

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE ZONES OF REGULATION

**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE**



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

Self-regulation is best described as the best state of alertness for a situation. Or the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress. This means we are most available for learning and interacting.





Everyone (including adults) will experience times when they find it hard to manage strong feelings such as worry, anger, restlessness, fear or tiredness. This can stop us getting on with our day effectively. Children will similarly find it hard to learn and concentrate at school.

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

In Newcastle, we want to teach all children effective coping and regulation strategies so they can help themselves when they experience anxiety and stress.

# WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT ZONES?

## The **ZONES** of Regulation™

			
<p><b>BLUE ZONE</b></p> <p>Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly</p>	<p><b>GREEN ZONE</b></p> <p>Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Relaxed</p>	<p><b>YELLOW ZONE</b></p> <p>Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control</p>	<p><b>RED ZONE</b></p> <p>Mad/Angry Terrified Elated/Ecstatic Devastated Out of Control</p>

© 2011 Think Social Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.  
From The Zones of Regulation™ by Leah M. Kuypers • Available at [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)

Using Zones of Regulation as a framework we aim to help children to:

- Recognise when they are in different zones.
- Learn how to change or stay in their Zone.
- Increase their emotional vocabulary so they can express how they are feeling.
- Recognise when other people are in different Zones.
- Develop stronger empathy skills.
- Understand what might make them move into different zones.
- Be aware that emotions, sensory experiences (e.g. hunger) and their environment might influence their Zone.
- Develop problem solving and resilience skills.

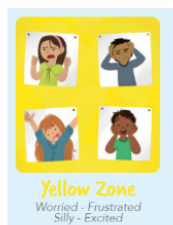
There are four coloured Zones to categorise states of alertness and emotional states:



The Blue Zone is used to describe low states of alertness such as feeling sad, tired, sick or bored (the body/ brain is moving sluggishly).



The Green Zone is used to describe a regulated state of alertness such as feeling calm, happy or focused. This Zone is generally needed for school work, being social and being ready to learn. It shows control.



The Yellow Zone is used to describe a heightened state of alertness, but with some control, such as when experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, silliness, nervousness or confusion. They may find themselves being fidgety, squirmy or sensory seeking. They are starting to lose control.



The Red Zone is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness or very intense feelings such as anger, explosive behaviour, panic, terror or elation. They are often not in control of their body.





You can remember the Zones by using a traffic light system:

**Blue** - rest area where you pull over to have a rest and recharge.

**Green** - good to go.

**Yellow** - caution, slow down.

**Red** - stop and regain control.

***“SELF REGULATION IS A BETTER  
INDICATOR OF SUCCESS THAN  
INTELLIGENCE OR TALENT.”***  
**LAURENCE D. STEINBERG**

# TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR REGULATION

There are many tools for young people to use to self-regulate which will be individual to them. However, it is useful to think about the types of activities that may help to regulate in each Zone.

## Blue Zone Tools

- Think about what you might do as an adult to make yourself feel better when you're sad, tired or bored.
- This might include: talking to a trusted person, breathing, taking a break, having a snack, doing a hobby, physical activity or simply having a break.
- These things should wake up our bodies and recharge and activate our senses and help us to regain our focus.

## Green Zone Tools

- Think about strategies you and/ or your child uses to maintain your happiness and alertness in the activity you are engaging in.
- This may involve some of the same strategies used within the Blue Zone but also consider whether your child is in an environment where they feel safe, calm and settled.

## Yellow Zone Tools

- When you see a young person starting to become heightened, over-excited or unfocused, these calming strategies can prevent an escalation to the Red Zone.

## Red Zone Tools

- Once in the Red Zone your child might need to be removed from the situation/ setting and encouraged to go to a safe, calming environment.
- Calming strategies can 'power down' the emotions your child is facing. These include:
  - Deep breathing.
  - Deep pressure/ heavy work activities.
  - Sensory activities (e.g. stress balls, fidget toys, theraputty).
  - Taking a walk in a quiet place.
  - Going to a quiet/ dark area.
- Minimise language when your child is in the Red Zone - be clear, concise and calm.

# What ZONE Am I In?

Blue Zone	Green Zone	Yellow Zone	Red Zone
 Sad	 Calm and Quiet Voice	 Silly or Wiggly	 Mad
 Tired	 Ready To Learn	 Touching Friends	 Throw
 Sick	 Listening	 Lie On Floor	 Yelling
 Bored	 Quiet Hands	 Hide/Playing Under Tables	 Climb

**Use these tools to get back and stay in the green zone!**

 Drink Some Water	 Count To 10	 Stretch	 Talk To An Adult	 Read A Book	 Go To Safe Zone
 Go For A Walk	 Sensory	 Quiet Break At Desk	 Squeeze Hands	 Listen To Music	

# HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD'S USE OF THE ZONES OF REGULATION?

- ✓ Model and identify your own feelings using Zones Language in front of your child.
- ✓ Observe your child's behaviour and identify when they are showing signs of being in the Yellow Zone and try to catch it before they move to the Red Zone.
- ✓ Practice calming strategies when your child is in the Green Zone.
- ✓ Talk about the tools you will use in particular Zones.
- ✓ Utilise books and films to discuss which Zone characters might be in.
- ✓ Share how their behaviour affects your Zone.
- ✓ Put up and reference the Zones visuals in your home and check in with this.
- ✓ Praise and encourage your child when they are their Zone.
- ✓ Help to develop their Zones of Regulation Toolbox and have access to calming/ sensory equipment at home.
- ✓ Monitor your language (less is best),

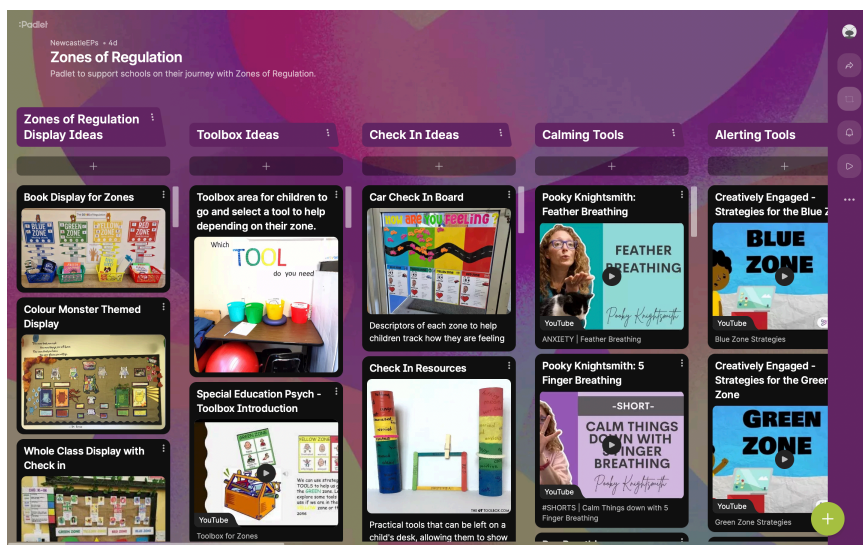
# TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD TO REGULATE

- Know yourself and how you react in difficult situations before dealing with your child's behaviour.
- 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 or 'sensory box' full of things to keep your child calm and alert.

# "LIFE IS 10% WHAT HAPPENS TO US AND 90% HOW WE REACT TO IT."

**CHARLES SINDOLL**

## Useful links / resources:



[https://padlet.com/  
NewcastleEP/zones-of-  
regulation-a3rfu9otv1geem0t](https://padlet.com/NewcastleEP/zones-of-regulation-a3rfu9otv1geem0t)



# PRINTABLES

The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible BB

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tools for Each of My ZONES

When I feel...

I can try...

<p><b>Tired or Sad</b></p> 	
<p><b>Calm or Happy</b></p> 	
<p><b>Frustrated or Silly</b></p> 	
<p><b>Angry or Mad</b></p> 	

Adapted for The Zones of Regulation from the original work of Barton and Oatis: The Incredible 5-Point Scale (2003). www.5pointscale.com.

© 2011 Think Social Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.  
From The Zones of Regulation® by Leah M. Kuypers • Available at [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)

**The ZONES of Regulation**

**Toolbox**

Blue Zone Tools

Green Zone Tools

Yellow Zone Tools

Red Zone Tools

© 2011 Think Social Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.  
From *The Zones of Regulation*® by Leah M. Kuypers • Available at [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)