

Information About The ZONES of Regulation™

Hello Parents and Caregivers,

This Semester, the students at Star of the Sea will be participating in The Zones of Regulation™ curriculum (or “The Zones” for short), which are lessons and activities designed by Leah Kuypers, licensed occupational therapist, to help them 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 a student 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 the students 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, the students will also gain an increased vocabulary of emotional terms, skills in reading other people’s facial expressions, perspective about how others see and react to their behaviour, insight into events that trigger their behaviour, calming and alerting strategies, and problem solving skills.

A critical aspect of this curriculum is that all team members know and understand The Zones language. This creates a comfortable and supportive environment for the student to practice his or her self-regulation skills. It also helps the students learn the skills more quickly and be more likely to apply them in many situations. You can support the student 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 the student 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 Yellow Zone. I need to use a tool to calm down. I will take some deep breaths.”
- Help the student gain awareness of his or her Zones and feelings by pointing out your observations.
- Validate what Zone your students are in and help them brainstorm expected ways to self-regulate so their behaviour is expected for the context.
- Share with the student how his or her behaviour is affecting the Zone you are in and how you feel.
- Help the student become comfortable using the language to communicate his or her feelings and needs by encouraging the student to share his or her Zone with you.
- Show interest in learning about the student’s triggers and Zones tools. Ask the student if he or she wants reminders to use these tools and how you should present these reminders.
- Ask the student to frequently share his or her Zones Folder with you and talk about what he or she has learned.
- Make sure to positively reinforce students for recognizing their Zone and managing their behaviours while in it, rather than only pointing out when students are demonstrating unexpected behaviours while in a Zone.
- It is important to note that everyone experiences all of the Zones—the Red and Yellow Zones are not the “bad” or “naughty” Zones. All of the Zones are expected at one time or another. The Zones of Regulation is intended to be neutral and not communicate judgment.

Yours sincerely,
Damian Weeks

The ZONES of Regulation™

Glossary

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 students learn how to self-regulate. The Zones of Regulation creates a system to categorize how the body feels and emotions into four coloured Zones with which the students can easily identify.

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.

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. The student feels a strong sense of internal control when in the Green Zone.

Yellow 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. The student's energy is elevated yet he or she feels some sense of internal control in the Yellow Zone.

Red Zone: Used to describe an extremely heightened state of alertness. A person may be experiencing anger, rage, explosive behaviour, panic, extreme grief, terror, or elation when in the Red Zone and feels a loss of control.

Toolbox: A collection of calming and alerting strategies a student can pull from depending on the present need. **Tools or strategies:** Used interchangeably to refer to a calming or alerting technique that aids the student in self-regulation.

Trigger: An irritant that causes a student to become less regulated and increases the likelihood of going into the Yellow or Red Zone.

Stop, Opt, and Go: A concept used to aid students in controlling impulses and problem solving better solutions. This phrase is paired with a stoplight to provide additional cues for students.

Expected behaviours¹: Behaviours that give people around you **good or comfortable thoughts** about you.

Unexpected behaviours¹: Behaviours that give people **uncomfortable thoughts** about you.

Doer: The person or persons doing the expected or unexpected behaviour in a situation.

What is the size of the problem? and Is this a Big or Little Problem?¹: Questions posed to help students measure the size of the problem they are experiencing (Big Problem, Medium Problem, or Little Problem).

Big Problems: Problems that many people share and that have no easy, quick, or pleasant solution.

Medium Problems: Problems some people share that are able to be resolved in an hour to a couple of days.

Little Problems: Problems that only affect one to two people and can be ignored or solved in a matter of minutes.

Inner critic: Used to describe negative, self-defeating thoughts.

Inner coach: Used to describe positive thoughts.

Superflex thinking²: A flexible thinking pattern in which a person is able to consider different points of view or ways to do something.

Rock Brain thinking²: A rigid thinking pattern in which a person gets stuck on an idea and has difficulty considering other options or ways to do something.