



Parent Guide to Zones of Regulation

DEFINITION OF SELF-REGULATION

"...it is defined as the capacity to manage one's thoughts, feelings and actions in adaptive and flexible ways across a range of contexts." - Jude Nicholas

It encompasses:

- Self-control
- Resilience
- Self-management
- Anger management
- Impulse control
- Sensory regulation

A person who is able to self-regulate is able to:

- Remain calm and organised in a stressful situation
(Executive Functioning)
- Cheer themselves up after disappointment
(Emotional Regulation)
- Know when they are experiencing sensory overload and can make adjustments
(Sensory Processing)
- Understand when it is appropriate to cheer and shout and when to be quiet. Understands what effect they are having on the feelings of those around them
(Social Cognition)

WHY TEACH THE ZONES OF REGULATION?

- Provides a common language to discuss emotions – a language that is non-judgemental
- The Zones of Regulation is simple for children to understand but is helpful for all
- The Zones teaches *healthy* coping and regulation strategies
- Research has found that higher academic achievement is more likely when interventions include self-regulation components

WHAT ARE THE ZONES OF REGULATION?

The Zones of Regulation is a framework used to teach children self-regulation. The framework takes all of the complex feelings and states of alertness that we experience and places them into one of four coloured zones. The framework enables children to identify which state of alertness and emotions they are experiencing and allows them to tap into strategies or tools to help them to move between zones.

Blue Zone is used to describe low states of alertness, such as when one feels tired, sick or bored. This is when the body and /or brain is moving slowly or sluggishly.

Green Zone is used to describe a regulated state of alertness. A person may be described as calm, happy, focused or content when in the Green Zone. This is the zone children generally need to be in for schoolwork and for being social. Being in the Green Zone shows control.

Yellow Zone is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness; however, a person has some control when in the Yellow Zone but is starting to escalate from this. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, nervousness, confusion and many more slightly elevated emotions and states when in the Yellow Zone (such as wiggly, squirmy or sensory seeking).

Red Zone is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness or very intense feelings. A person may be experiencing anger, rage, explosive behaviour, panic, terror or elation when in the Red Zone. Being in the Red Zone can best be explained by not being in control of one's body.

Once the correct Zone is identified, we can work out what to do next

Blue Zone: we need to rest and recharge first before choosing a tool to improve our mood or alertness.

Green Zone: tells us to keep going and that we're in control and doing well.

Yellow Zone: tells us to go slowly now as we are in danger of losing control. Work out why we are feeling a more intense emotion and choose a tool to bring yourself back to green.

Red Zone: a sign to stop. We are not in control now and need to make regulation a priority.

In school, we never discuss or address incidents with children when they are in the Red Zone. It is important that they are well regulated first and we give them time to do so. Once they are regulated, we can discuss things calmly and clearly, try to work out what triggered such a heightened state and talk about how we can be prepared for it next time so we react more appropriately.

MY CHILD SAYS THEY PUT A PEG TO SHOW HOW THEY FEEL. WHAT IS THIS?

Each morning, we ask our children from Reception Class to Year 2 to self-check how they are feeling. They place their names/pictures on the Zones display in class. The children are well practised at this and are confident in placing their names in their zone. None of the zones are 'bad'. The teacher will have a chat with any children who are not in the green zone and discuss any issues and what tools they could choose that would return them to green.

KEY POINTS:

- There is no 'bad' Zone
- Everyone experiences all of the Zones at different times and in different circumstances
- We can't change the way children feel but we can help them to manage their feelings/states and behaviours. "It's ok to be angry but it is not ok to hit..."
- You can be in more than one Zone at a time (eg. sad and angry)
- If your child is confidently using words to describe their emotions, they don't need to revert to Zones language. However, it is useful for them to know the strategy groups that will help them
- If your child is in the Red Zone, limit the number of words you are using. This is not the moment to address their behaviour in depth. Discuss the use of tools when your child is regulated.

HOW TO REGULATE OUR EMOTIONS

Tools to help a child move out of a Zone and into a more appropriate one can only be used once they have learnt to identify their feelings. Much of our work with children is still centred around identifying their feelings as they are often more complex than 'tired' or 'distracted'; they may also be frustrated or worried. The identification of the feelings is the key to successful regulation.

Blue Zone tools: help wake up our bodies, feel better and regain focus.

Green Zone tools: help us stay calm, focused and feeling good. These are often proactive strategies.

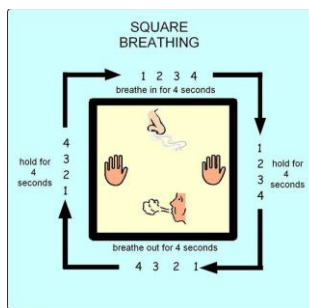
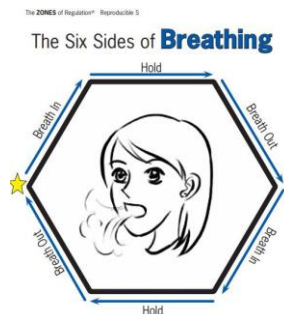
Yellow Zone tools: help us regain control and calm ourselves.

Red Zone tools: help us stay safe and start to calm down.

There are three main tools available to help us regulate:

- Thinking strategies
- Calming techniques
- Sensory supports

CALMING STRATEGIES – these ideas link closely with our work on Mindfulness



COUNTING

- Forward and backward
- Count objects
- Count colours
- Count breaths
- Count pulse (use a fitbit to pulse track)

CALMING ACTIVITIES

- Puzzles
- Listen to music
- Draw / paint / doodle
- Origami
- Play-Doh / clay
- Read
- Kick a ball, skip, walk, bounce on a trampoline

SENSORY STRATEGIES

SENSORY TOOLS – Do you have a sensory box at home?



Sometimes children are better able to regulate with reduced sensory input in a quiet place. Weighted blankets are also helpful for calming worry and anxiety.

