

The Zones of Regulation



Being able to identify and regulate big emotions is an important part of behaviour management. The Zones of Regulation is a framework that aims to make this process more accessible.

What are the Zones of Regulation?

The Zones of Regulation is a behaviour management framework designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control. Self-regulation is something that everyone is continually working on whether they are aware of it or not. When we are able to recognise that we are in a situation that is making us lose control of our emotions we are then able to do something about it and manage our feelings to help ourselves get back to a healthier headspace.

The aim of the Zones of Regulation is to help people go through this process more naturally.

What are the zones?

The zones are a self-regulation approach to behaviour that categorises all the different ways we feel into different colours, which helps children to identify the way they are feeling.

The framework also provides strategies to help children understand how they can control their emotions and improve their ability to problem solve conflicts. The goal of introducing children to the framework is to help them move towards independent emotion regulation. This is a lifelong skill that they will not only be able to transfer to future educational settings but also use in their relationships and situations they encounter outside of school.

The Zones of Regulation:

The Zones of Regulation are split into four different colours, here is a list of each colour along with the kinds of emotions people may feel when they are in that coloured zone:

The **Red Zone** is used to describe an extremely heightened sense of alertness and intense emotions. The emotions in the red zone include anger, rage, devastation and terror.

The **Yellow Zone** is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and intense emotions. However, children experiencing yellow zone levels of alertness will feel more in control of their emotions than those feeling red zone emotions. Emotions in this zone include stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness and nervousness.

The **Green Zone** is used to describe a calm sense of alertness. Feelings in this zone include happy, focused, content and ready to learn.

The **Blue Zone** is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when someone feels sad, tired, sick and bored.

The zones can be compared to traffic lights, since the two feature similar colours and meanings. For example, green lights and the green zone both mean 'good to go.' Whilst blue does not feature on traffic lights, it can be seen as a rest colour, which is also relevant to driving.

Emotions in all of the zones are natural to experience, but by using the framework children will learn how to recognise and manage feelings from all zones, as well as further understand how those around them may be feeling.

Using the Zones of Regulation:

Big emotions can be very overwhelming for some children. This means that identifying and regulating these emotions can be a very big job. By being able to relate their emotions to the different coloured zones children will be able to identify some of those big emotions and understand how they can deal with them in a healthy and practical way.

By introducing the Zones of Regulation into our classrooms we are enabling our pupils to talk about their emotions in a healthy way.

History of the Framework:

The zones of regulation were developed by Leah Kuypers who is an experienced occupational therapist and was looking for a way to make emotional regulation more accessible. By developing a system that is structured around basic colours Kuypers ensured that conversations about emotions were open to everyone.

Importance of the Zones:

Recognising emotions is so important. This is because some emotions present themselves in similar ways. For example, both anger and fear can cause a person's heart to start racing, but if someone cannot tell the difference between the two they may act angrily when they are just scared. This can cause friction between them and the people around them.

When children can fully understand the emotions they are feeling, not only will they be able to regulate them better, but they can express them to people around them in a smooth and controlled way.