Here are practical classroom solutions and strategies for children who struggle with self-regulation, attention, impulsivity, self-esteem, task initiation/completion, following instructions, and defiance.

**1. Structuring Tasks for Success**

**Chunking Tasks Down**

* **Break tasks into smaller steps**: Instead of “Write a paragraph,” say, “Write one sentence, then take a short break.”
* **Use visuals**: Show a checklist or sequence of images for steps.
* **Highlight key parts**: Underline, bold, or colour-code essential information.
* **Give a starting point**: Example: “First, write your name. Then, write the date.”
* **Provide templates**: Scaffolding can help (e.g., sentence starters, graphic organizers).

**How to Implement Timed Tasks**

* **Use timers**: Set a sand timer or visual countdown (e.g., 5-minute writing sprint).
* **Adjust time expectations**: Allow for breaks, e.g., “Work for 3 minutes, then check in.”
* **Beat the timer**: Gamify focus, e.g., “Can you finish two problems before the timer runs out?”
* **Slow down anxious workers**: Say, “Take your time and do your best. Let’s see how much you can do in 10 minutes.”

**2. Encouraging Task Initiation and Completion**

* **“First, Then” strategy**: “First, write one sentence, then you can draw a picture.”
* **Provide a clear end goal**: “You need to write three sentences before you finish.”
* **Use a motivation checklist**: “Tick off each step as you go.”
* **Offer small breaks**: "After every three questions, take a 1-minute movement break.”
* **Use peer models**: Pair with a student who stays on task.

**3. Language and Praise**

**What Language to Choose**

* **Use positive, clear instructions**: Instead of “Stop talking,” say, “Let’s use quiet voices.”
* **Give choices with limits**: Instead of “Do your work,” say, “Would you like to write with a pencil or a pen?”
* **Use ‘when’ and ‘then’ statements**: Instead of “You can’t go outside,” say, “When your work is finished, then we can go outside.”
* **Avoid negative labels**: Instead of “You’re being difficult,” say, “I see you’re finding this hard. Let’s try together.”

**How to Give Praise Effectively**

* **Be specific**: Instead of “Good job,” say, “I love how you started right away!”
* **Praise effort, not just outcome**: “I saw you working hard even when it got tricky!”
* **Use private praise for shy children**: Whisper, “I noticed you stayed in your seat. Well done.”
* **Acknowledge small wins**: “You wrote the first word! That’s a great start.”
* **Pair praise with action**: “Great focus! Here’s a sticker for your chart.”

**4. Helping with Self-Regulation**

**Time to Think**

* **Provide quiet reflection space**: A corner with a cushion and sand timer.
* **Use ‘think sheets’**: Simple forms where students reflect on choices.
* **Pause before reacting**: Teach “Pause, Breathe, Think” before responding.
* **Encourage self-talk**: Model, “I can do this. I just need to start.”

**Limiting Choices**

* **Offer two options, not open-ended choices**: “Do you want to start with reading or writing?”
* **Provide structured free time**: “You can choose drawing or puzzles after work.”
* **Use ‘Must-Do’ and ‘Can-Do’ lists**: Must-Do: Worksheet; Can-Do: Read a book.

**5. Early Intervention Strategies**

* **Check in early**: Approach quietly and ask, “What’s your first step?”
* **Offer a preview**: “Before we start, here’s what we’ll do today.”
* **Use a buddy system**: Pair with a supportive classmate.
* **Provide movement breaks**: Short walks, stretching, or fidget toys.
* **Use a non-verbal signal**: Tap on their desk or show a picture cue.

**6. Managing Defiance**

* **Stay calm and neutral**: “I hear you don’t want to do this. Let’s find a way to start.”
* **Offer controlled choices**: “Do you want to sit here or here?”
* **Validate feelings, then redirect**: “I know this is hard. Let’s do the first step together.”
* **Use humour or distraction**: “Can you teach me how to do this?”
* **Allow a ‘reset’ moment**: “Take a minute, then we’ll try again.”