

What are the Zones of Regulation?

The Zones of Regulation is an internationally renowned intervention which helps children manage their emotions. The zones provide a framework for our children to develop self-regulation.

Children learn to identify emotions, recognise events that might make them move to a different zone and use the tools they have learnt to help them remain or move to a particular zone to help them regulate how they are feeling. What are the different Zones?

What are the different Zones?

Blue Zone: low level of arousal, not ready to learn, feels sad, sick, tired, bored

Green Zone: calm state of alertness, optimal level to learn, feels happy, calm, focused

Yellow Zone: heightened state of alertness, feels frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, excited

Red Zone: heightened state of alertness and intense emotions, not an optimal level for learning, out of control, feels mad/angry, terrified, yelling/hitting, elated

We teach the children that everyone experiences all of the zones. The Red and Yellow Zones are not 'bad' or 'naughty' zones. All of the zones are expected at one time or another. We will show them that the Blue Zone, for example, is helpful when you are trying to fall asleep.

What can I do to support the Zones of Regulation at home?

- Identify your own feelings using zones language in front of your child (e.g. "I'm feeling frustrated because..... I am in the Yellow Zone.")
- Talk about which tool you will use to be in the appropriate zone (e.g. "I'm going to go for a walk as I need to get to the Green Zone.")
- At times, wonder which zone your child is in. Or, discuss which zone a character in a film / book might be in. (e.g.: "You look sleepy. Are you in the Blue Zone?")
- Provide positive reinforcement when your child is in the Green Zone and if they make efforts to stay in the Green Zone. E.g. "I can see you are working really hard to stay in the Green Zone by..."
- Label which zones your child is in throughout the day (e.g. "You look sleepy, I wonder if you are in the Blue Zone?")
- Teach your child which zone tools they can use (e.g. "It's time for bed, let's read a book together in the rocking chair to get to the Blue Zone.")
- Play "Feelings Charades"
- Have regular check-ins. "How are you feeling now?" and "How can you get back to Green?"
- Share how their behaviour is affecting your zone. For example, if they are in the Green Zone, you could comment that their behaviour is also helping you feel happy / go into the Green Zone

- Take turns choosing emotions from a stack of cards or papers and act it out using only face and body clues. Guess each other's emotion, discuss which zone it's in and why. (Added challenge: Name a tool you could use when feeling that emotion)
- Play "Name that feeling"
- People watch and guess the feelings/zones of others
- Name the feelings of characters while watching a movie (and point out any strategies they use)

Tips for practicing the Zones of Regulation

- Know yourself and how you react in difficult situations before dealing with your child's behaviours.
- Know your child's sensory threshold. We all process sensory information differently and it impacts our reactivity to situations.
- Know your child's triggers.
- Be consistent in managing your child's behaviour and use the same language you use at home.
- Empathise with your child and validate what they are feeling.
- Have clear boundaries/routines and always follow through.
- Do not deal with an angry, upset child when you are not yet calm yourself.
- Discuss strategies for the next time when you are in a similar situation.
- Remember to ask your child how their choices made you feel (empathy).
- Praise your child for using strategies. Encourage your child to take a sensory break to help regulate their bodies.