



A Parents' Guide to The Zones of Regulation

The Zones of Regulation is an 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'.

*Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we
react to it.*

-Charles Sindoll



At Marsden Infant and Nursery School, we use the Zones of Regulation throughout the whole school. We want to teach **all** of our children good coping and regulation strategies so they can help themselves when they experience anxiety or stress. In the classroom, sometimes children experience anxiety when faced with a tricky learning problem or challenge. By teaching them how to cope with these feelings it might make them better at tackling learning challenges and build better resilience so they don't give up so easily when faced with difficulty.

We want children at Marsden Infant and Nursery School to grow as successful young people and then into successful adults. Teaching the children at a young age about managing their feelings will support them in later life so that they don't turn to negative coping strategies which affect their mental and physical wellbeing.

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?

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

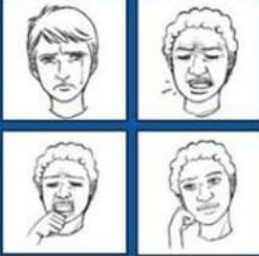
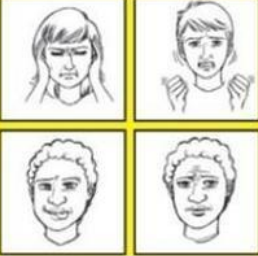
Green Zone: calm state of alertness; optimal level to learn; feels happy, calm, feeling okay, focused.

Yellow Zone: heightened state of alertness; elevated emotions; has some control; feels frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, excited, nervous, loss of some control.

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, out of control.



The **ZONES** of Regulation®

			
BLUE ZONE Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	GREEN ZONE Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	YELLOW ZONE Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	RED ZONE Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control

We will 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.



The Zones can be likened to traffic lights:

Green: you are 'good to go!'

Yellow: slow down or take warning

Red: stop and regain control

Blue: rest area where you pull over when you're tired and need to recharge.





How will my child learn about the Zones of Regulation?

We will be introducing the Zones through discrete teaching lessons and through our PSHE curriculum. We will also be using the Zones language as part of daily school life so all staff will be referring to them, not just their class teacher.

Some children might prefer not to use the 'Zones language' but label the emotions directly this is fine and encouraged!

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 what 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. Or, discuss which Zone a character in a film / book might be in. (e.g.: "You look sleepy. Are you in the Blue Zone?")
- Engaging your child in discussion around 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 / calm.
- Teach your child which tools they can use. (eg: "It's time for bed. Let's read a book together in the comfy chair to get you in the Blue Zone.")
- Regular Check-ins. "How are you feeling now?" and "How can you get back to Green?"



- Modelling it is important to show the children how you use tools to get back to the green zones. 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/ go 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 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.

Create a 'calm' box full of things which help to keep your child calm and alert. Advice about what could go in the box can be found on our website in the 'Zones Toolkit' section below.

Common questions on the Zones of Regulation

Can my child be in more than one zone at the same time?

Yes. Your child may feel tired (blue zone) because they did not get enough sleep, and anxious (yellow zone) because they are worried about an activity at school. Listing more than one Zone reflects a good sense of personal feelings and alertness levels.

Should children be punished for being in the RED Zone?

It's best for children to experience the natural consequences of being in the RED zone. If a child's actions/choices hurt someone or destroys property, they need to repair the relationship and take responsibility for the mess they create. Once the child has calmed down, use the experience as a learning opportunity to process what the child would do differently next time.

Can you look like one Zone on the outside and feel like you are in another Zone on the inside?



Yes. Many of us “disguise” our Zone to match social expectations. We use the expression “put on a happy face” or mask the emotion so other people will have good thoughts about us. Parents often say that their children “lose it” and goes into the Red Zone as soon as they get home. This is because children are increasingly aware of their peers and expectations when in the classroom. They make every effort to keep it together at school to stay in the Green Zone. Home is when they feel safe to let it all out.

Where can I find out more about the Zones of Regulation?

www.zonesofregulation.com www.weareteachers.com/zones-of-regulation-activities <https://www.theottoolbox.com/?s=zones+of+regulation>

[The Zones of Regulation - An Overview of The Zones for Parents \(hes-extraordinary.com\)](http://hes-extraordinary.com)



The Zones of Regulation Toolbox Guide



As part of our learning about the Zones of Regulation, children will get to choose 'tools' to go in their toolkits.

UNDERSTANDING **ZONE** TOOLS:



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.

These 'tools' aren't just for school: they can be used at home too so you can help your child to regulate (manage) their emotions.



Read through some of the strategies below to decide what would go in **your** Zones of Regulation toolkit? Think about:

- What helps you to calm down when you are stressed?
- What helps you to focus when you are tired?
- What do you do to calm down when you are angry?

Different tools work for different people. Can you help your child choose what works for them when they need to move from one zone to another?

Sensory tools include anything which you can see, touch/feel, smell, hear or taste. They also are things which encourage you to move.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| • Having a bear hug | • Swinging or rocking |
| • Using a wobble cushion | • Eating a strong mint |
| • Using a weighted toy or blanket | • Wall push-ups |
| • Ear defenders / headphones | • Sucking a smoothie or milkshake through a straw |
| • Blowing bubbles | • Roll on a balance ball |
| • Watching changing coloured lights | • Listen to classical music |
| • Soft, dimmed lighting | • Have a dance |
| | • Jumping on a trampoline |



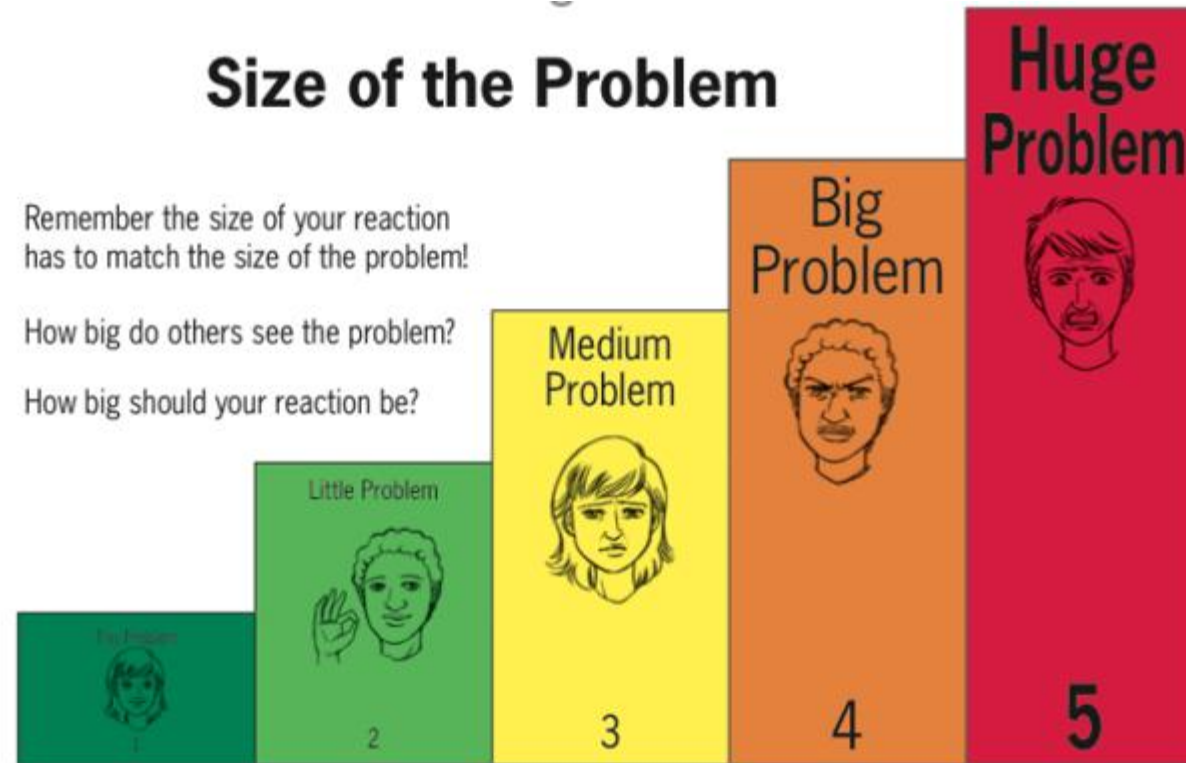
- Fidget and squeeze toys or putty
- Smelling relaxing scents like Lavender
- Eating chewy food
- Having a nice warm bath
- Listening to bird / nature sounds
- Going for a walk or run

These include any activities which distract you or need you to focus to take your mind off worries and negative thoughts.



Thinking Techniques

These are strategies to challenge negative thoughts and help a child to deal with problems.



Make sure you frequently praise your child for having expected reactions rather than just pointing out the unexpected reactions.



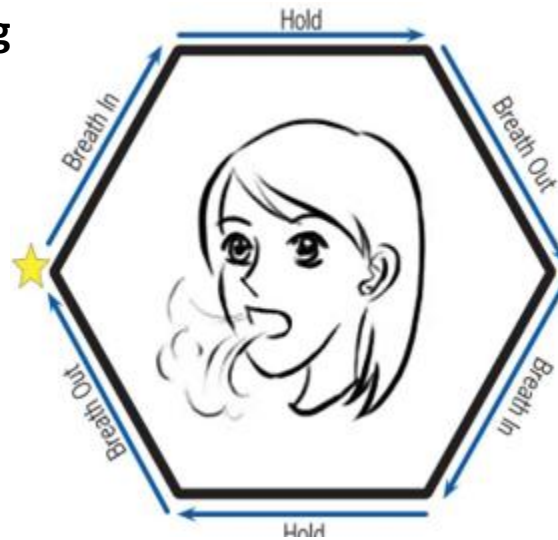
Inner Coach versus Inner Critic

Instead of....	Try thinking....
I'm not good at this!	What am I missing?
I give up!	I'll use some of the other strategies I've learned.
This is too hard!	This might take some time and effort.
I can't make this any better!	I can always improve; I will keep trying.
I can't do maths!	I'm going to train my brain in maths.
I made a mistake!	Mistakes help me to improve.
I'll never be as smart as her / him!	I'm going to work out what they do and try it.
It's good enough!	Is this really my best work?



Breathing Techniques

The Six Sides of Breathing



Starting at the star, trace with your finger the sides of the hexagon as you take a deep breath in, feeling your shoulders rise as the air fills you.

Trace over the next side as you hold your breath for a moment.

Slowly breathe out as you trace the third side of the hexagon.

Continue tracing around the bottom three sides of the hexagon as you complete another deep breath.

Continue the Six Sides of Breathing cycle until you feel calm and relaxed.



Lazy 8 Breathing



Start with the eight on its side and start in the middle

Go up to the left and trace the left part of the 8 with your finger while you breathe in.

When you get to the middle of the eight again, breathe out while you trace the right part of the 8 with your finger.

Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques can help someone who is extremely anxious or scared, has lost control and is struggling to calm down.

Room Search Pick one broad category and search the room. Name everything in the room that is green. How many stars can you find in the room? Say the type of shoe everyone in the room is wearing. Count the bricks on one wall.



5-4-3-2-1 Senses

Identify:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you hear
- 3 things you smell
- 2 things you can touch
- 1 thing you taste

5-4-3-2-1 Sights

If noticing each sense is tough right now, try an exercise just with sights. Create categories and have them name what they see. Here's an example:

- 5 colours I see
- 4 shapes I see
- 3 soft things I see
- 2 people I see
- 1 book I see



A-B-C Around the Room

This exercise will get the child connected with that place where they are right now. Have your child look around the room and name something they see that starts with A, then B, then C and so forth. See how far they can get through the alphabet and then check-in to see how they're feeling once they reach the end.

Object Focus

Keep some unique items on hand with different textures and colours. These could be sensory items, colourful rocks, snow globes or something else. Children can hold an item in their hands and tune in all of their focus to the item. Notice the colours. Notice the textures. How does it feel in my hand? How does it feel when I squeeze it? What colours do I see? Just notice everything there is to notice about the item!

'I am Here' Hand Trace

For this exercise, you'll need paper and a pencil, marker, or crayon. Children will trace a hand on the paper. You can take this a few different directions. Children can simply press the hand into the space on the paper and feel the connection between hand and table. Alternatively, they can use the space inside the hand to write things they see or describe the room.



Reorientation

To re-orient to the moment, just have the child name facts about the moment. You can give them a card to keep with them to remind them of facts they can state and practice, practice, practice! It might sound like:

- My name is...
- I am in...
- Today is...
- The season is...
- The weather is...
- I am wearing...