

Zones of Regulation

Autumn 2024

Zones of Regulation

This term we are introducing the Zones of Regulation curriculum at Offley School in Reception to Year 6 classes.

We had become aware that pupils were struggling to self-regulate and that they needed strategies to help them do this. Zones of Regulation addresses this and also helps pupils to identify their own and others' feelings. In so doing, it enhances wellbeing, resilience and emotional literacy.

The children have been enjoying exploring the concepts and are starting to use the vocabulary in their day-to-day language. Perhaps your child has told they are 'in the green zone' or has asked you which zone you are in?

Why do we need Zones of Regulation?

Emotions, regulating behaviours, and skills of executive functioning all play a role in everything we do on a day-to-day basis. The limbic system is an important brain structure involved in these areas.

The limbic system and how we function are connected by the fight, flight, freeze system of the brain. A stressful situation sends signals to activate the amygdala, which quickly processes that information. It activates the hypothalamus which tells the adrenal gland to send adrenaline into the blood stream. The hypothalamus also activates other hormones to alert the pituitary gland.

Several hormones work together to keep the body on high alert, while suppressing other body systems. The adrenal glands release hormones such as epinephrine that work to raise blood pressure and heart rate, increase blood flow to muscles and organs, and elevate breathing rate. All of these systems keep you on high alert.

When we are in that high alert state, it is difficult to accomplish everyday tasks.

Think about being in an over-responsive state and trying to read a book or concentrate on completing complex math problems. These tasks require attention, focus, and the ability to block out other sensory and environmental input.

For children, accomplishing day-to-day tasks like getting dressed, completing the morning routine, interacting with peers and learning can be affected by being in an over-responsive state: for some, that fight/flight/freeze state interrupts the ability to initiate a task or follow through to accomplish a task.

Let's look at this another way: Have you ever been startled by a rabbit jumping out in front of your car while driving? You probably recall that whole-body sense of alertness and maybe felt prickly sensation all over your arms and that JUMP of acute awareness. When the rabbit ran away, your body probably settled and while you were still feeling that sense of alarm, your body was already settling down

The limbic system regulates those automatic responses to emotional stimuli and plays an important role in behaviour. Other places in the brain, such as the frontal regions (executive functioning centre) are recruited for modulation of amygdala activity. This is when **self-regulation** happens.

When it comes to **self-regulation**, many children have a difficult time learning and achieving without help. In any given moment, a child (or an adult) may be experiencing multiple situations and circumstances that require an awareness of self and others as well as the ability to have or gain self-control.

Generally speaking, a child should achieve an optimal level of **self-awareness** ('**green zone**') to identify their inner feelings and emotions and be ready to regulate themselves when they need to.

They need to learn strategies and techniques that work for them to assist them in leaving a less optimal level and returning to a "ready-to-go" level of regulation so that they can accomplish tasks: for example, brushing their teeth, reading a book, interacting with a friend, crossing the street or focusing on their learning.

To successfully self-regulate, 3 critical neurological components need to be integrated: **sensory processing, executive functioning** and **emotional regulation**.

Self-regulation/ self-control/ self-management/ anger control/ impulse control all describe people's ability to adjust their level of alertness and how they display their emotions through their behaviour to attain goals in socially acceptable ways – to do what needs to be done to be in the optimal state for the given situation.

The Zones of Regulation curriculum improves resilience alongside supporting self-regulation and improves emotional literacy, as it teaches us to identify our own and others' feelings.

Zones of regulation is a concept from which a curriculum has been created. Pupils are guided through a set of sequenced lessons in which they learn about their own regulation system and how they can adjust it.

The four zones help children to visually and verbally self-identify how they are functioning in the moment given their emotions and states of alertness.

Lessons are designed to help them understand different internal emotions, sensory needs and thinking patterns that result in them shifting from one zone to another.

Pupils explore a variety of tools – sensory supports, calming techniques, thinking strategies – that they can use to regulate whichever zone they are in and to when, why and how to use these tools.

Core teachings from Social Thinking help pupils learn more about perspective taking, to help them understand how being in different zones impacts others' thoughts and feelings.

The curriculum was designed for students who struggle with self-regulation. Originally it was for pupils with neurobiological or mental health disorders, but it became apparent it can reach a broader population.

The lessons are designed to be used with age 4 and up.

Four zones

Introducing the Four Zones

The Zones of Regulation provides an easy way to think and talk about how we feel on the inside and sorts emotions into four colored Zones, all of which are expected in life.

[Learn more](#)



Blue Zone

Sad • Bored • Tired • Sick



Green Zone

Happy • Focused • Calm • Proud



Yellow Zone

Worried • Frustrated • Silly • Excited



Red Zone

Overjoyed/Elated • Panicked • Angry • Terrified

The ZONES of Regulation®



BLUE ZONE	GREEN ZONE	YELLOW ZONE	RED ZONE
Sad	Happy	Frustrated	Angry/ cross
Unwell	Feeling okay	Worried	Panicky
Tired	Calm	Silly	Shouting
Bored	Relaxed	Wiggly	Aggressive
Moving slowly	Focused	Excited	Elated
Low energy	Ready to learn	Embarrassed	Over excited
		Loss of some control	Out of control

The zones are incremental in terms of alertness/ energy levels/intensity, going from **blue** to **green**, to **yellow**, then to **red**.

Green is the zone we aim to be in for optimal learning and for interacting with well others.

However, it is normal to be in other zones at various times in the day.

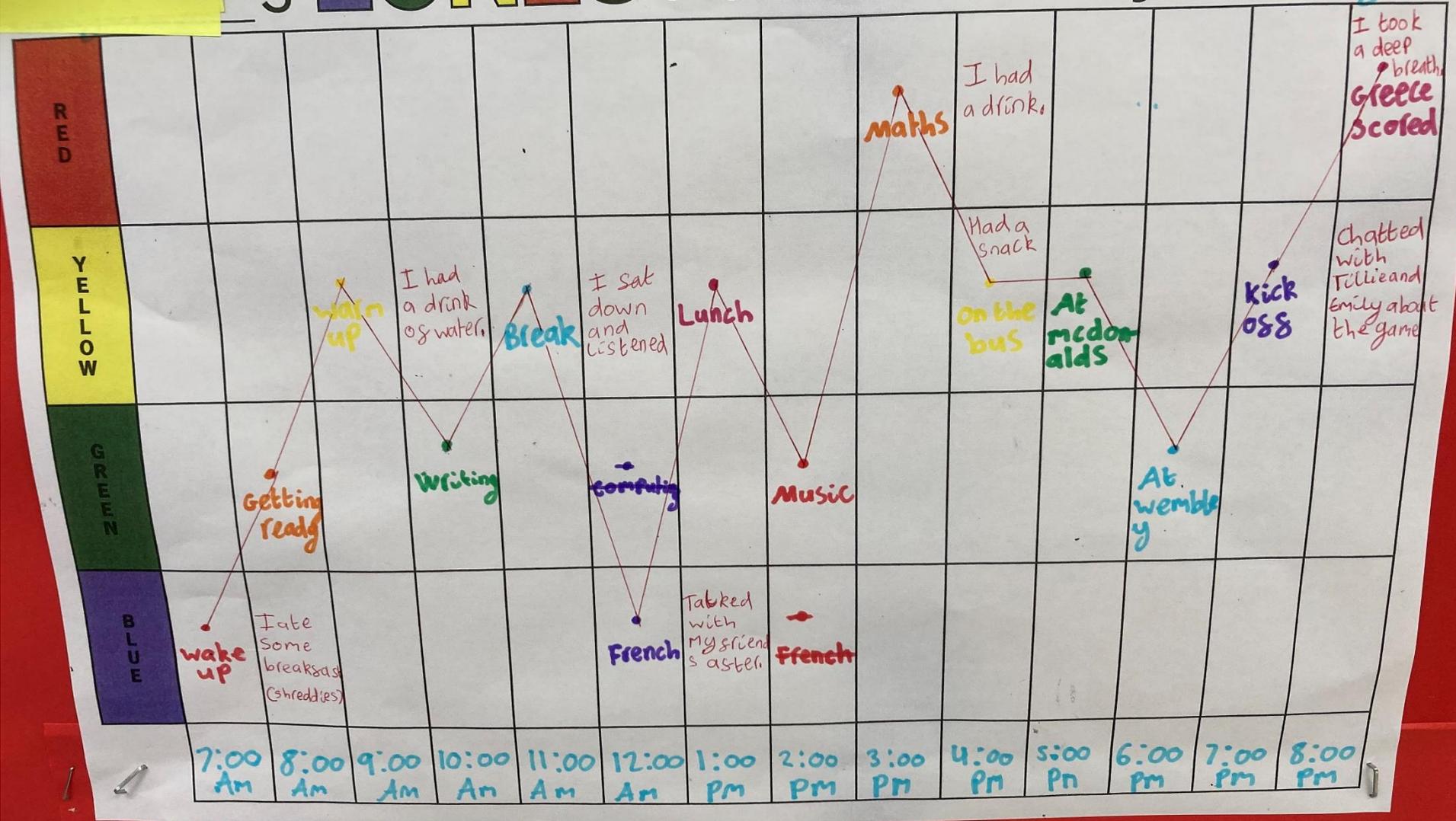
Early Years and Years 1 and 2 are using A. A. Milne characters – Eeyore (Blue zone), Winnie-the-Pooh (Green zone), Piglet (Yellow zone) and Tigger (Red zone) to represent the zones.

Here is some of the work the children are doing on Zones of Regulation...

The next slide shows an example of a Year 6 pupil tracking their zones across the day. This exercise helps pupils to understand that our feelings change throughout the day. They can then cope more easily with a difficult emotion, as they know that they will not experience that emotion forever.

This pupil has also recorded strategies they have used to return to the green zone.

's ZONES Across the Day: Thursday



An important aspect of Zones of Regulation is identifying strategies that help us return to the green zone when we need to.

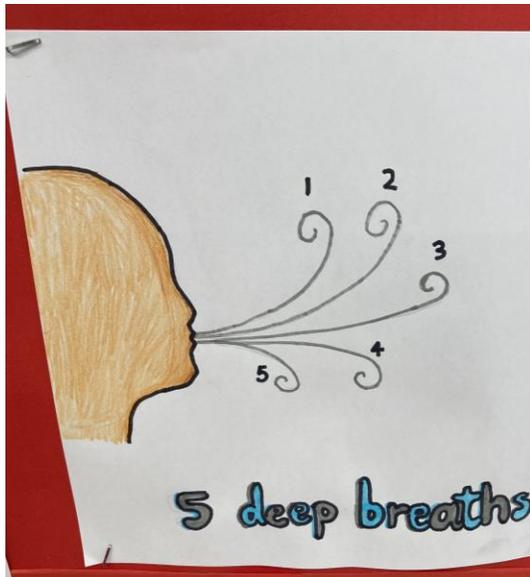
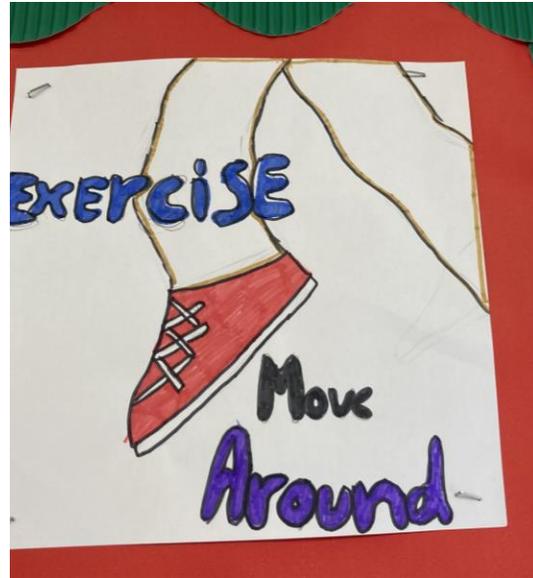
Directions:
Staple all the pages together **except for this one**. Cut out and glue the headings below to the page opposite the picture of him or her in the corresponding colored zone. For example: When the book opens to *This is a picture of me in the Blue Zone* page, the heading on the left side page opposite it will be: *When I'm in the Blue Zone, I can try these Blue Zone tools* (tools are covered in lessons 10-12).

**When I'm in the Blue Zone,
I can try these Blue Zone tools:**

**When I'm in the Green Zone,
I can try these Green Zone tools:**

**When I'm in the Yellow Zone,
I can try these Yellow Zone tools:**

**When I'm in the Red Zone,
I can try these Red Zone tools:**



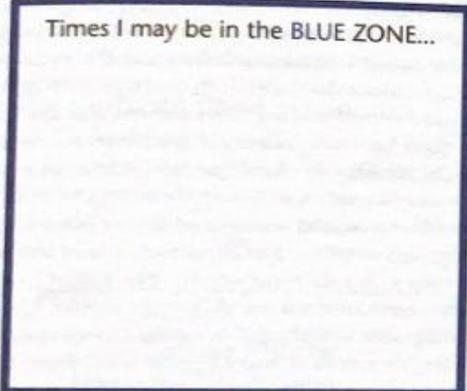
Here are some strategies Year 6 came up with.

Which **ZONE** Would I Be In?

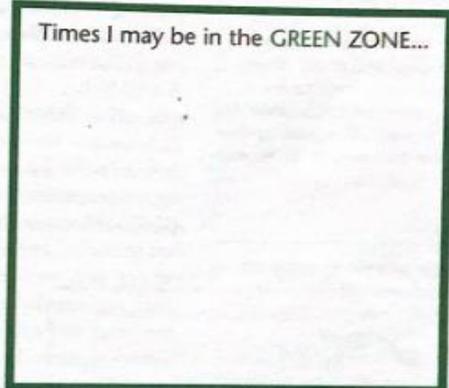
All of the zone colors are okay. There are times when you will be in different zones. Think about times that you expect you would be in the Blue, Green, Yellow, or Red Zone.

I experience all the Zones!

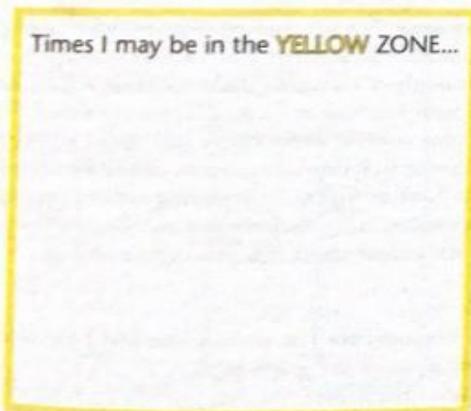
Times I may be in the BLUE ZONE...



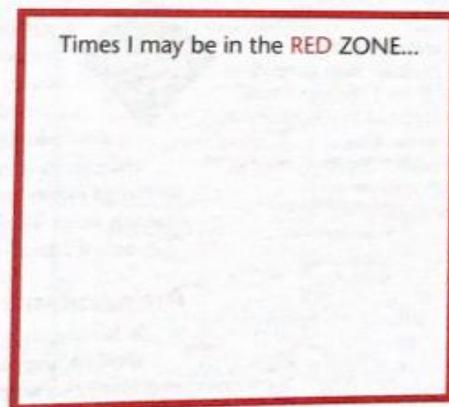
Times I may be in the GREEN ZONE...



Times I may be in the YELLOW ZONE...



Times I may be in the RED ZONE...



The children have been thinking about times when they might be in each of the four zones.

They are also working on how to identify which of the 4 zones they are in, by thinking about their 'face and body clues' and their feelings.

The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible L BLUE

Name: _____

 This is a picture of me in the BLUE ZONE:

My face and body clues are:

 _____

 _____

 _____

I feel in the BLUE ZONE when:

I am more likely to make others feel:

The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible L GREEN

Name: _____

 This is a picture of me in the GREEN ZONE:

My face and body clues are:

 _____

 _____

 _____

I feel in the GREEN ZONE when:

I am more likely to make others feel:

The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible L YELLOW

Name: _____

 This is a picture of me in the YELLOW ZONE

My face and body clues are:

 _____

 _____

 _____

I feel in the YELLOW ZONE when:

I am more likely to make others feel:

The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible L RED

Name: _____

 This is a picture of me in the RED ZONE:

My face and body clues are:

 _____

 _____

 _____

I feel in the RED ZONE when:

I am more likely to make others feel:
