

## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

# Understanding the Zones of Regulation

A framework for understanding emotions, energy levels, and regulation

## What if we thought about behaviour as communication?

The Zones of Regulation, created by occupational therapist Leah Kuypers, is a framework that sorts feelings and states into four colour-coded categories. It helps individuals of all ages recognize their emotions and levels of energy, understand what they may need, and develop strategies for regulation. Rather than viewing certain emotions or states as “good” or “bad,” the Zones encourages us to notice where we are and consider what support might help.

### Meet the Four Zones

#### BLUE | Low Energy

Sad • tired • bored • sick • low energy

**might need:** movement, stimulation, or connection

#### GREEN | Ready to Learn & Connect

Calm • focused • comfortable • ready

**might need:** opportunities to learn, connect, engage

#### YELLOW | Elevated Energy

Worried • frustrated • excited • silly • restless

**might need:** less stimulation, reduced demands, or a pause

#### RED | Very High Energy

Angry • panicked • terrified • overwhelmed

**might need:** safety, space, and connection

### ALL ZONES ARE OKAY

We all move between Zones throughout the day. The goal isn't to stay in the Green Zone all the time = it is to notice, understand, identify what we need, and choose a helpful strategy.

## Bringing the Zones Home

The Zones can become a shared language for families. Instead of focusing only on **what happened**, try getting curious about **what might be happening underneath the behaviour**.

“What Zone are you in right now?”

“What are you noticing in your body?”

“What do you think you need?”

“What might help right now?”

**IMPORTANT:** Validation doesn't mean agreement. We can recognize a child's experience while still maintaining boundaries and expectations.

## Match the Strategy to the Need

|                   |                                        |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Less Stimulation  | Quiet space, headphones, fewer demands |
| Connection        | Adult support, proximity, conversation |
| Movement          | Walk, stretch, stand, or fidget        |
| Predictability    | Visual schedule, countdown, or preview |
| Task Support      | Break the task into smaller steps      |
| Emotional Support | Validation, listening, and connection  |

## ONE SMALL SHIFT TO TRY

### Connect before you correct

When a child is overwhelmed, frustrated, or dysregulated, our first response doesn't always need to be teaching, problem-solving, or correcting.

**Pause. Notice. Connect. Then support.**

## Learn More

Explore the Zones of Regulation framework and additional resources:

**Zones of Regulation** Official framework and resources: <https://zonesofregulation.com/free-downloads/>

**Social Thinking** Video lessons, emotion visuals & downloadable handouts: <https://www.socialthinking.com/zones-of-regulation/free-stuff>

**Additional resources families can explore together:**

- **Zones of Regulation Youtube Channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/@thezonesofregulation/videos>
- **Website** Twinkl Parenting WIKI, free resources and links to home-teaching support resources on the topic: <https://www.twinkl.ca/parenting-wiki/zones-of-regulation>
- **Apps:** Zones of Regulation, Breathe Think Do

