



WELCOME



Being a neurodivergent parent myself, I understand firsthand the challenges we may face in forming deep, lasting relationships with our family and friends. The emotions can be overwhelming, the misunderstandings frequent, and the sense of disconnection all too real.

I've walked in those shoes, bearing the weight of shame from past behaviors. That's exactly why I felt the urge to create "Build Better Bonds with Emotional Regulation". So, if you've been that parent - screaming at the top of your lungs during a car ride or sobbing uncontrollably because it all seems too hard - please know that you are not alone.

This is more than just a workbook. It's a fifty-five-day journey towards self-development, tailor-made for parents like us. A workbook journal guide designed to help us transform these challenges into opportunities for nurture, self-development and growth.

How to use this workbook

You are encouraged to make this workbook your very own! It is divided and colour-coded into three easy to follow sections :-

- A. The Learning
- B. Gather the Evidence
- C. Build Your Toolkit



This structure ensures you have the necessary tools to improve your connections with yourself and your family step by step over the next fifty-five days. Please do Scribbledeedo™ away :-)

Who am I?

I'm Yasmin Shaheen-Zaffar (she/her), on a personal note a neurodivergent parent and professionally a relational and trauma therapist. I'm also a safe and sound practitioner, a Neurofeedback practitioner, Creator of 'What's Your State? Polyvagal Teen®' and Neurosloth® resources., My work blends my personal experiences with my professional expertise.

This Scribbledeedo™ workbook is brimming with insights gathered from my journey. Its primary aim is to unravel the scientific complexities of our bodies, dispel any lingering feelings of shame or regret, and serve as a roadmap for embracing change amid the ebbs and flows of daily life.

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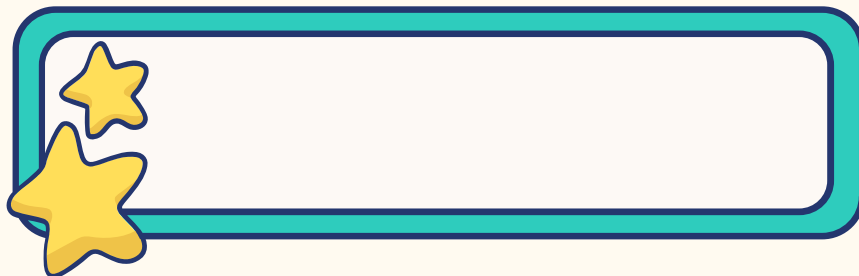
The PROMISE:



Let's do this - I'm all in, ready to rock this Scribbledeedo™ workbook journal guide!

It's not just pages and ink, it's my passport to self-discovery and personal growth. I'm geared up to dig deep, push boundaries, and ignite self-development and growth in myself and my family.

**This epic JOURNEY
is OWNED by:**



You've taken the first step towards a stronger, healthier relationship with yourself and your family by picking up this workbook.

Now it's time to dive in, so shimmy this way ...



SECTION A

The Learning - Welcome to the first step in our journey towards understanding and mastering emotional regulation. Over the span of approximately fourteen days we will dive into the ten key concepts that underpin emotional regulation.

Each section is designed to be digestible, requiring just 12 to 20 minutes of your day.

- 1** Introduction to Emotional Regulation and the Autonomic Nervous System
- 2** The Importance of Feeling Safe Enough and the Science of our Body.
- 3** Alexithymia: The Challenge in Recognising and Expressing Emotions
- 4** Shutouts, Meltdowns, Burnout and RSD: The Consequences of Emotional Dysregulation
- 5** Interpreting Body Sensations: A Pathway to Understanding Our Emotions
- 6** Shifting State, Shedding Shame, and Changing the Language.
- 7** The Power of Connection, Co-regulation and Shimmers in Emotional Regulation.
- 8** A Tug of War: The Internal Struggle of Dysregulation.
- 9** Window Of Capacity AKA Window of Tolerance
- 10** The R.U.D Process®: A Structured Approach to Emotional Regulation

Glossary of key terms can be found on page 232.



ABOUT THIS SECTION.

This section serves as your easy to follow guide to emotional-regulation, offering key insights into one of the most profound aspects of human life - the mind-body connection.

Using Dr Stephen Porges polyvagal principles, here you will learn about how our two fundamental core needs - the need to feel safe and our need for connection influence our emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

Subsequently influencing our relationships and our ability to emotionally regulate.

By understanding this intricate dynamic, you will be empowered to build better, stronger, healthier bonds and will gain a more balanced sense of self.

It is estimated that it will take you fourteen days to go through Section A as you absorb the learning and work through some of the therapeutic Scribbledeedo™ exercises.

Please don't skip this section (as tempting as it may be) – the learning you do here will form - the basis of Section B.

This learning part may at times feel a little heavy - but know that, at any point you can practice the grounding exercises found on pages 204 - 208 in Section C (that's the peach coloured pages).



I. Introduction to Emotional Regulation & the Autonomic Nervous System

Before we dive into the intricacies of emotional regulation, it's essential to grasp the concept of self-regulation.

Think of self-regulation as the maestro of our personal orchestra, skillfully orchestrating our emotions, behaviors, and bodily movements to harmonise with society and fulfill our needs. This includes cultivating healthy relationships, maintaining emotional stability, and leading a fulfilling meaningful life.

Self-regulation empowers us to manage our impulses, soothe nerves during emotional peaks, stay focused on tasks, and navigate challenges with precision. It serves as a guide for making sound decisions, handling emotions, and maintaining an overall sense of balance and well-being.

So what does self-regulation actually involve? It's a constant monitoring and adjustment of our internal states - our attention, impulses, and emotional responses - to align with our goals and values. It's a delicate dance involving our thoughts, feelings, actions, and sensory processing.

For modern families, mastering self-regulation can be transformative. The ability to express needs effectively, rather than spiraling into heated arguments and chaos, often hinges on self-regulation. It's a pivotal skill that can prevent the reinforcement of patterns of dysregulation.

Now that we have a better understanding of self-regulation, let's connect it to emotional regulation. These two concepts are closely intertwined, but the web of regulation doesn't end there.

Emotional regulation is also linked with behavioral regulation, cognitive regulation, physiological regulation and sensory regulation. Each form of regulation is a puzzle piece contributing to our overall well-being and functioning.

As we embark on this workbook journey, we'll explore each piece, unraveling their unique roles, how they harmonise, and their impact on your day-to-day life.

Additionally, we'll delve into why emotional regulation can present unique challenges for neurodivergent individuals, adding an extra layer of complexity to our lives, the pages overleaf will provide a deeper explanation.

In this Scribbledeedo™ workbook journal, we will explore self-regulation across four interconnected areas and additionally the science of our body - physiological states (we will come back to understanding this better later):-

Emotional Regulation: Picture this as the conductor of our emotional symphony, guiding us to manage intense emotions and preventing them from escalating into overwhelming upset, anger, depression, aggression, or violence. It's about finding the balance in our emotional response, not too high, not too low, but just steady enough for the situation at hand.

Cognitive Regulation: Imagine this as the captain of our mental ship, steering our thoughts in the right direction. It helps us focus on tasks or conversations at hand, preventing negative thoughts from taking over the helm. By managing our thought processes, we can sail smoothly through the sea of distractions and negativity.

Behavioural Regulation: Think of this as the gatekeeper of our actions, helping us manage our behaviours. Whether it's resisting temptation or refraining from acting aggressively or impulsively, behavioural regulation ensures our actions align with our values and goals. It's about reacting appropriately to situations and keeping our behaviour in check.

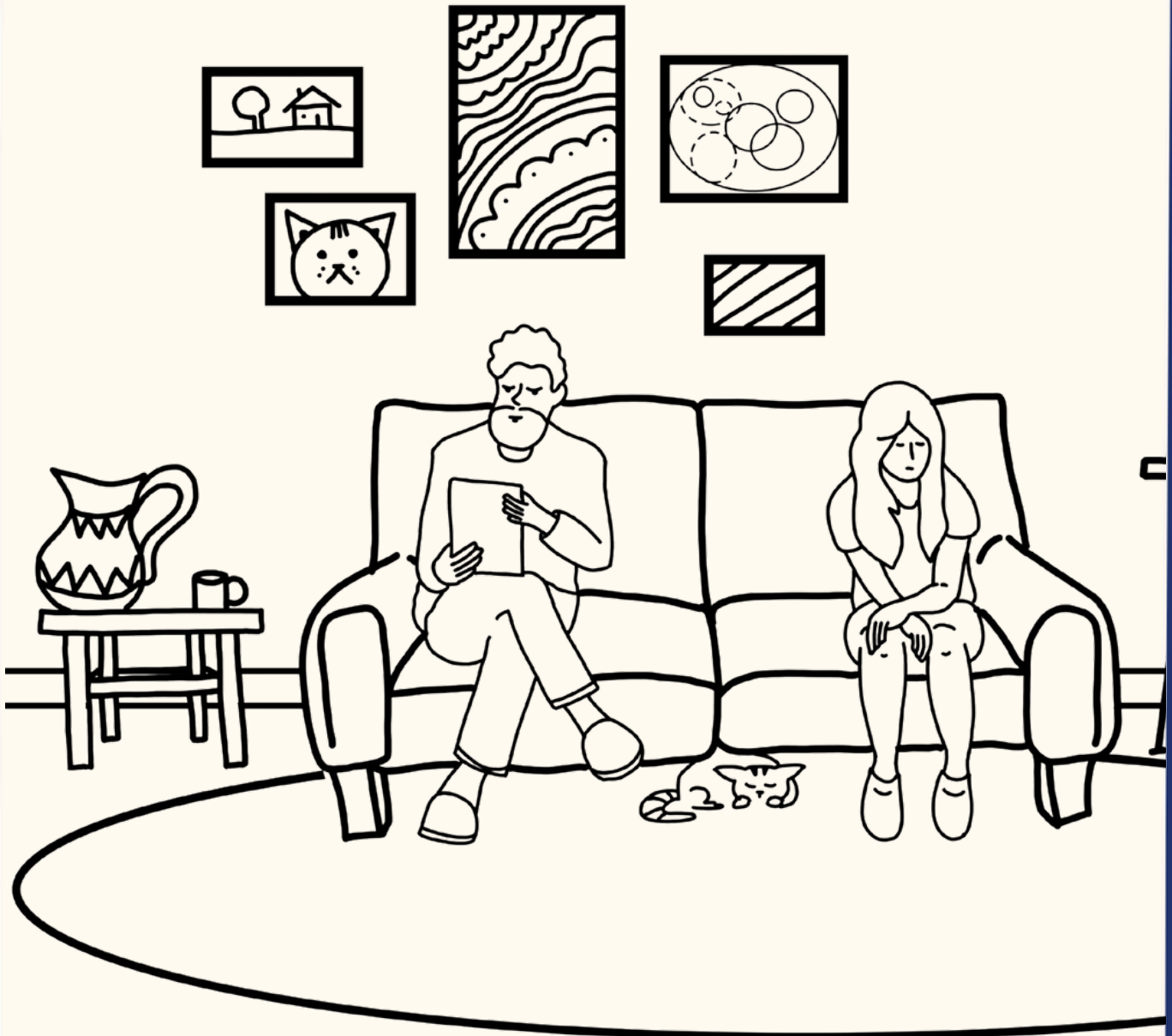
Sensory Regulation: This is like the control room of our sensory experiences - what we feel, see, hear, taste, and smell. It decides what gets our attention and how we react to it. Sometimes, the control room may get overwhelmed, making things too loud or too quiet or too scratchy.

But with accommodations, certain activities, environmental changes, and mindfulness practices, we can assist it in regulating our sensory input effectively.

By understanding these different areas of self-regulation and implementing strategies across them, we can start to create meaningful change in our lives. So let's get started ...



Imagine you've had a challenging day and you're trying to unwind, but your family is exhibiting difficult behaviours. This scenario may activate a whirlwind of emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, not to mention a sensory overload. Let's take a moment to reflect on the impact this situation may have on you.



♥ behaviours:

♥ thoughts:

♥ sensory:

♥ emotions:

What does emotional dysregulation look like for you?

Review the list below and identify behaviours that resonate with you personally:

- **Anxiety:**
 - Heightened anxiety
 - Excessive worry
 - Panic attacks
- **Intense Emotions:**
 - Overwhelming feelings
 - Heightened emotional intensity
 - Excessive emotional reactions
- **Difficulty Relaxing:**
 - Trouble calming down
 - Ongoing restlessness
 - Persistent tension
- **Quick Mood Shifts:**
 - Rapid mood swings
 - Sudden emotional changes
 - Unpredictable emotional states
- **Anger Issues:**
 - Explosive anger
 - Difficulty managing anger
 - Frequent outbursts
- **Impulsivity:**
 - Impulsive & risky behavior
 - Acting without thinking
 - Difficulty in impulse control
- **Self-Harm or Suicide Ideation:**
 - Self-destructive behavior
 - Suicidal ideation
 - Engaging in self-harming
- **Irritability:**
 - Easily irritated
 - Short and snappy mood
 - Short temper
- **Low Frustration Tolerance:**
 - Easily frustrated
 - Difficulty coping with frustration
 - Tendency to give up quickly
- **Sadness and Despair:**
 - Intense sadness
 - Feelings of hopelessness
 - Pervasive despair
- **Emotional Numbness:**
 - Feeling emotionally numb
 - Lack of emotional responsiveness
 - Detached from one's emotions
 - Unaware of what you feel
- **Interpersonal Challenges:**
 - Difficulty forming maintaining relationships
 - Conflict in relationships
 - Impaired social functioning.





Recognising My Body Sensations Scribbledeedo™ Exercise

Interoception refers to the internal sensory mechanism through which individuals consciously or unconsciously acknowledge, and react to their physical and emotional states.



With a better grasp of emotional regulation, let's explore a crucial element: emotional dysregulation.

It involves struggles in managing emotions, causing challenges in expressing feelings in a steady way. When both emotional and self-regulation are compromised. Else it has been known as losing the plot.

This may result in intense reactions, impulsivity, or resilience challenges in stressful situations. Notably, emotional dysregulation varies among individuals, leading to diverse combinations of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Chronic emotional dysregulation can often lead to burnout, resulting in emotional and physical health challenges.

But first - how can this workbook help you to build better bonds with emotional regulation?

This workbook helps in building stronger connections through nurturing and growing emotional regulation skills.

Let's take a quick recap - emotional regulation is a part of self-regulation, It is the artful balance of our thoughts, emotions, actions and sensory processing. It involves acknowledging our feelings and needs, while remaining cognisant of how our behaviours impact others and our environment. This process is underpinned by three key pillars:

- self-awareness
- self-tracking
- self-management

Cultivating these three skills helps us manage stress, handle emotions, and stay focused, it enables us to emotionally regulate better, which enables us to self-regulate better. This inreturn helps us to strengthen bonds, address emotional dysregulation by enhancing self-awareness, develop coping mechanisms, and improve communication (all of these fall under self-management).

Actively regulating emotions enhances relationships, inreturn fostering positive connections. The workbook guides you through developing self-awareness, self-tracking, and self-management skills, equipping you with a personalised adaptable toolkit for effective self-help and life navigation.

Let's take a look at an example scenario for context:

A parent (with sensory challenges) is planning a family outing to a local (noisy) amusement park with their child. They have all been looking forward to this event, everyone is excited and it involves multiple steps and considerations.

Some possible parenting challenges during this scenario:

Planning and organisation: The parent may struggle with planning the outing, breaking down the steps involved, and organising them in a logical sequence. This could include selecting the day, coordinating transportation, and considering factors such as weather and potential sensory challenges at the amusement park.

Time management: Estimating how much time each task will take and allocating time accordingly can be challenging. The parent might find it testing to gauge how long it will take to get ready or travel to the park.

Flexibility and adaptability: Neurodivergent individuals may find it challenging to adapt plans in response to unexpected changes. If there's a sudden change in weather or if the child expresses a preference for a different activity, the parent or family may struggle to adjust the plan.

Prioritisation: Difficulty in prioritising tasks and focusing on the most critical aspects of the plan can be an executive function challenge. The parent may get overwhelmed by details and struggle to identify the most important steps for a successful outing or may become easily distracted with another task or over-commit when a friend or family member for example asks for a short notice favour.

Consequences: the impact on emotional regulation

Increased stress and anxiety: Executive function challenges can lead to increased stress and anxiety as the parent navigates the complexities of planning the outing. The fear of overlooking details or not being adequately prepared may contribute to heightened emotional responses such as being less patient.

Frustration and overwhelm: The parent may feel frustrated and overwhelmed by the number of tasks involved in the planning process. Difficulty in organising thoughts and actions can result in a sense of being inundated with "too much information".

Difficulty coping with change: If unexpected changes occur, such as a sudden change in plans or an unforeseen obstacle, the parent may struggle to effectively regulate their emotions. The need for flexibility and adaptability can be emotionally taxing, resulting in meltdowns or shutouts.

Can you relate to any of the following reasons you find emotional regulation challenging?

Sensory sensitivities: Many neurodivergent individuals deal with heightened sensory sensitivities, which can make them more susceptible to environmental stimuli. This sensory overload could lead to emotional dysregulation, as these individuals may struggle with filtering and processing these sensory inputs as needed.

Difficulty recognising and interpreting emotions: Neurodivergent individuals often face challenges when it comes to recognising and interpreting emotions, both their own and those of others. - a condition known as alexithymia. This difficulty can result in a lack of awareness and understanding of their and others emotional states, thereby making emotional regulation and appropriate response more challenging.

Executive function challenges: Individuals may experience challenges related to executive functioning. These include essential skills such as planning, organising, and self-regulation. Any impairment in these areas can significantly influence their ability to regulate emotions, especially in situations demanding flexible thinking and adaptive responses.

Social communication challenges: Neurodivergent individuals often encounter challenges in social communication, which can affect their ability to effectively navigate social interactions. Struggles with understanding social cues, non-verbal communication, and the subtleties of social dynamics can lead to emotional dysregulation, not only in social situations but also within the home,

Ongoing criticism and teasing: Persistent criticism or teasing, particularly when focused on areas where individuals face challenges, can heighten feelings of inadequacy and frustration, leading to difficulties in emotional management.

Consider, for instance, someone with dyslexia who is constantly corrected for their spelling, or someone dealing with short-term processing challenges who is mocked for their forgetfulness. Such jibes from others only exacerbates their overwhelm and struggles instead of providing much needed support.

Societal expectations and labels can significantly impact emotional regulation in individuals with a spiky profile.* When people are given specific roles or labels, such as 'the clever one' or 'the organised one', it creates an expectation for them to consistently perform at a high level in these designated areas.

These labels can place undue pressure on individuals, causing them to overextend themselves in order to meet these set expectations, which can in return lead to stress, anxiety and emotional dysregulation. It may also cause them to neglect their areas of struggle, further exacerbating their emotional distress.

**Spiky profile"refers to the significant variations in skills and abilities exhibited by neurodivergent individuals. These individuals may excel in certain areas, while finding others challenging, leading to an impact on distress tolerance and emotional regulation*

Difficulty in transitioning: For neurodivergent individuals, transitions between activities or environments can pose a unique challenge. The uncertainty and unpredictability often associated with such changes can activate emotional responses that are difficult to manage and regulate.

Inadequate self-advocacy: Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with self-advocacy, which involves recognising their own needs and effectively communicating these needs to others. This can stem due to not knowing what their needs are in the first instance, but also coping strategies created in childhood.

When we are unable to ask for the accommodations we require, neurodivergent individuals may resort to 'masking' - suppressing their natural behaviors to conform to societal expectations. This constant effort to mask can lead to increased stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, shutouts and meltdowns, making emotional regulation even more challenging. In severe situations burnout is a stark reality.

Repetitive behaviors and routines: Some neurodivergent individuals find comfort and predictability in routines and repetitive behaviors. Routine offers a degree of certainty which leaves one feeling safe. Disruption to routines or unexpected changes can lead to heightened stress and dysregulation.

Other reasons: Take a moment to reflect on other reasons why you may find emotional regulation challenging: