



What are the Zones of Regulation?

The Zones of Regulation is an internationally renowned intervention which helps children manage their emotions. At St Mary of the Angels we use the Zones of Regulation throughout the whole school. The zones provide a framework for our children to develop self-regulation.

Children learn to identify emotions, recognise events that might make them move to a different zone and use the tools they have learnt to help them remain or move to a particular zone to help them regulate how they are feeling.

What are the different Zones?

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

Green Zone: calm state of alertness, optimal level to learn, feels happy, calm, focused

Yellow Zone: heightened state of alertness, feels frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, excited

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

We 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.

How will my child learn about the Zones of Regulation?

We use the zones as part of daily school life so all staff refer to them, not just the class teacher.

What can I do to support the Zones of Regulation at home?

- Identify your own feelings using zones language in front of your child (e.g. "I'm feeling frustrated because....., I am in the Yellow Zone.")
- Talk about which tool you will use to be in the appropriate zone (e.g. "I'm going to go for a walk as I need to get 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?")
- Provide positive reinforcement when your child is in the Green Zone and if they make efforts to stay in the Green Zone. Eg. "I can see you are working really hard to stay in the Green Zone by..."
- Label which zones your child is in throughout the day (e.g. "You look sleepy, I wonder if you are in the Blue Zone?")
- Teach your child which zone tools they can use (e.g. "It's time for bed, let's read a book together in the rocking chair to get to the Blue Zone.")

- Post and reference the zones visuals and tools in your home
- Play “Feelings Charades”
- Have regular check-ins. “How are you feeling now?” and “How can you get back to Green?”
- 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
- Take turns choosing emotions from a stack of cards or papers and act it out using only face and body clues. Guess each other’s emotion, discuss which zone it’s in and why. (Added challenge: Name a tool you could use when feeling that emotion)
- Play “Name that feeling”
- People watch and guess the feelings/zones of others
- Name the feelings of characters while watching a movie (and point out any strategies they use) □
Read ‘The Way I Feel’ by Janan Cain.
- Play ‘Zones Uno’ (can be purchased online)
- Learn a song!
- Create a calm box full of things which help to keep your child calm and alert

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.

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 their actions. Once the child has calmed down, use the experience as a learning opportunity to process what the child would do differently next time.

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

www.zonesofregulation.com

How can you help yourself?

The BLUE zone



How might you feel?

sad
tired
bored
moving slowly

What might help you?

Talk to someone
Stretch
Take a brain break
Stand
Take a walk
Close my eyes

The GREEN zone



How might you feel?

happy
okay
focussed
ready to learn

What might help you?

The goal of this exercise is to get to the GREEN zone.
What can you do to be happy, calm and ready to learn?

The YELLOW zone



How might you feel?

nervous
confused
silly
not ready to learn

What might help you?

Talk to someone
Count to 20
Take deep breaths
Squeeze something
Draw a picture
Take a brain break

The RED zone



How might you feel?

angry
frustrated
scared
out of control

What might help you?

Stop what I'm doing
Make sensible choices
Take deep breaths
Ask for a break
Find a safe space
Ask for help