

Zones of Regulation

Your child is participating in a modified version of The Zones of Regulation[®] curriculum (or “The Zones” for short), which are lessons and activities designed by Leah Kuypers, licensed occupational therapist, to help him/her gain skills in the area of self-regulation. Self-regulation can go by many names, such as self-control, self-management, and impulse control. It is defined as the best state of alertness of both the body and emotions for the specific situation. For example, when your child plays on the playground or in a competitive game, it is beneficial to have a higher state of alertness. However, that same state would not be appropriate in the library. The lessons and learning activities are designed to help your child recognize when they are in the different zones as well as learn how to use strategies to change or stay in the zone they are in. In addition to addressing self-regulation, your child will gain an increased vocabulary of emotional terms, skills in reading other people’s facial expressions, perspective about how others see and react to their behavior, insight into events that trigger their behavior, calming and alerting strategies, and problem solving skills.

A critical aspect of this curriculum is that parents know and understand The Zones language. This creates a comfortable and supportive environment for your child to practice his or her self-regulation skills. It also helps your child learn the skills more quickly and be more likely to apply them in many situations. You can support your child during this process by doing the following:

- Use the language and talk about the concepts of The Zones as they apply to you in a variety of environments. Make comments aloud so your child understands it is natural that we all experience the different zones and use strategies to control (or regulate) ourselves. For example, “This is really frustrating me and making me go into the Red Zone. I need to use a tool to calm down. I will take some deep breaths
- Help your child gain awareness of his or her zones and feelings by pointing out your observations.
- Talk about what zone is “expected” (appropriate) in the situation or how a zone may have been “unexpected” (inappropriate).
- Share with your child how his or her behavior is affecting the zone you are in and how you feel.
- Help your child become comfortable using the language to communicate his or her feelings and needs by encouraging your child to share his or her zone with you.
- Show interest in learning about your child’s triggers and Zones tools. Ask your child if he or she wants reminders to use these tools and how you should present these reminders.
- Make sure you frequently reinforce your child for being in the expected zone rather than only pointing out when his or her zone is unexpected

It is important to note that everyone experiences all of the zones - the Red Zone is not the “bad” or “naughty” zone. The Zones of Regulation is intended to be neutral and not communicate judgment.

Zones Vocabulary

Self-regulation: The ability to achieve the preferred state of alertness for the given situation. This includes regulating one’s body’s needs as well as one’s emotions.

The Zones: A concept used to help your child learn how to self-regulate. The Zones of Regulation creates a system to categorize how the body feels and emotions into four colored zones with which your child can easily identify.

Green Zone: Used to describe the ideal state of alertness. A person may be described as calm, happy, focused, or content when he or she is in the Green Zone. Your child is in control in the Green Zone. We are in this zone when we are feeling happy and doing “Whole Body Listening.”

Blue Zone: Used to describe a low state of alertness. The Blue Zone is used to describe when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.

Red Zone: Used to describe a heightened state of alertness. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, or fear when in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, panic, or elation when in the Red Zone and is described as being “out of control”

Below are visuals and phrases that can be used to describe the zones with your child.

Green Zone

Just Right
Good Calm
Proud
Happy
Ready to Learn
Good Listener
Relaxed
Okay

Blue Zone

Too Little
Too Slow
Hurt
Sad
Tired
Sick
Bored
Shy
Depressed

Red Zone

Excited
Silly
Nervous
Scared
Upset
Confused
Mad
Angry
Out of Control
Overwhelmed

