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework or ELOF is that it gives you that nice developmental progression when

you look at that. You can see from infants and toddlers all the way to children who will be entering kindergarten. We're going to start with this one, which is, since we're in the preschool part, we're going to start with the 3-year-olds. And around 3-year-olds, they will frequently engage in impulsive behaviors, but inhibit it when they're directly supported by an adult. And I think that's so important to remember, that yeah, they are going to have a difficult time controlling their impulse. But when a teacher or an adult supports them, they can start to do that. Let's look at a classroom of 3- to 5-year-olds, and keep your eye on the bell. Actually not on the ball, but on the bell and see what happens here.

[Video begins]

Teacher: All right, friends, you have to clean up. Let's clean up for circle time, then we can go back outside. If you'd like to have a chair –

Child: My turn.

Teacher: Friends, if you like to have a turn - friends, if you like – Layla first.

Child: My turn.

Teacher: If you like to have a turn. Layla first.

Child: My turn.

Teacher: Over here. All right, that's Paul's turn. All right. Would you like to have a turn with the bell? Let's face the chair, Nina. Let's face the chair, Nina. Ring the bell. All right, let's go. Ring the bell.

Teacher 2: Do you want to put that over there, or do you want to do it.

Teacher: Thank you. All right. That's Wello's turn. Thank you.

[Video ends]

Gail: OK, that was just so perfect, because the teacher brings a bell. That is a marshmallow. In a classroom of children, that can be a marshmallow. And she lets the one child ring it and then you see that the three-year-old boy runs up and grabs it, right? Because he does have that impulse. But with the teacher supporting him and saying first, we're going to get in line first and then you can have it, he's able to get in line and do that. And I think that's just a really great example. And I love how she then lets everybody have a chance to ring the bell as long as they have been lined up.

Dawn: Yeah, that was such a helpful way to defuse that right? Great teacher move in that moment. Now as children get a little older, around 4, they sometimes control impulses independently, while at other times they need support from an adult. Let's watch this video of a

classroom with 4-year-old children. And watch the times children are controlling impulses during this transition, and then when the teacher needs some support.

Gail: And we'd love to hear your observations in the Q&A as you watch this one.

Teacher: Good job. Thank you. Amar? Hey, I think it would help if we put this on. Can you put your arm in? Thank you. All right. Feet on the feet. Perfect. Nice job, you look just like the little boy. Where's your backpack? Yeah, let's go get it. Wow, I see Lemuel and Tortana and Kenzie standing nicely, just like the little boy.

Student: Get your backpack.

Teacher 2: Yeah, your backpack.

Teacher: Thank you guys. What letter are we learning about this week?

Students: N.

Teacher: N, that's right. And how many students do we have? Ten. Ten. Are you guys ready to count and see if we have ten students lined up? Yeah.

[Video ends]

Dawn: All right. What did you all observe in that video? Let us know in the Q&A. What strategies? Let's see. OK, there's the teacher was praising, just getting down on eye level and helps the children pay attention. Just kept them engaged when they're in line. There were clear instructions.

Gail: Great.

Dawn: Redirection, a friendly voice. Reinforcement. There was a visual prompt.

Gail: There's so many great ideas.

Dawn: Yes, yeah, all of those things, like sometimes needing adult support to control impulses is developmentally appropriate. And that's what 4-year-olds need at that moment.

Gail: That's right. It looked to me like it was a little bit less support than in our bell ringing example, right? Like there was a little bit more support. It's like kind of lessening support. But I love that what we're seeing here is that these are developmentally appropriate, right? Like this is developmentally appropriate behavior, is to have some impulses that you act on. And it is with this adult support that we're really kind of scaffolding the ability to regulate those impulses. To gain those skills there. Now, as children are getting closer to going to kindergarten, our goal is that children will be able to stop an engaging activity to transition to another less desirable activity with adult guidance or support. Let's just think about that for a moment. Like stop doing something you really want to keep doing, and start doing something you don't really

want to, which is like maybe clean up. I feel like that's school and that's life a lot of times. That's what we're looking for as we're starting to get – yeah, that is life, right?

Dawn: Yes.

Gail: It's a skill that we need to develop. We're also looking for the ability to delay gratification, so delay having your desires met, such as agreeing to wait to start an activity – so hard to do. And then without adult reminders, wait to communicate information to a group. Again, this is the one I'm still working on. But like raising a quiet hand when you want to be called on, right? Maybe the teacher is asking the whole group at circle time something, and you really want to give the answer but you have to wait and raise your hand. That's something that we're looking for again, as we're getting about ready to go to kindergarten. And then refraining from responding impulsively, such as waiting to be called on during group discussion or requesting materials rather than grabbing them. We're going to now look into another classroom, and the teacher is going to tell children – again, we've got some older children here, still preschoolers but older. The teacher tells the children that it's time to clean up, which is exactly that, stopping doing something you want to do and start doing something you don't want to do so much. Now cleanup time requires a lot of cognitive self-regulation. Let's watch what these young children are doing, and put your comments in there, what you see them doing in terms of cognitive self-regulation and the skills that we were just going over.

[Video begins]

Teacher: OK, friends, let's clean up. My friends, it's time to clean up now. We're going to get ready.

Student: Miss Bradley. Look at it. That's what I'm working.

Teacher: Wonderful. Can you put it on the shelf, please? OK, hurry. Quickly.

[Video ends]

Gail: Yeah, pretty great, isn't it?

Dawn: Yeah.

Gail: People already writing in. Nice tower. Yeah, it was a great tower. But you saw them, they were really enjoying playing. They hear thank you, right? Remember, in the very beginning, we see that the teacher really has to intervene with a young child – a little bit less so in when they're around four. Lots of visual supports and group guidance. And now here, the teacher just gives the group cue, "It's time to stop playing. It's time to start cleaning up." And you see that the children are, like they wanted to finish the tower, but then they immediately went to clean it up. I thought that that is – I think we just saw like a really nice progression of what that cognitive development looks like. And we're getting some really nice responses coming in about, you know, exactly that, like that they wanted to – and they also wanted recognition for their creation. Yes, absolutely. They wanted to see it, show it to their teachers. And, yes, Claire,

she says they even coughed into their elbow, which requires impulse control. I noticed that too, of course, we're all noticing things like that nowadays. And I noticed that too. I was really excited to see that.

Dawn: Yeah.

Gail: Great observation there. You are a great observer.

Dawn: Yeah.

Gail: They called to their teacher when they were done. Again, like just ... And again, those kiddos are about to go into kindergarten. Nice progression that we see there.

Dawn: Then during the preschool years, children experience rapid growth in areas of the brain associated with self-regulation, which makes them developmentally much more prepared to learn new self-regulation skills. Likewise, growing language skills during the preschool years allow children to use words for managing their thoughts and feelings and asking for help. This is the perfect time for family childcare providers and teachers to actively teach and coach skills like emotion identification and problem solving, perspective taking and calm down strategies. We covered some of these in our last episode of Teacher Time, and you can catch it on demand in PushPlay. But children will need considerable repetition, prompting and practice in using these new skills, and lots of opportunities to do all of that. Teachers and caregiver modeling of these skills is also important, as children watch adults closely to learn how they should behave. And then as in earlier developmental periods, preschool children continue to need structured, predictable environments and warm, responsive caregivers that provide them a supportive context in which they can practice these skills. They have to feel safe and secure to be able to do those things. In fact, remember the marshmallow experiment we described earlier? Well, that experiment has been repeated dozens of times with different twists.

One recent study repeated the experiment with two conditions – a reliable experimenter, and an unreliable experimenter. When the children had a reliable, consistent experimenter promise them a second marshmallow, they waited longer and control their impulse to eat the marshmallow. When the experimenter was less reliable, the children were less likely to wait. As children are developing their cognitive self-regulation skills, having a predictable environment and responses from adults are key. And those strong relationships that you've been building also help with that, right? The more they trust you, the more likely they'll be able to be successful at this. The good news is that we can teach children these skills. It is time to turn our attention to Teacher Time basics and think about how we can use these strategies for cognitive self-regulation.

Gail: That is right. I love that study you just talked about, Dawn, like how important that is, like the reliable environment allows children to start developing those skills as we saw in that progression. That's so key. We're here at Teacher Time BASICS. This is new to this season of Teacher Time. We love these basic skills. These are a collection of strategies that we can use really in any setting that you are interacting with preschool aged children, or even younger



children. And we use these and we review them, I would say, in each Teacher Time episode, because no matter what the content is that you're focusing on – it could be math, it could be literacy, today it's cognitive self-regulation – it's always important to remember the basics. The Teacher Time BASICS are B, stands for behavioral expectations in advance. A is attend to and encourage appropriate behavior. S is to scaffold with cues and prompts. I is to increase engagement. C is to create or add challenge, and S is to provide specific feedback.

Dawn: All right, let's start with some examples providing behavioral expectations in advance that support children learning cognitive self-regulation. You might say, "When we go outside, someone might already be using the tricycle. If that happens, we can use our words and our waiting muscles for a turn." Give a warning heads-up of what's coming. You can also say, "We have to share the glue. If you want to turn with the glue, you can say please pass the glue. Or "I'm going to call someone who was raising their hand quietly." What are some other ideas? And you could write these into your viewers guide.

Gail: That is great. We can also provide behavioral expectations in advance through visual supports. And here are a couple of examples. First, you see the children sitting at circle time with the carpet squares and their name cards. And those name cards provide children with visual information about the expectation of where they are supposed to sit at circle time. They run to the carpet – well, maybe use their walking feet over to the carpet squares. They look for their name and then they sit down. I love that the teacher puts their names behind them too so it doesn't become a distraction later on. But that's another great example of what you were talking about in that study, Dawn, of like a predictable environment, right? If teachers can create that for young children, then young children know that like, oh, I don't have to, like, you know, run and grab the green square or, you know, try and push to get next to my friend. I know that the expectation is I find my name, and I sit down. I think that's a really great example of how the environment can provide those behavioral expectations in advance, as well as providing that kind of reliable environment.

Now, the second example that I love is the soft and loud meter. And this is a great way to tell children the behavioral expectations of their voice volume in advance. The adult can change the direction of the arrow and show the child in advance if their voices should be soft, or if they can be loud. I really like that. Additional information about like, "OK, it's time to read a story, and Teacher Gail is going to read it to you. Your voices are – that's right, they're soft. And now we're going to go outside and our voices can be loud." Behavioral expectations in advance with a little bit of support with the visual information. Use your viewers guide to note some of these strategies that you might want to try. And we've added a lot of links in there in case you want to access some similar visuals such as the soft and loud meter.

Dawn: And now we will check out a video of a teacher providing behavioral expectations in advance.

[Video begins]

Teacher: OK, if you go to small group, and you come out and your house is not here anymore, it's not a big problem or a small problem? What do you think? Yeah, which one? Big or small?

Student: Big.

Teacher: Is it a big problem?

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: What are you going to do? What are you going to do if you're upset about it? Sometimes other kids may use the tiles. They might use the tiles, and that's OK. And you can say, "Oh, bummer." You want to try that?

Dawn: This teacher does such an excellent job of talking through what could happen, preparing him for the situation with the tower. Like she does a great job of priming them for what might happen.

Gail: I think that's so true. You know, like priming that – like priming the utilization of those cognitive self-regulation skills.

Dawn: I love it.

Gail: Right in the moment, too, right?

Dawn: Right, yes, exactly. And she did it so well. You know, it doesn't have to be perfect, and it just was exactly what he needed.

Gail: That's right. In that video, she also introduces a strategy. She says, "OK, but somebody knocked over your tower or somebody took the block," whatever the situation is – she primes them with a strategy that they can use, right? If that's going to happen, what can you do? She introduces, you could say, "Oh, bummer," if he if he gets upset or feels disappointed. This is such a great strategy. I use this all the time in the Head Start classroom where I would tell children, like, you know, like, "I can only pick one of you to be my helper. And if I don't pick you, you might feel disappointed. And what can you do if you feel disappointed?" It was like, "Oh, man," or "Maybe tomorrow or maybe next time." And I love it. Shout out to our colleague, Heather Floyd, who I hear saying, "Oh, pickles," which I think she actually learned from a Head Start child, and she gave him proper credit for that. But I love that one, too. "Oh, pickles." That is such a great phrase to use.

But the idea here is that we're going to do that in advance, right? It's going to be really hard if we're in a hot executive function moment where my emotions are running high to have that skill come to me. I want to prime with little things, right? Like, you know, like, what if I don't call on you? "Oh, pickles." Or what if we don't pick the book that you wanted to learn? "Oh, bummer. Maybe next time." And if you want the visual of this little guy doing, "Oh, man," or "Oh, bummer," we've actually put that in the viewers guide. You can have that visual. But while we are thinking about this one, write into the Q&A, do you have any catchphrases or things that

you've done to teach children in advance what they could do if they feel disappointed? Do you have a little catchphrase you use? Is there a gesture that they use or some kind of way that they can express their disappointment so that they can then have it acknowledged and move on? We're going to look to see some of these.

Dawn: Rats, snakes and eyeballs. I love that.

Gail: I love that too.

Dawn: The kids sing Everyone Gets Upset. I know that song.

Gail: I love that one in a singsongy voice. Smell the roses, blow the bubbles and then shake it off. OK, I love that we might shake it off with this gesture.

Dawn: Oh, sorry.

Gail: Yeah, yeah. And Accidents Happen song. Aw, man, I can try again next time. I love this, kiss your brain and then have the child kiss their hand and then move to the floor. OK, I love these. These are coming in really, really fast. And I know, we actually have the great Heather Floyd helping us push these out so everyone can see them. So excited about that. OK, we could spend the whole time just on this. I'm going to move us on.

Dawn: To the A, the A in BASICS is for attend to and encourage appropriate behavior. One sure way to help children learn cognitive regulation skills is to give them your time, attention and encouragement when they are controlling their impulse. Here's some examples of what this might look or sound like. Praise children's attempts to regulate or control their impulses. You might say, "Jeremy, thank you for remembering to raise your hand so everyone gets a turn." Or, "It's hard to wait for a turn, but you were really good at it." Or, "I heard you ask Jewel to please pass the glue. And now you're adding sparkles all over your picture." Or, "Whoa, it's so hard to look with our eyes sometimes, especially at something so cool, but you are doing great. Elbow bumps for you, my friend." What are some of the ways you provide attention and encouragement? I'd love to see those ideas pop up into the Q&A too.

Gail: We're getting so many great ideas coming into Q&A. I love this, around ways that you provide attention. That's a great one. That's a great one. Yeah. All right. I'm going to, we are – high five, we see that one coming in. I'm going to move us ahead because I'm looking at our time, I'm like, oh my gosh, where is it going? And speaking of high fives that Janise – I hope I'm pronouncing your name correctly – wrote in. Yes, we can do high fives. We can attend to and encourage appropriate behavior with words and gestures. Those gestures can mean so much. Sometimes kids don't want to be called out in front of everyone. But if you can do a little like high five or a thumbs up or a fist bump or a hug, all of that can send a message to a child that their efforts are being noticed, that they're important and that that skill that they're demonstrating deserve some recognition, because it's hard to do. And I love this photo of our colleague, Dr. White, because there is no doubt in this child's mind that they just did something really awesome.

Dawn: Right.

Gail: With that like, you know, looking eye-to-eye and the big high five there. High five to everybody out there who is giving some attention and encouragement to children when they're doing things that are really hard to do like cognitive self-regulation skills.

Dawn: OK, on to the S. A very important part of helping a child learn is providing them with scaffolding. Scaffolding is how we help a child learn by providing them with just the right amount of assistance to help them reach the next level, just like we were seeing in some of our videos earlier. We can provide verbal prompts like, "Remember what you can say if you are disappointed." We can also use visual cues to support children's learning. Here's some examples of visual cues that can help children with their cognitive self-regulation. In this picture, we see an individualized support for a child who needs some ideas of what to do while they wait for an adult. You could count your ABCs, you could run through your numbers through your head, as some examples.

Gail: I love those examples. And assistance – it's so important, right, to be able to scaffold that. That's a really great example, those visual cues. And when you notice that a child might get impulsive – so this is why it's so important to be a really sensitive teacher, right, to have those eyeballs on the back of your head if you can grow them, right? That you can always be looking, that you're scanning a lot so that you can see when a child is getting close to being impulsive, right? That's a great time for us to kind of catch them so that we can prompt them and remind them to use a strategy, to use an "Oh pickles" if we're going to use that or, you know, "Maybe next time." But also just kind of noticing that they might be getting frustrated and providing a little bit of support for them. Like you notice a child starting to get frustrated with a puzzle. You move in and you point out like, you know, maybe, "You're working so hard on that." Giving some recognition for working hard. "Would that piece fit if you turned it just a little bit?" Right? You're not completing the puzzle for them. You're not waiting till they fall apart. But you are just saying, can I just – you know, can I give you a little prompt? "What if you turned it just a little bit? Or what if you looked at the picture again?" Just those little cues to help support a child when they're just starting to, maybe starting to get a little bit dysregulated there.

Dawn: All right, and the I is increase active engagement. It's another way that we can support cognitive self-regulation. Actively engaging children during wait times is a great strategy. For example, these visuals are taped down on the counter where children wait in line to use the sink. Each visual provides children with an active thing to do while waiting, like hop on one foot or give a high five. What are some of the ways that you provide active engagement during transitions that has some waiting time? We'd love to see those ideas pop up in the Q&A.

Gail: Oh, we need lots of those ideas. Those are always the times when we're teaching that we're feeling like, OK. You know, it's just if children have to wait too long, you know, how can we create those ways to resist the marshmallow, I guess if we're going with our analogy there?

Dawn: Yeah. Right. Resist the marshmallow?

Gail: Yeah. Now while those are coming in, and I know that we'll be pushing those ideas out so you can learn from each other, I'm going to share one of my favorite ways to support young children's cognitive self-regulation, is to talk about using their waiting muscles. Children love that idea of kind of connecting with strength, I think, strength and power that they have. It really conveys to children that it's so hard, you have to build up these muscles, right? It's hard to do, and you can keep getting better at it by practicing. Whenever we see a child that's just you know, having – like this little girl, this is a perfect opportunity. She's definitely waiting in line for a little bit there. And we can just say, "Oh my gosh, you are really using your waiting muscles." You know, and just children love to have that. I mean, not every child, but children I've worked with have really found that a fun way to kind of be recognized for waiting. And then we've actually also created a using your waiting muscles certificate in the viewers guide that you can grab. And maybe you want to hand that out at the end of the day if you notice the child did a really great job of using their waiting muscles. Think about doing that one for a way to both kind of attend and encourage and increase active engagement.

Dawn: Aw, that visual is so cute. I love that.

Gail: Shout out to Tammy who created that for us.

Dawn: Well done. OK. For the letter C in BASICS, we have create or add challenge. Providing challenge helps children grow and develop their cognitive self-regulation as well. Think about ways to challenge children's cool self-regulation. Remember, we talked about the cool and hot earlier. Remember, cool means that there is not a heated emotional context. One way to add challenge is to play games that require a child to stop a behavior and then add challenge. For example, red light, green light is a great game to support a child's cognitive self-regulation. When they see or hear green light, they can move forward to the finish line, or when they hear or see red light they have to stop. After children have a lot of experience, you can add challenge. For example, in the photo, we see a child adding yellow light, which means move slowly. This is a way to create more challenge.

Gail: I love it. That's a fun way. And that's what we see, right? We see that increasing progression of being able to delay gratification or control impulse. And that's a great way to add challenge. Finally, the second S in BASICS is to provide specific feedback. And here are some examples of a teacher or family childcare provider providing specific feedback to a child who is trying to use their cognitive self-regulation skills. And as a bonus, when you're giving specific feedback, you're also acknowledging the child's skills. Two of our basic strategies in one statement. Things like, "I saw you put your hands behind your back, when I said look with your eyes. That's a great strategy." We're praising that strategy that they're using to engage in some self-control. "You are raising your hand, but I still hear talking. I'm looking for people with quiet voices and hands raised. Yes, you have a quiet hand, you can come up next." And, "I see you're using the all done bucket. That is a great way to help yourself wait for your friends to finish their small group activities." Just some examples there.

Dawn: OK, remember, the Teacher Time BASICS to support child's development of cognitive self-regulation. You can use your viewers guide to write down ideas that you want to try and

ideas to share with your colleagues, especially all those ones that got pushed forward through the Q&A. There's lots and lots there.

Gail: So many. And now it's time for our segment Small Change with a Big Impact. And here we are highlighting a curriculum modification or adaptation that can help a child who just needs a little more assistance to fully access, participate and thrive in a learning environment or group routine and activity.

Dawn: Today's modification is the all done bucket. The all done bucket is designed to help support children who may finish a small group activity or a meal before others. Some children because of their age or skill may not participate in an activity as long as others. When they are all done, but you are not ready for them to leave the table entirely, they can grab something to do from the all done bucket while they wait for the table mates to finish and you are ready to transition the children to another activity or routine. Some of the ideas and activities I've seen teachers or caregivers put in all done buckets include folder games, puzzles, peg and pegboards, books and geo boards. And then this picture shows an example of an all done bucket with picture books in it. One tip though is to not put the most exciting toys in the all done buckets, because children may finish too quickly just to get to their favorite toy that's in the bucket. In the viewers guide, there's also some more ideas of things you could put in your all done bucket.

Gail: I love this strategy, such a good strategy, and I've definitely learned from experience not to put the most exciting thing in the all-done bucket.

Dawn: Yeah.

Gail: And now our segment, Focus on Equity, one of the most important sections of our season this time in Teacher Time. We lift up the value of equity and consider how we can make our teaching practices more equitable.

Dawn: Yes, we had the opportunity to interview Mike Browne, who you see pictured there. He is the senior community engagement manager at Hilltop Children's Center in Seattle, Washington. And he wrote an article and did an interview with his colleague Amira Sian Gilmore, about black humanity and black boy joy. For more information, his interview is available on My Peers. But we want to tell you a bit about it and make connections to today's topic. In the article, they talk about the importance of joy, how that joy is frequently demonstrated in early childhood. But all too often, and especially for young black boys, that joy is mistaken or mislabeled as challenging behavior or a lack of impulse control. It's so important that the joy be fostered, especially in early childhood. One of the things they talked about in the video is that this pedagogy of no, which is, don't do this, or stop doing that, which is a lot of what you hear. And instead of having that pedagogy of no, how can we shift perspective, to foster yes spaces of joy, where children can express joy and not have it confused for lack of impulse control?

One thing we want you to think about are the ways that you can create or can create more yes spaces in your program. Reflect on it, if you've ever confused joy for an impulse control issue, and perhaps redirected versus joined in the joy. Think about if there are some groups of children you're more likely to redirect from perceived misbehavior, or how you can redirect yourself to more yes and more joy. I'd love to hear your ideas in the Q&A. That's powerful.

Gail: I think ever since I read that article, Dawn, I think a lot about this as a Head Start teacher, the times that my implicit bias was coming forward, and ways in which I might have probably like regulated joy. And thinking now like – but I also think about times that I was able to join in and create more yes spaces, more open-ended activities, more, you know, reinforcement of enthusiastic responses. Let's see what else we have, people coming in here in their reflection. I know I shared this example with you before, Dawn, but I was thinking about, I always think about this. When I watched a teacher with a group of young children and they were at the zoo on a field trip. And they were going to – they were supposed to go down the hill to get to the next activity. And as the teacher was leading the way, and one of the children just kind of ran past the teacher and was running. And I think, gosh, I probably would have been like, "Stop." You know, "Walking feet," whatever. But instead, that teacher just said, "Yes, Carla, lead the way." Like that's like a nice reframe into like joining in her joy in that moment.

Dawn: Yeah, that's a perfect example. Right? Because you would be excited to go see something, right? Yeah, one of the things Mike really talks about is like shifting your perspective, and taking some time to reflect to do that so that you can, you know, shift in a moment like that, and follow the lead and follow the joy as you're running through the zoo.

Gail: Follow the joy. Just a really great example for us to reflect on, you know, ways in which we join in joy and when we're redirecting it. And to be cognizant of, are there some children that we redirect more often? I just think this is really important. I'm looking at our time. Should we move on to our next.

Dawn: We should.

Gail: I know it's so hard to fit everything in, especially when I want to read everything that people are writing in here, right, into our Q&A. All right, but now it's time for our segment, the Bookcase. The Bookcase is where we highlight books by diverse authors and illustrators related to our episode's themes and then make the CASE. The case is an acronym that we've used, and it stands for how we can think about the books more intentionally. C stands for connections. When we connect the books to an ELOF goal, we want to make sure we think about books intentionally, about how does this connect to what skill I'm trying to support? A stands for the advanced vocabulary that we can find in the book, a wonderful way to introduce children to novel words and build with those child-friendly definitions. S stands for supporting engagement during book reading, so that children are active participants in the book reading. And E stands for extending the learning beyond the book. Thinking about activities you can plan or ways that you can connect to the characters or the skill that you're developing, building that advanced vocabulary and deepening concept development. You can read about the books that we've

selected. I'm going to just highlight them really quickly. One of my favorites, *Waiting is Not Easy* by Mo Willems.

This is, you know, the tail between Elephant and Piggy. And Piggy tells Elephant, there's something really great about to happen. And oh my gosh, Elephant has to wait and wait and wait. And it's really hard to wait. And that's what we've been talking about. I love this one, too. This is a new book to me. This is *How Can I Wait When There's a Treat on My Plate?* Which is just what we were talking about. It's actually a children's book written based off of the marshmallow experiment by Dan Graham and illustrated by Teresa Martinez. It's about two twin boys, and one of them – everything's the same about them except one of them's really great at waiting and one is not. And then they start to make up, teach each other a plan for waiting. And it's really great. And it also has some links to some recommended practices and things you can do in the classroom. One definitely on your bookcase. I also love this one. This one is by Gabi Garcia, and it is *I Can Do Hard Things*. And it is written both in English and in Spanish. In fact, I think everything Gabi Garcia writes is always in English and Spanish, which we love. And this is just a book of mindful affirmations for kids. Things like saying like, I can wait, I can do hard things. And then finally the book that we're going to build our bookcase from is, our build our bookcase for, is *Impulsive Ninja*. This is a book by an author, Mary Nhin. And this is part of a series of books about highlighting different skills. There you see the author. And then I love this book. If we start to think about making the case for this, definitely *Impulsive Ninja* has a connection to our ELOF goal about increasing ability to control our impulses. There are a few advanced vocabulary words in here that are really important to highlight, words like impulse and patience. Those are things that would be great words to introduce to young children.

And then when you're thinking about it, you can increase support, support active engagement, by asking children open-ended questions, seeing if they can move their body like the impulsive ninja. But one of my favorite things about this is that they talk about using the superpower of pause. The superpower of pause, that is something I want to get better at, like practicing my superpower of pause. And that is kind of stopping myself from doing something impulsive. Using that superpower of pause. Pause is a great vocabulary word, but also supporting the active engagement, like practicing using our superpower of pause. And that leads into what I think is a great way to extend the learning, is by maybe playing, kind of practicing our superpower of pause by playing statue tag. And that is this little guy in the middle is playing that, where the teacher – when the teacher is looking at you, kind of like red light, green light, you have to stop and freeze. And then when they turn around, when they're not looking at you, you have to run up. But when they turn back around, you have to freeze and use your superpower of pause in a statue. It's great way to kind of extend the learning from our *Impulsive Ninja* book.

Dawn: All right, so let's boost our attention over here to this *It's All About You* segment with our time left. And here's your tip for today. We do our best caregiving and teaching when we feel well ourselves. Engaging in self-care practices can help educators build greater social-emotional



capacity to deal with difficult times. Here's one quick strategy that you can use to get back into the calm space.

The tip is the 10 minute tidy. This tip comes from a book called The Happiness Project. And the idea is to proactively reduce morning stress by doing a 10-minute tidy the night before. Simply pick a time each night that you will set a timer for 10 minutes and focus on picking up, doing a quick clean or just prepping your work bag for the next day so that you wake up and don't have to stress trying to find your keys or phone charger to help yourself get ready. And if you live with others, have everyone help. It's amazing how much you can feel on top of things when you have a 10-minute tidy. And if you're trying to work on your cognitive self-regulation – that is stopping things you want to keep doing and start doing things you might not really want to do but are good for you – then the 10-minute tidy can help. You could put your running shoes by the door. You can fill your water bottle and have it ready to go the next morning. You can try it out. Let us know how it goes.

Gail: I love the 10-minute tidy, Dawn. Like I need to get – today I'm going to start back at it because it has kind of fallen off. But when everyone helps, I get my partner to help, I get my children to help and it's like 10-minute tidy. They just spend 10 minutes cleaning up the room. It's amazing how on top of things you feel. It's great.

Dawn: Truly. And I don't know about you all, but come Thursday and Friday, the house not in the same condition it was on Monday. It is time for 10-minute tidy.

Gail: But if we do it every day, maybe we can stay closer to that.

Dawn: That's right.

Gail: Although I don't know. My house is kind of always in that state, but at least I will get the coffee pot ready, the dishes done and my water bottle filled. It's great. All right. Now before we jump, we want to be sure to tell you about PushPlay. Did you miss a webinar? We've totally got you covered. Go to PushPlay DTL on demand where you can view recently aired webinars at your convenience. Maybe you want to catch the infant-toddler version, maybe you want to go back and watch emotional self-regulation. We've made it easy to find exactly what you're looking for. And the more views you have, the more customized the experience. It's like, oh, you like that? Maybe you'll like this. Please be sure to bookmark the site and save it, or you can find it over on My Peers. And we want to tell you upcoming time. Tune in January 12th for Supporting Infants' and Toddlers' Cognitive Self-Regulation. And on February 3rd, there will be another Teacher Time webinar and we will see you then. And until we see you then, we wish everybody well. Stay safe, be kind, and we will see you all next time.

Dawn: Bye, everyone.