

What are the ZONES of Regulation?

Your child is learning all about a SELF-REGULATION concept called the Zones of Regulation developed by Leah Kuypers, a licensed Occupational Therapist, to help him/her gain skills in self-regulation. Self-regulation can also be called, “self-control”, “self-management”, and “impulse control”. It is best defined as a “state of alertness of both the body and emotions for the specific situations”. Your child is learning the ZONES language with four distinct zones describing an array of emotions/behaviors.

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. A student is in control 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 maintains some control of himself or herself in the Yellow Zone.

Red Zone: Used to describe an extremely heightened state of alertness. A person may be experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, panic, extreme grief, terror, or elation in the Red Zone and is described as being “out of control”.

Your child is learning how to identify his/her Zone from moment to moment and is learning that it is expected for a person to be in each of the zones throughout the day. There is not a “naughty” or “bad zone”, simply an increasing awareness and ability to identify accurately the emotion and behavior that accompanies each zone.

In addition, your child is beginning to learn a variety of “tools” to equip him/her with calming/alerting strategies to use with increasing independence. Your child is also learning to identify the “triggers” that occur throughout the day that cause him/her to become less regulated.

How can you help?

1. Use the zone language frequently at home and in the community to communicate as it relates to a variety of situations. (ex. “This is really frustrating me and is making me go into the Yellow Zone”. I need to _____ to calm down”. “I notice that you seem kind of tired. You must be in the blue zone. Let’s use a tool to help us get to the green zone”.)
2. Talk about what zone would be “expected” or “unexpected” in different situations. Talk about this prior to an outing or activity that is known to be a trigger (irritant).
3. Share how his/her behavior is affecting the zone you are in and how you feel.
4. Show an interest in learning about your child’s triggers and Zones tools.
5. 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.
6. Be sure to send your child’s Green OT folder back and forth so I can send home information on the triggers/tools that your child is learning. Please let me know if you have any questions or