

A parents' guide to: **THE ZONES OF REGULATION**



The Zones of Regulation is an international framework which helps children to manage difficult emotions, known as 'self-regulation'.

From time to time, all of us (including adults) find it hard to manage strong feelings such as worry, anger, excitement, restlessness, fear or tiredness, and this stops us from getting on with our day effectively.

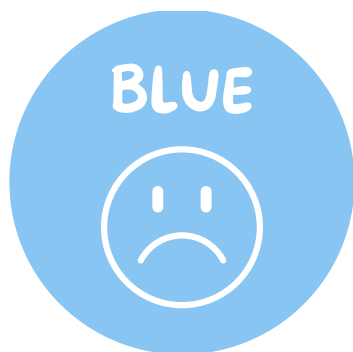
Children who feel these emotions often find it hard to learn and concentrate in school.

The Zones of Regulation aims to teach children strategies to help them cope with these feelings so they can get back to feeling calm and ready to learn. These coping strategies are called 'self-regulation'.

Using this framework will help children to:

- Build strategies to manage difficult feelings
- Increase emotional vocabulary
- Recognise how others are feeling, building empathy
- Increase resilience

WHAT ARE THE ZONES?



In the **BLUE** zone
you might feel:

Sad
Tired
Bored
Poorly

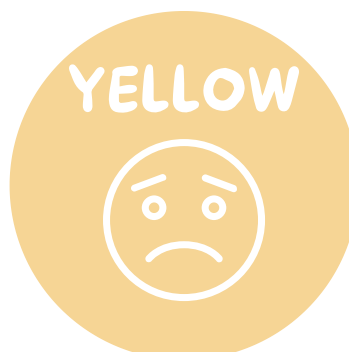
You might have low
levels of energy, or
feel sluggish



In the **GREEN** zone
you might feel:

Calm
Happy
Content
Focused

You might be in a
regulated state of
alertness, and feel
in control



In the **YELLOW** zone
you might feel:

Nervous
Silly
Frustrated
Angry

You might be in a
heightened state of
alertness, but still
have some control



In the **RED** zone
you might feel:

Panicked
Angry
Elated
Terrified

You might be in an
super heightened
state, or feel out
of control

You can remember the zones by using a traffic light system

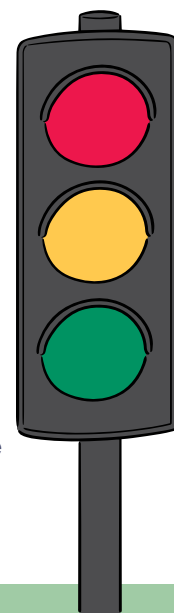
BLUE: rest area where you pull over, you need to recharge

GREEN: we are good to go!

YELLOW: caution, slow down, or take warning

RED: stop and regain control

There are no good or bad zones, we all experience being in each zone, and some are helpful depending on the situation. For example, when we are trying to go to sleep, we would want to be in the blue zone, but maybe not if we were trying to concentrate in class!



HOW DO WE MOVE BETWEEN ZONES?

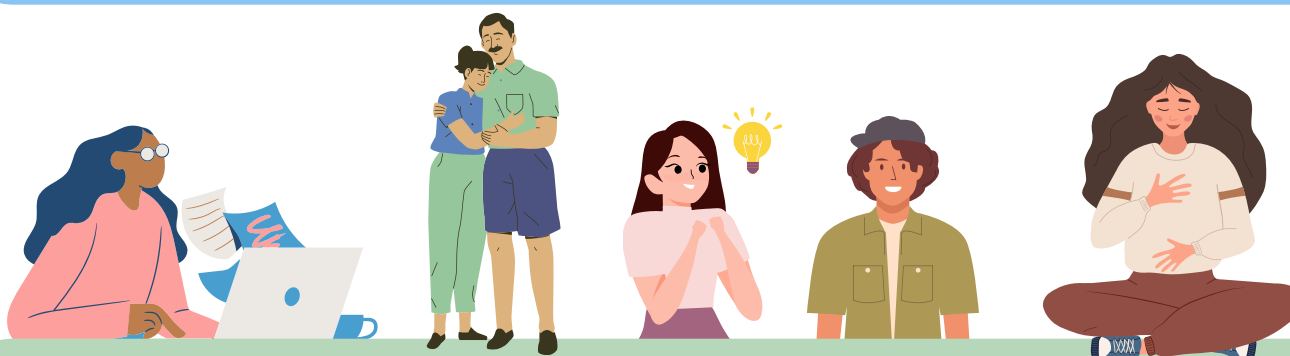


There are multiple tools and strategies that children can use to self-regulate – and they will be individual to each child. However, it may be useful to think about the types of activities that will help our children to regulate in each zone.



BLUE ZONE TOOLS

- Think about what would make you feel better when you are sad, tired or bored.
- This might include talking to a trusted person, breathing, taking a break and relaxing, doing a hobby or importantly, doing some physical exercise.
- These exercises should wake up our bodies, recharge and activate our senses and regain our focus. Examples may include: taking a walk, doing some active movement (think jumping, bouncing or swinging).



GREEN ZONE TOOLS

- Think about the strategies you or your child uses to maintain your happiness, alertness, and calmness in the activity you are engaging in.
- This may include all of the activities mentioned above, and also pay attention to the environment your child is in – is it safe, calm and enabling of engagement?

HOW DO WE MOVE BETWEEN ZONES?



Try modelling some of the strategies suggested to show the benefits to your child. It might take some practice and repetition to start using them as a habit, so some encouragement and help to try them together could be helpful.



YELLOW ZONE TOOLS

- When you see your child starting to become heightened, fidgety, overexcited or unfocussed – try to introduce calming strategies to prevent an escalation into the Red Zone.
- These might be taking deep breaths, listening to calming music, pressure – like an arm massage or a big hug, using fidget toys or stress balls, reading a book.



RED ZONE TOOLS

- Once in the Red Zone, it is encouraged that your child go to an environment that is calming and safe.
- Calming strategies that 'power down' the emotions your child is feeling can be practiced here.
- Minimise your language when your child is in the red zone – be clear, concise and calm in your tone.

OTHER HELPFUL STRATEGIES

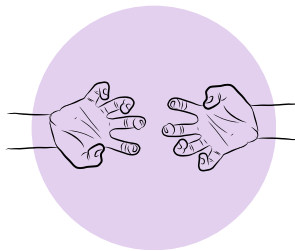


PALM PUSH



Face your palms together, push firmly, and hold for 10 seconds to get rid of some extra energy or tension.

FINGER PULL



Put one palm up and the other palm down, facing each other. Lock your finger tips together (except thumbs) and pull firmly and hold for 10 seconds.

SAFE SPACE



Imagine a special place you can go to in your mind when you feel stressed, upset or worried. It might be a real place or a happy memory - its up to you!



ARM MASSAGE

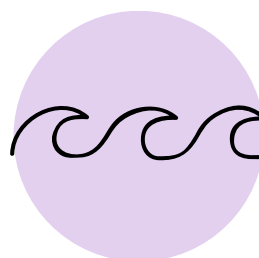
Starting with your wrist, squeeze firmly and move up and down the arm 5 times. Then do the same on the other arm.

BELLY BREATHING



Place one hand on your belly, and one hand on your chest. Breathe in through your nose and count to 5. Breathe into your belly, feeling your hand rise.

Then breathe out through your mouth (like blowing through a straw) for another 5 counts.



SURF THE WAVE

Surf the Wave means trying to wait until the feeling has passed before deciding what to do. This helps to prevent us saying or doing something that we later regret.

When we surf the wave, we want to say to ourselves:

IT'S OK TO FEEL THIS WAY
IT'LL PASS
I'M GOING TO BE OK

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD TO USE THE ZONES AT HOME?



- Model and identify your own feelings using Zones language in front of your child, and talk about what you might do to feel better
- Observe your child's behaviour and try to use strategies when they are showing signs of being in the yellow zone, to catch it before they move to the red zone.
- Practice calming strategies when your child is in the green zone. This may include doing some deep breathing/meditation/sensory activities throughout their day.
- At times, wonder which Zone your child is in. Or, discuss which Zone a character in a film / book might be in.
- 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.
- Put up and reference the Zones visuals and tools in your home to consistently refer to and check in regularly with this
- Praise and encourage your child when they share which Zone they are in.
- Develop your child's own zones of regulation tool box and have easy access to calming/sensory equipment at home

You look sleepy - I wonder if you in the Blue zone?

I am going to take 4 deep breaths to get me back to the green zone

I am feeling frustrated, I think I am in the yellow zone



WHERE CAN I GET MORE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT?



If you are seeing this resource digitally, click the links below to be directed to the resource. If not, type the links into your search browser.

ZONES OF REGULATION WEBSITE

www.zonesofregulation.com

SELF REGULATION ACTIVITIES

www.theotttoolbox.com/zones-of-regulation-activities

CALM DOWN STRATEGIES

www.parentswithconfidence.com/calm-down-strategies-for-kids

YOUNG MINDS | VALIDATING EMOTIONS

www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/how-to-validate-your-feelings-however-you-are-is-perfectly-okay

CHILD MIND INSTITUTE | HELPING CHILDREN TO SELF-REGULATE

www.childmind.org/article/can-help-kids-self-regulation