



**St. Michael's CE
Primary School**



ZONES

OF REGULATION



A guide for Parents

"Too often children are struggling to keep it together...while falling apart."

Temple Grandin, 2005

The Zones of Regulation: A self-regulation tool

In today's ever-changing and fast-paced society, children have to adapt constantly to their environment. In order to find success in school, the home and the community, much of that success depends on the ability to control unexpected responses.

The Zones of Regulation is a conceptual framework geared towards helping children to gain skills in consciously regulating their actions, which in turn leads to increased control and problem-solving abilities. Using a cognitive behaviour approach, the framework's learning activities are designed to help children recognise when they are in different states called 'zones', with each of the four zones represented by a different colour. Children also learn how to use strategies or tools to stay in a zone or move from one to another. They explore calming techniques, cognitive strategies and sensory supports; they eventually build up a toolbox of methods to use to move between zones.

In essence, the Zones of Regulation is a self-regulation tool.

What is self-regulation?

Self-regulation can go by many names, such as 'self-control', 'self-management', 'anger control' and 'impulse control'. These terms all describe a person's ability to adjust their level of alertness and how they display their emotions through their behaviour. *(Bronson, 2001)*

Given a stressful or frustrating experience, a child who can self-regulate well is able to remain calm and organised to successfully negotiate the event. If they struggle with self-regulation, they will have difficulty coping and display inappropriate behaviour.

Coloured Zones

The Zones of Regulation categorises states of alertness and emotions into four coloured zones:

The Blue Zone is used to describe low states of alertness, such as when one feels sad, tired, sick or bored. This is when one's body and/or brain is moving slowly or sluggishly.

The Green Zone is used to describe a regulated state of alertness. A person may be described as calm, happy, focused or content when in the Green Zone. This is the zone children generally need to be in for school work and for being social. Being in the Green Zone shows control.

The Yellow Zone is used to describe a heightened state of alertness; however, a person still has some control when in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, nervousness, confusion and many more slightly elevated emotions and states when in the Yellow Zone (such as wiggly, squirmy or sensory seeking). The Yellow Zone is starting to lose some control.

The Red Zone is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness or very intense feelings. A person may be experiencing anger, rage, explosive behaviour, panic, terror, or elation when in the Red Zone. Being in the Red Zone can best be explained by not being in control of one's body.

How they are used

At school we compare the zones to a stop light or traffic signs. When you're in the Green Zone, you're 'good to go'. In the Yellow Zone you need to slow down or take warning, and in the Red Zone, you need to stop and regain control. The Blue Zone can be compared to a blue rest area where you pull over when you're tired and need to recharge.

The children are taught that everyone experiences all of the zones at one time or another: the Red and Yellow Zones are not 'bad' or 'naughty' zones. The children explore what behaviours are expected in given circumstances and determine if they need to manage their behaviours while in different zones to meet the needs of the situation.