Behavior Stoplight

Think of the behavior part of the brain as a stoplight. The red light tells us to ‘stop and think’ and control our behavior. The green light tells us to ‘go, go, go!’ and act on wants and impulses. Your child’s brain is still developing, his stoplight is often on ‘go, go, go!’ He needs you to help exercise his red light to ‘stop and think’. This is called self-regulation.

Practice

For your child to be successful in school, learning to control his own behavior is just as important as being smart. The behavior part of the brain isn't fully developed until the early 20s. This means your child is just beginning to learn how to control his behavior.

Remember

Offer your child choices to exercise his red light. This encourages him to ‘stop and think’ before responding.

- Talk More and give your child 2 options.
- Take Turns and let him make a decision.
- Tune In and go with what he chooses.

Show your child how you self-regulate in challenging situations.

- Talk More about how you’re feeling.
- Tune In to your tone of voice. If you’re angry or loud, your child may think that’s an appropriate way to respond.
- Take Turns by putting words to how your child is feeling. Helping him learn to express his emotions is an important part of learning to self-regulate.