

# Zones of Regulation

## Overview:

The Zones of Regulation was created to help students gain skills in consciously regulating their actions using a cognitive behavioral approach to increase self-awareness, self-regulation and problem solving abilities.

The activities range from teaching the four zones in a systematic and creative way of "road signs."

## The signs

The **Blue Zone** is shaped/colored like a Rest Stop Sign - low states of alertness. Examples when one feels sad, tired, sick or bored. This is when the body and/or brain is moving slowly or sluggishly.

The **Green Zone** is shaped/colored like a Go sign- describes a regulated state of alertness. As demonstrated by feeling calm, happy, focused, or content. This state is needed for completing school work and/or being social; being in the Green Zone shows control.

The **Yellow Zone** is shaped/colored like a Yield Sign - is described as being in a heightened state of alertness or very intense feelings **but are still somewhat in control**. This could be a state where we may feel stressed, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, nervousness, and confusion.

The **Red Zone** is shaped/colored like a Stop Sign is described extremely heightened states of alertness or intense feelings. Being in the Red Zone can be best explained by not **being in control of your body** and experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, panic, terror, or elation.

Leah has built on the components from the Alert Program (How does your Engine Run) by also teaching students how different emotions and thinking patterns impact their level of alertness. The Zones promotes the use of sensory supports as well as thinking strategies and calming/mindfulness tools to help students regulate between states.

The **Yellow** and **Red** Zones are not meant to be BAD OR NAUGHTY. All Zones are meant for a student to identify what is expected in different environments and to match their regulation to that environment with the supports they have learned and practiced during their lessons.

The focus of the Zones curriculum is to teach students that self-regulation includes the ability to do what needs to be done to be in the optimal state for a given situation. *This includes regulating one's sensory needs, emotions and impulses to meet the demands of the environment, reach one's goals, and behavior in a socially appropriate way.*

Leah explains that to successfully regulate, three critical neurological components need to be integrated:

1. Sensory processing - how we make sense of the information perceived by your sensory receptors as well as how you organize and integrate the information so that you can act upon it a purposeful way. Fire alarm is perceived by your ear and then you act dependent on the action your brain has organized around this information.
2. Executive function: Cognitive processes involved in the conscious control of thoughts and actions. Executive function is described by her as the command or control center of our brain.
3. Emotional regulation: Defined as the process that are responsible for controlling your emotional reactions in order to meet your goal. *"Anyone can be angry that is easy... but to be angry with the right person to the right degree at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way is not easy."*

In addition Leah has extended the work of Kari Dunn Buron Mitzi Curtis and their Incredible 5 point scale. Both of these programs provided the foundation for the development of the Zones of Regulation curriculum. As work by Michelle Garcia Winner on Social Thinking would assist in understanding the social emotional process and is referenced also within the lessons of the Zones.

Leah determined that regardless of the type of disability including physical, mental health and cognitive there seemed to be deficits in self-regulation and exhibiting behaviors that were disruptive to their learning. These behaviors included: getting too silly, becoming distracted, shutting down, exploding or acting aggressively.

*As an occupational therapist she was focused mostly on their self-regulation but found that in the larger picture she needed to address the executive function and emotional regulation. Looking at them from a wider lens.*

# How to use the Curriculum

## Forming Groups:

- a. Be sure that students are grouped with others with similar cognitive abilities so instruction can be geared to their level.
- b. Groups of two to four students work best, though a classroom setting with another facilitator can work with as large as 8 to 10.
- c. When grouping students make sure you take into consideration a student's ability to take on others' perspective. If a student has a poor awareness of others, the student may have increased difficulty regulating his or her own behavior to match the demands of the group; this student may do better individually or with only another peer.
- d. Working in a group requires an increased ability to regulate given the greater social demands of having other students to think of and tolerate.
- e. Make sure that when doing this curriculum you include information to all team members so that they are familiar with the concepts and support students across environments. (Letter of Information Reproduction A) and The Zones of Regulation Glossary (Reproduction B)

## Preparing and Organizing:

1. Provide each student with a Zones Folder: they can decorate it themselves and keep their handouts and worksheets in this.
2. Lessons are designed for 30 to 60 minute sessions, which will vary depending on the size of the group, time spent on discussion, and student abilities.
3. All lessons are organized in the same order: lead in, learning activity, and wrap up.
4. Posting the schedule on the board for each lesson will help students know what to expect and ease anxiety.
5. Some lessons include more than one activity or different ways to adapt it for different populations. Other lessons include additional learning activities and extensions to the curriculum to further reinforce concepts.
6. Each lesson includes probing questions for facilitating discussions so students can deepen their understanding and find meaningful connections.

# Lessons

## Chapter 3

Introduces students to the Zones. Activities include teaching the students about the different level of Alertness and emotional states of being. The activities include teaching and understanding vocabulary, recognizing emotions in themselves and other people, and how their own state of arousal affects those around them.

Lesson 1 - Creating Wall Posters of the Zones

Lesson 2 - Zones Bingo

Lesson 3 - The Zones in Video

Lesson 4 - The Zones in Me

Lesson 5 - 9 Continues to provide deeper understanding

#### Chapter 4

Introduction of the Tools can begin once students are able to understand what zone they are in. Students can then choose the tools that may help them. The order in which the tools are taught is up to you.

Lesson 10 - Exploring Sensory Support Tools

Lesson 11 - Exploring Tools for Calming

Lesson 12 - Exploring tools - Thinking Strategies

#### Chapter 5

Learning when to use and apply the tools. Students learn how to put into practice the tools they are taught in Chapter 4. Students are taught that they are in control of themselves and that to be successful they need to know what strategies work for them and when to use them. The focus on this chapter is to encourage and make students to become better problem solvers.

Lesson 13 - The Tool box.

Lesson 14 - When to use the Yellow Zone Tools

Lesson 15 - Stop and Use a Tool

Lesson 16 - Tracking My Tools

Lesson 17 - Stop, Opt and Go

Lesson 18 - Celebrating My Use of Tools