



Soft Eyes (Self-Reg Song)

Music & Lyrics and Arrangement by André Zirnsak with the support of Johanna Blackstone (additional voice and ukulele) and Jamie Collier (drums, mixing and mastering).

Introduction:

It was clear from the first course that I wanted to write a Self-Reg Song. I was both thrilled and concerned at the same time when I knew I could do this song as a graduation project. My mixed feelings came from my first experience as a songwriter for a social project. It was quite stressful, as I had to make so many changes to my original ideas - most of them to the disadvantage to the song. Making these changes made me quite uncomfortable, but I made them anyway as the project leaders requested that the song be "different". But this time it should be opposite and I just let the song come to me. The pressure to create something new and meaningful took me some time to get over my fears of not finding the "right" melody, composition and lyrics for this new song. Then, the moment I thought of the title "Soft Eyes", the song just seemed to write itself. Because as we all learned that with the understanding of stress, we get soft eyes. This is the first song I have ever written in English and even if the lyrics took a while to put together, it all just fell into places as it should. The arrangement of the song felt and feels natural to me.

This is a short reflection on what this song is about, why I wrote it the way I did, and what you will be listening to. I will present different parts of the song first and after there is a short description. I hope you enjoy reading and listening to "Soft Eyes", as much as I did creating it.

1st Verse:

Walking along the road.
Looking right and left of me.
Struggling with all these words.
Trying to make sense to see.

What's wrong and right?
What's too much one leaves behind.
No longer blind.
A new way to find.

"Self-Reg is a process, not a program!" This sentence and one of TMC (The Mehrit Centre) values is burned into my head now and forever... I wanted to find a good image for emphasizing this fact ("walking along the road"), as well as pointing out that this process, the search is what we will do life long ("looking right and left of me").

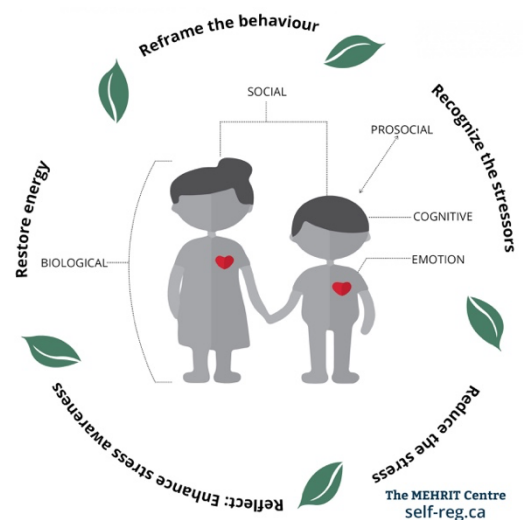


Though, it is not always easy to handle (“struggling with all these words”) and to make sense of what is happening inside of us as well as what is happening in the outside world (“trying to make sense to see”). This reframing process and the questions of “Why?” and “Why now?” seemed crucial to me to include into the song like this. Recognizing the stressors we all face and what is going on inside of ourselves and others is the next part of the first verse (“What’s wrong and right?”), followed by the process of sorting out stressful aspects (“What’s too much one leaves behind.”) and being able to reduce them, reflect about them and restore afterwards (“no longer blind - a new way to find”).

Refrain:

With soft eyes
I can realize what’s written on your mind.
Feelings
Often hidden in a box deep inside.
With soft eyes
All those unspoken words are heard right.
You and I
Here together all our tensions put aside.

The refrain starts with the title of the song “Soft Eyes”, which speaks for itself. It is the central ability to be able to do Self-Reg in general, representing the base for using the Self-Reg framework with the 5 steps, and understanding the 5 domains (s. graphic). Then, I tried to put general aspects of the 5 domains into words. I wanted to stretch out and show our emotions as a big human resource, but also a barrier as well. To point out that stress is much easier for us to handle for us together with others, in case of co-regulation and containment.



2nd Verse:

Standing still for a moment.
Closing eyes and breathing deep.
Letting go of all burdens.
Putting all this shit to sleep.

I know now what to do.
Less is more, I turn to you.
Being a fool.



Warm instead of cool...

For me it is not only central to ask the questions “Why?” and “Why now?”, but also to ask “How?” (“Standing still for a moment. Closing eyes and breathing deep.”). We have to take time and focus on ourselves first, before we can have a closer look at others and to help support them. That’s what I love about Self-Reg: the self-care aspect and having to ask ourselves the question “What for?”. I think this question is missing in so many discussions about how to better support children. I would like to quote one of the TMC values here: “The well-being of children is inseparable of the well-being of the critical adults in their lives.” For me this is absolutely crucial: Get your shit together (“Letting go of all burdens. Putting all this shit to sleep.”), look at yourself and others (“Less is more, I turn to you.”), don’t take yourself too seriously (“Being a fool.”) and do whatever is necessary, with the understanding of the 5 domains as backup (“Warm instead of cool...”). I would like to quote one of my all-time favorite actors, Goldie Hawn, and founder of the Hawn Foundation (Mind-Up!), because what she said, for me, is one of the core elements of Self-Reg. When she spoke about happiness, she pointed out: “If you are not aware of yourself, you cannot be aware of others.” Happiness, as it is hard for someone like me, to protect and value it, was one of my main guidelines when writing the music for this song. I wanted other people to feel happy by listening to it and open up...

Refrain:

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You and I
Here together all our tensions put aside.

Bridge:

Put aside, put aside, put aside
Put aside, put aside, put aside...

Reframing, recognizing
Reducing, new learning
Reflecting, restoring,
Finding my own thing.



This part of the song should emphasize stress management in a gentle manner ("Put aside, put aside..." - listen to the singing...). I was thinking very hard about how to utilize in the 5 steps of Self-Reg in here. Should I look for another image or other words to describe them? But then I realized that these terms, Stuart Shanker established already, are so clear and on point that there was no need for a replacement. Additionally, they are good to sing..;-) I only wanted to stress two important aspects. First, the aspect of "new learning". I hear so many people who tell me excuses like: "It is just how I am. I cannot get out of my skin." From my point of view this is a defensive behavior - to quote Stuart Shanker - absolutely not true: "It is never too late!" I totally agree with that. Otherwise nothing would ever change and would never have been. "New learning" includes one of the TMC values ("a new way looking through/beneath behavior"). The second aspect is "finding my own thing" or in other words according to TMC: "There is no single set way to do Self-Reg." It also includes, that "there are no quick fixes" (another TMC value) and that Self-Reg is an ongoing lifelong process. That potential lies in all human beings, which I love...

Refrain:

With soft eyes
I can realize what's written on your mind.
Feelings
I'm aware, they're around me in their own right.
With soft eyes
I know better now, my thinking's shining bright.
You and I
Here together in this calming joy - side by side.

In the last refrain, I just changed some parts to emphasize that the deep understanding of Self-Reg can have an immense effect on our lives. That if we are able to use the 5 steps will make our lives so much better. The aspect feeling calm and a sense of balance I found essential to include here as well, as they are part of the core characteristics of Self-Reg in combination with the social framework, which is co crucial and rich for all humans.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to start my own Self-Reg journey and giving me the chance to express myself in a way, I totally feel good and calm with in this moment, at that time... I learned tons!!! I hope you enjoy the song and feel the love & joy I had writing and recording it ☺ Take care!