

The Zones of Regulation

At Wallace Fields Infant School and Nursery we embrace all emotions. We understand that it is important to allow children to express a range of emotions and that we teach them how to regulate their emotions.

Why Teach Self-Regulation?

Regulation is something everyone continually works on whether we are aware of it or not. We all come across situations that can test our patience and if we can recognise when we are becoming less regulated then we are able to do something about it. This means we can manage our feelings and get ourselves back to a healthy and regulated place. This comes more naturally for some, but for others it is a skill that needs more attention and practise. This is the goal of The Zones of Regulation.

Sorting Our Emotions into Four Zones

Feelings are complicated. They come in different sizes, intensities and levels of energy that are unique within our brains and bodies. To make them easier to talk about, think about and regulate, The Zones of Regulation organises our feelings, state of alertness, and energy levels into four coloured Zones – Blue, Green, Yellow and Red. The simple, common language and visual structure of Zones of Regulation helps make the complex skill of regulation more concrete for learners and those who support them. We learn to regulate our Zones to meet our goals and task demands, as well as support our overall well-being.

The Four Zones

Blue Zone



The **BLUE ZONE** describes low states of alertness and down feelings, such as when a person feels sad, tired, sick, hurt, lonely, or bored. Our energy is low and our body is moving slowly when we are in the **Blue Zone**. When in the **Blue Zone** we often need to rest and recharge to meet our goals. We can regulate by seeking (or co-regulate by offering) comfort, energizing or resting. If we are feeling sick in the **Blue Zone**, we may need to rest. If we are feeling tired, we may need to energize (depending on the context). If we are feeling sad, we may need comfort. In all these situations, the common theme is noticing our lower energy and/or down feelings and options for managing them.

Green Zone



The **GREEN ZONE** describes a calm, alert state. We may be feeling happy, focused, content, peaceful or calm in the **Green Zone**. The nervous system feels safe, organized, and connected in the **Green Zone**, helping us be primed to learn. However, we can learn in other Zones too. When in the **Green Zone** we regulate by using tools and supports that keep us moving forward comfortably, helping us feel ready to go! In the **Green Zone**, we might regulate by choosing to eat a healthy snack, exercise, take a break, or pause for a mindful moment. These restorative actions help us proactively care for ourselves so we can move forward with ease.

Yellow Zone



The **YELLOW ZONE** describes when our energy is higher, and our internal state starts to elevate. Our emotions get a little stronger. We may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, confusion, nervousness, be overwhelmed, or have the wiggles, when in the **Yellow Zone**. In the **Yellow Zone** we may need to take action to regulate to manage our energy and feelings as they get stronger. For example, if we are feeling energetic at the lunch table it helps to use caution and take a deep breath, so we do not spill something. If we are feeling nervous before our performance, we can slow down our racing thoughts and speech by using a mindfulness tool. When we are frustrated, and pause to take notice, we can decide to take a break to collect ourselves before we say something we regret.



Red Zone



The **RED ZONE** describes a state of extremely high energy and intense, very overwhelming feelings. We may be in an extremely heightened state of alertness, potentially triggering our fight, flight, freeze or flee protective response. We may feel elated, euphoric, anger, rage, devastated, out of control, panicked, or terrified when in the **Red Zone**. When in the **Red Zone** we might need to pause and assess if we need to regulate and gain a sense of control of our strong feelings and high energy. For example, if we are feeling angry it may help to pause and count to 10 before we act. If we are panicked, we can stop and use our self-talk to help us gain a sense of control of our thoughts in order to meet our goal. If we are elated, such as when a teammate scores the winning point, we might need to pause and take a big breath to regulate our impulse to run out on the field to celebrate if there is still time on the clock.

How Can You Help At Home?

- Talk through the zones with your child. Ask them 'how would you feel in each zone?'
- Discuss what emotion they feel in each zone e.g. in the yellow zone I may feel worried.
- How they physically feel e.g. in yellow zone I may have butterflies in my stomach or have sweaty palms (if feeling anxious).
- Then discuss what might they be doing - what be their actions e.g. in yellow zone would they be pacing around, snapping at others, fidgeting?
- Then discuss how to help them move into the Green zone e.g. if I was in the Yellow zone and feeling anxious I might find competing some yoga stretches/breathing techniques helps me get back into the green zone.
- Create a list of strategies that work for your child. Remind your child that we are all unique and the strategies that work for one person might not help them so they need to think about what would help them.
- Remind them that we will experience all zones and there are no good or bad zones - however our success in regulating our emotions depends on us recognising our emotion, understanding it and putting a support strategy in place.

			
<p>Blue Zone</p> <p>Sad Bored Tired Sick</p>	<p>Green Zone</p> <p>Happy Focused Calm Proud</p>	<p>Yellow Zone</p> <p>Worried Frustrated Silly Excited</p>	<p>Red Zone</p> <p>overjoyed/Elated Panicked Angry Terrified</p>

What are the self-regulation tools we can use?

Every child will have a different set of tools that help them get back to their green zone – this will relate to hobbies, interests, and personal preference. Some examples are listed below and are taught in school and can be practised at home to provide your child with a toolkit of strategies. They can include:

- Sensory tools: having a snack or something to drink; fidget toys; walk and movement breaks; exercise; listening to music; sand/ water/messy play;
- Thinking tools: thinking about the size of the problem and the reaction – is it a tiny/little/medium/big/huge problem; how big do you see the problem/how big do others see the problem? How big should your reaction be? Positive self-talk; discussing the problem with adults/peers.
- Calming activities: lights on/off; change seating; temperature of the room; noises in the room; relaxation area; reading; colouring/drawing; listening to music; breathing exercises.

Here is a fantastic link to a Youtube channel run by Occupational Therapists in the NHS: [Sensory Integration Videos](#)