



A Parents' Guide

Introduction

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

Self-regulation can go by many names such as 'self-control', 'impulse management' and 'self-management'. Self-regulation is best described as the best state of alertness for a situation. For example, when your child takes part in a sports game they would need to have a higher state of alertness than when, for example, they were working in a library.

From time to time, all of us (including adults) find it hard to manage strong feelings such as worry, anger, 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'.

At Dorin Park School, we run The Zones of Regulation throughout the school. We want to teach all of our children good coping and regulation strategies so they can help themselves when they experience anxiety and stress. In the classroom, children sometimes panic when faced with a tricky learning problem or challenge. Teaching them how to cope with these feelings can make them better at tackling learning challenges and build better resilience so they don't give up so easily when faced with difficulty.

Aims

We aim to help children to:

- Recognise when they are in the different Zones and learn how to change or stay in the Zone they are in.
- Increase their emotional vocabulary so they can explain how they are feeling.
- Recognise when other people are in different Zones, thus developing better empathy.
- Develop an insight into what might make them move into the different Zones.
- Understand that emotions, sensory experiences such as lack of sleep or hunger, and their environment might influence which Zone they are in.
- Develop problem-solving skills and resilience.
- Identify a range of calming and alerting strategies that support them (known as their personal 'toolkit').

What are the different Zones?

The Zones of Regulation uses four colours to help children self-identify how they're feeling and categorize it based on colour. They learn different strategies to help them cope and manage their emotions based on which colour Zone they are in.

Additionally, The Zones of Regulation helps children recognise their own triggers, learn to read facial expressions,

develop problem-solving skills, and become more attuned to how their actions affect other people. The curriculum helps children better understand their emotions, sensory needs and thinking patterns.

The Blue Zone

The Blue Zone is used to describe low states of alertness or arousal. When you're in the Blue Zone you may be feeling down – sad, sick, tired, or bored. You are still in control, but with low energy emotions.

The Green Zone

The Green Zone is used to describe a calm state of alertness. When you're in the Green Zone, it means you are calm, focused, happy, or ready to learn. This is predominantly the state you want your child to be in. It is also the state most needed in the classroom in order to learn.

The Yellow Zone

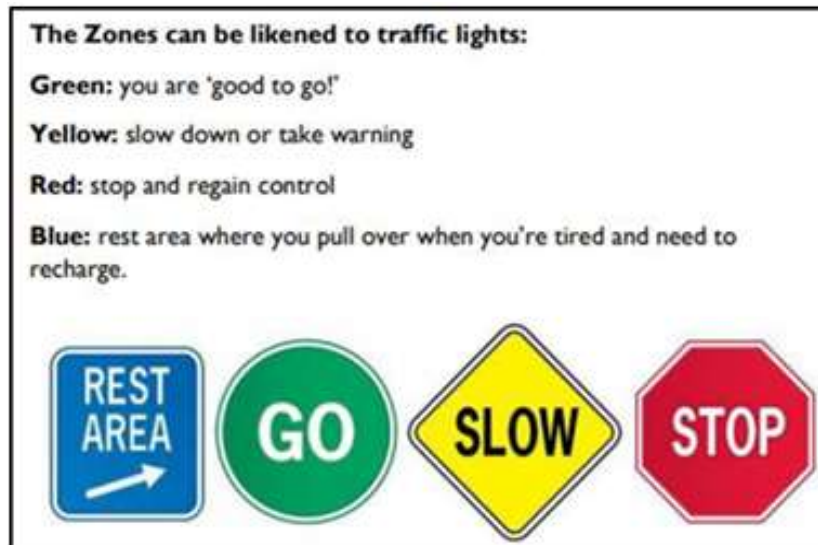
The Yellow Zone is used to describe a heightened state of alertness. This is not always a bad thing, and you still have some control of your actions in the yellow zone. Being in the Yellow Zone means you may feel frustrated, anxious, or nervous. But it could also mean you're feeling excited, silly, or hyper – which is okay in the right situations.

The Red Zone

The Red Zone is used to describe an extremely heightened state of intense emotions. When a person reaches the Red Zone, they're no longer able to control their emotions or reactions.



We teach 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, for example, that the Blue Zone is helpful when you are trying to fall asleep.



How does my child learn about the Zones of Regulation?

We have introduced the Zones through discrete teaching lessons. We also use the Zones language as part of daily school life so all staff refer to them, not just their class teacher.

How can you help your child use The Zones of Regulation at home?

- Identify your own feelings using Zones language in front of your child (e.g.: "I'm frustrated. I think I am in the Yellow Zone.")
- Talk about which tool you will use to be in the appropriate Zone (e.g.: "I need to take four deep breaths to help get me back to the Green Zone.")
- At times, wonder which Zone your child is in.
- Discuss which Zone a character in a film or book might be in (e.g.: "You look sleepy. Are you in the Blue Zone?")
- Engaging your child in discussion about Zones when they are in the Red Zone is unlikely to be effective. You need to be discussing the different Zones and tools they can use when they are more regulated and calm.
- Regular check-ins. (e.g.: "How are you feeling now?" and "How can you get back to Green?")
- Modelling. It is important to remember to show how you use tools to get back to the Green Zone. You might say "I am going to make myself a cup of tea and do some breathing exercises because I am in the Blue Zone", and afterwards tell your child how using those tools helped you get back to the Green Zone.
- 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 and move into the Green Zone.
- Put up and reference the Zones visuals and tools in your home.
- Praise and encourage your child when they share which Zone they are in.

Tips for practising the Zones of Regulation

- Read different books about feelings to your child and actively refer to which Zone the feelings in the book belong to.
- When you're watching TV with your child, ask them to identify which Zone their favourite characters are in throughout the show. This is a great way to turn your child's screen time into a learning experience and to show your child that the Zones can be found everywhere.
- Know yourself and how you react in difficult situations before dealing with your child's behaviours.
- Know your child's triggers.
- Be consistent in managing your child's behaviour and in the language you use.
- Empathise with your child and validate what they are feeling.
- Have clear boundaries and 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.
- Create a 'calm' box full of things which help to keep your child calm and alert.

Tools for self-regulation

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Techniques are not a treat – they are tools to help the children feel regulated

Calming Techniques



- Counting:
 - forward & backward
 - objects
 - colours
 - breaths
 - pulse

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Sensory Techniques



- Classical music
- Bear hug
- Chewy foods
- Go for a walk
- Wall push
- Suck a smoothie through a straw
- Blow bubbles