

# The zones of regulation

## Understanding and applying the zones of regulation

The zones of regulation is a tool that helps children understand and manage their feelings and actions. It puts emotions into four different groups, making it easier to see and talk about how we feel.

Using the zones of regulation at home can really help children become more aware of their emotions and learn how to stay in control. When children learn about the zones and practice using them, they get better at handling their feelings and behaviours in a healthy way.

## The four zones of regulation

	Blue Zone	Green Zone	Yellow Zone	Red Zone
<b>What does this look like?</b>	Sad Tired Sick Bored	Happy Calm Focused Ready to learn	Anxious Excited Silly Nervous	Angry Overwhelmed Out of control
<b>What does this mean?</b>	Children in the blue zone may feel down or lack energy.	Children in this zone are calm, attentive and in control of their emotions.	Children in the yellow zone have heightened alertness but can still maintain control with some effort.	This is the extreme state where children may have intense emotions and loss of control.
<b>What do children in this zone need?</b>	May need rest, comfort, activation, or cheering up.  May benefit from support refocusing thoughts on positive things.  Mood may shift by engaging in fun activities.	The green zone is the optimal state for learning and interacting. They can be supported to remain in this state and to know how to recognize if/when they start becoming dysregulated.	May need strategies to calm down and regain focus.  Engage in calming/relaxation and mindfulness strategies.	Need immediate support to calm down and regain a sense of safety.  Engage in strategies for calming, relaxation and regulation.  Co-regulation can be very effective (engage in the strategy with them).

## **Applying the zones of regulation with children**

### **Step 1: Introduce the zones, with the visual aid**

- Explain each zone and associate it with specific emotions and behaviours.
- Can incorporate discussion about the association of the colours with various ideas (e.g., blue = sad, red = "stop", yellow = "caution").

### **Step 2: Help children identify their personal "cues"**

- Have children think/talk about the things they can pay attention for that will let them know what zone they are in (e.g., emotions, bodily sensations, thoughts, behaviour).

### **Step 3: Help children identify strategies for each zone**

- Help children create a personal toolbox of strategies for each zone.
- Strategies for when they are in the green zone can involve things to help them remain there.

### **Step 4: Discuss how to apply the "zones of regulation" moving forward**

- Encourage them to remain alert for the different "cues" they identified (e.g., to indicate they are in the blue, yellow or red zone) to help themselves recognize when they need to regulate.
- If you observe the child being/becoming dysregulated, support them to recognize this, identify their "zone" and choose a coping strategy to implement.