

Waylon's Self-Regulation Routine

A simple grown-up guide for recognizing feelings, finding calm, and teaching better choices



The goal is not to stop every big feeling. The goal is to help Waylon feel safe, borrow an adult's calm, and gradually learn what he can do with that feeling.

The five-step routine

1. CONNECT

Get low, soften your face and voice, and stay close. Use very few words.

2. NAME

Offer the wheel: "Show me how you feel." If he cannot point, name what you see without demanding an answer.

3. CHOOSE

Point to two calming pictures: "Wall pushes or your Tonie?" During a tantrum, two choices are enough.

4. CALM

Do the activity with him. Keep the limit in place and focus first on safety and regulation.

5. RECONNECT

When his body is calm, briefly teach the boundary, help repair any harm, and practice what to do next time.

Using the Emotion Wheel and Poster

Practice when Waylon is already calm. Point to faces in books, in daily life, and on the wheel. The wheel is a communication aid - not a quiz. Accept pointing, looking, touching, or a grown-up's best guess.

When feelings begin to rise

- Move close and make the area safe. Block hitting, biting, throwing, or unsafe climbing calmly.
- Say: "You are safe. I am here."
- Offer the wheel: "Can you show me?" Avoid insisting if he cannot respond.
- Reflect: "You look frustrated. You wanted another turn."
- Offer the poster and point to only two likely choices. He may point, touch, look, or let you choose.
- Use the chosen strategy with him. A two-year-old is learning through co-regulation, not independent self-control.

During peak distress: fewer words, slower movements, lower voice. Do not lecture, demand an apology, or ask "Why did you do that?" yet.

Calming activities: quick directions

Activity	How the grown-up helps
Pray	Keep it to one short sentence: "Jesus, please help my body feel calm. Amen." Pray with him; do not require repetition.
Listen to a Tonie	Choose one familiar, quiet selection. Sit nearby for 5-10 minutes; this is a reset, not unlimited escape from the original limit.
Hug a stuffed animal	Invite a firm, gentle squeeze: "Bear hug your friend." Never force touch or a hug.
Jumping jacks or burpees	Do 5-10 together in a clear safe space. Stop if movement increases rather than lowers his energy.
Ask for help	Model the words and sign/gesture: "Help, please." Respond quickly so asking becomes useful.
Blow bubbles	Blow together. Encourage one slow breath in and a longer gentle blow out. The adult handles solution and supervises.
Take an animal walk	Choose one animal and move across the room and back: ape squat, bear walk, penguin steps, or slow elephant stomps.
Squeeze a stress ball	Offer a child-safe ball with no loose pieces. Squeeze together 5 times: "Squeeze...and let go."

Calming Activities, Continued

Activity	How the grown-up helps
Push the wall	Place both palms flat. Count 5 slow pushes, then shake arms loose. Supervise so feet remain safe and steady.
Smell the flowers	Place one hand on the belly. Breathe in gently through the nose as if smelling a flower; breathe out slowly. Try 2-3 times.
View a glitter jar	Place it on a stable surface. Watch the glitter settle together; quietly name what you notice. Use a sealed, child-safe jar.
Rest in a cozy corner	Make it inviting, visible, and voluntary. Stay nearby. It is a calm space, not a punishment or place of isolation.
Starfish breathing	Spread one hand. Help trace up a finger while breathing in and down while breathing out. One hand is plenty at first.
Color	Offer chunky crayons and one page. Sit close; let the repetitive movement do the work. No expectation to finish a picture.
Drink water	Offer his familiar thermos and pause for several sips. Drinking can create a helpful physical pause; it does not replace meals or medical care.

Choosing the best strategy

If his body is...	Try first...
Fast, loud, angry, hitting	Wall pushes, animal walk, jumping, stress ball
Worried, scared, clingy	Prayer, stuffed animal, cozy corner, Tonie, slow breathing
Sad, tired, overwhelmed	Cozy corner, stuffed animal, water, Tonie, quiet coloring
Silly, scattered, unable to focus	Animal walk, wall pushes, water, then a quiet choice

A strategy is successful if Waylon becomes a little safer, slower, or more connected - not only if he becomes instantly cheerful.

After Calm: Correct, Repair, and Practice

Wait until his breathing, voice, face, and body are noticeably calmer. Keep this conversation under one minute. Regulation does not erase the boundary or consequence; it makes learning possible.

1. Reconnect

"Your body is calm. I am here. I love you." Offer closeness without requiring a hug.

2. Name the feeling and event

"You were angry because school time started." Avoid labels such as bad, naughty, or mean.

3. Restate the limit

"It is okay to be angry. It is not okay to hit." Keep the rule concrete and brief.

4. Repair the harm

Help him take one age-appropriate action: check on the person, bring an ice pack, pick up what was thrown, help rebuild, or try gentle hands. Do not force a spoken apology.

5. Practice the replacement

Rehearse once: "Show me gentle hands," "Say help," "Point to frustrated," or "Push the wall." Practice immediately and praise the attempt.

6. Follow through

Use a related, calm consequence when needed. A thrown toy rests; spilled items are helped up; an unsafe activity pauses. Avoid adding unrelated punishment after he has regained control.

7. Notice success

Later say exactly what worked: "You were upset and you pushed the wall. Your body got calm."

Core script: "You felt _____. I would not let you _____. Next time, you can _____. Let's practice."

Prevent more than you correct

- Use the wheel once or twice daily when calm, including happy, focused, and calm - not only during problems.
- Preview transitions: "Two more minutes, then reading." Use a visual timer or first-then statement.
- Watch common triggers: hunger, thirst, fatigue, overstimulation, difficult work, waiting, and abrupt transitions.
- Offer small choices before frustration peaks and build movement breaks into homeschool.
- Keep a tiny pattern log: what happened before, the feeling/body signal, strategy tried, and what helped.

Website Follow-Up Plan

Add a private grown-up resource page within the OakBrook Way Academy site so every caregiver uses the same language and routine. The child-facing poster can remain visible in the homeschool area; the website holds the details.

Activity	How the grown-up helps
1. Quick routine	A top-of-page five-step strip: Connect - Name - Choose - Calm - Reconnect, plus the core script.
2. Download center	Buttons for the emotion wheel, one-page poster, printable cards, and this parent guide. Offer both screen and print versions.
3. Activity library	Fifteen image tiles. Each opens a short panel with steps, suggested duration, supervision notes, and when it may help.
4. After-calm section	Include the seven-step correction and repair process with sample language for hitting, throwing, refusal, and transitions.
5. Prevention section	Add transition warnings, first-then language, visual timers, movement breaks, sleep/food checks, and a simple pattern log.
6. Family consistency	List the exact phrases adults will use. Review together and update strategies as Waylon's language and needs grow.
7. Privacy and scope	Do not post tantrum photos, behavior logs, medical details, or identifying stories publicly. Keep this educational, not diagnostic.

When to seek more support

Talk with Waylon's pediatrician if tantrums are unusually intense or frequent, regularly cause injury, last a very long time, interfere substantially with eating, sleep, learning, or family life, or if you notice loss of skills or other developmental concerns. The pediatrician can help determine whether additional developmental or behavioral support would be useful.

Sources and developmental grounding

- American Academy of Pediatrics / HealthyChildren.org: positive discipline, toddler emotional development, tantrum guidance, and calming spaces.
- CDC: Positive Parenting Tips for Toddlers (1-2 and 2-3 years) and developmental milestone resources.
- Treehouse Schoolhouse: Emotional Regulation Strategies and Tools (inspiration for the wheel-and-strategy format).

This guide is an educational family resource and does not replace individualized medical, developmental, or mental-health advice.