

Supporting Your Child's Emotional Development

Holy Trinity C of E Primary School

Session Two

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**achieving
for children**

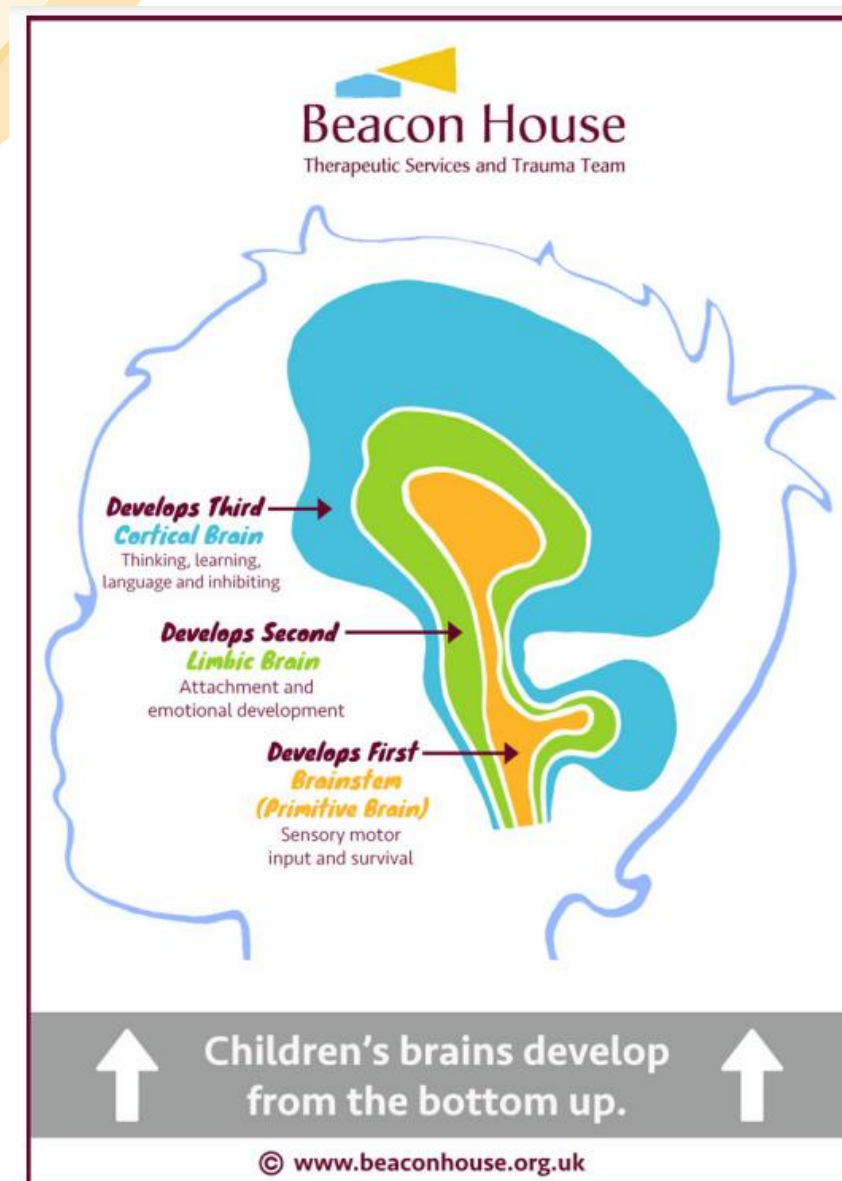
Session One (9th March 2026)

- Exploring emotional regulation in relation to brain development

Session Two (22nd April 2026)

- An introduction to emotion coaching
- An introduction to the Zones of Regulation
- Q & A Session

Re-cap: Brain Development



Emotional Dysregulation



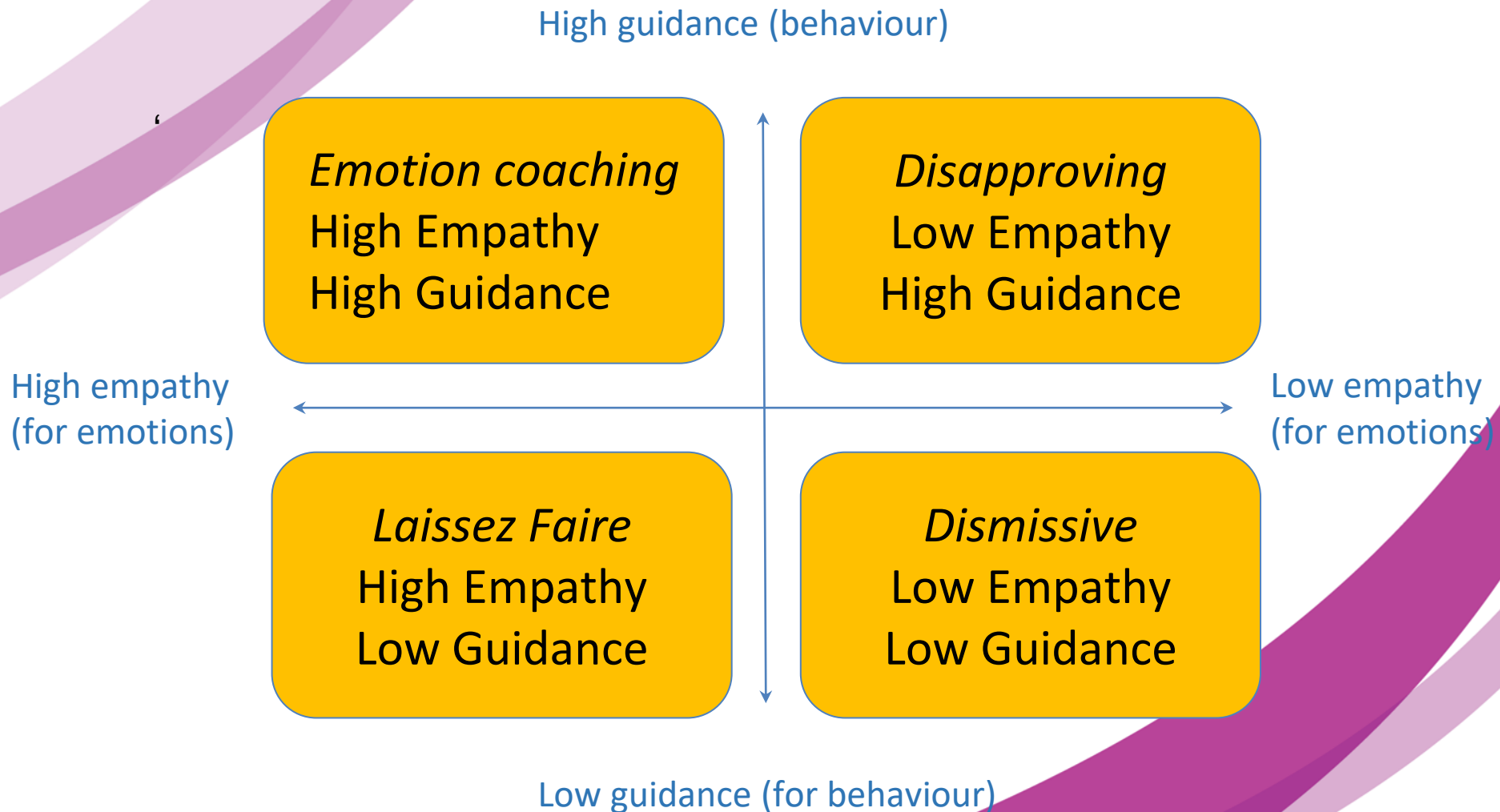
The amygdala fires off - this is the brain's primary emotional alarm system and threat detector,

The 'downstairs' brain is active and stress hormones flood the body.

The 'upstairs' brain is temporarily 'offline'

When we are in a feeling place we have no capacity to think.

How do we respond to children's behaviour?





Emotion Coaching Style

- 'Tunes in' to the child's emotions
- Gives guidance on how to cope with the feelings and what to do
- Provides opportunities for learning and reflection
- Leads to internal, self-regulation



Emotion Coaching

- We **all have feelings** and we need to recognise them in ourselves and others
- It is safe to engage in a problem solving process and we can **find solutions to our problems**
- **All feelings are normal** but need to be regulated and expressed constructively
- Moments of negative behaviour are considered to be **opportunities for teaching**



How do we do Emotion Coaching?

- Having **awareness** of your own emotions

*“Put on **your** oxygen mask*

*first **before** putting it on the child”*

- **Empathise, validate, understand!**

“Proposing solutions before empathising is like trying to build the frame of a house before you lay a firm foundation” (Gottman)





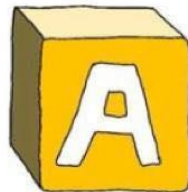
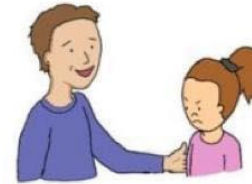
PACE

PACE (Dan Hughes)



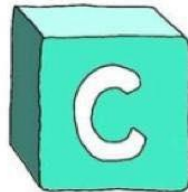
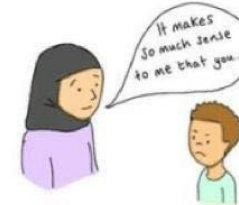
Playfulness

- Playfulness in interactions can diffuse conflict and promote connection e.g. Maintaining a relaxed 'lightness' and can involve making a joke (though this has to be done carefully)



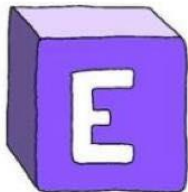
Acceptance

- Accepting needs and emotions that drive behaviour (not necessarily the behaviour) without judgement



Curiosity

- Being curious to where a behaviour has come from (in your head or out loud...)



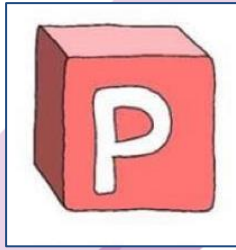
Empathy

- Really connecting with how they are feeling and showing compassion



P.A.C.E is an approach developed by Dr Dan Hughes aimed at supporting recovery from developmental trauma. However, it can be a useful attitude to adopt with anyone who is emotionally dysregulated

Illustrated by Juliet Young



Playfulness



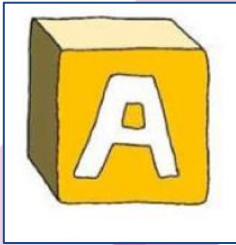
This is about creating a **fun, light and playful atmosphere** when communicating with the child.

It is not about making making jokes when a child is sad or frustrated or being dismissive of their needs.

Instead, it's about using a light tone of voice, like you might do when **story-telling**, rather than an irritated or lecturing tone.

A playful approach can be powerful for **defusing tension**.

A playful approach also **reassures the child** that you are cross with them and that they are not a bad person.



Acceptance

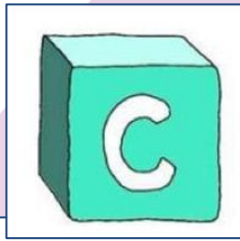


This is about accepting that whatever the child (or you) are feeling right now is **ok** - even if it is a painful or 'negative' feeling.

You are aiming to convey that **you still accept the child** - regardless of the behaviour / feeling they are currently showing.

Let their feeling 'land' with you.

Acceptance does not mean there is no place for limits - you can limit the behaviour, while **accepting the child's underlying need or motive**.



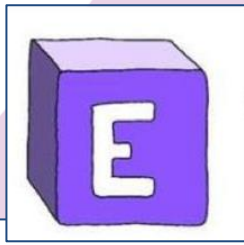
Curiosity



Curiosity involves a **quiet, accepting tone**: “What do you think that was about?” or “I wonder what...?” You say this without anticipating an answer or response from a child.

Curiosity is **not asking the child, “Why did you do that?”** with the expectation of a reply.

With curiosity we are trying to show **we simply wish to understand** why. We hope to convey that our intentions are to truly understand and to help the child, not to lecture.



Empathy

Empathy is about putting yourself in **someone else's shoes** and allowing yourself to feel what they must be feeling.

It gives us a sense of **compassion** for the child and their feelings.

This is essential in helping a child feel **understood**.



We are trying to communicate to the child that **they are not alone** with their feeling (which isn't the same as reassurance).

Using PACE flexibly, in the moment



In an emergency, go to 'A' & 'E'

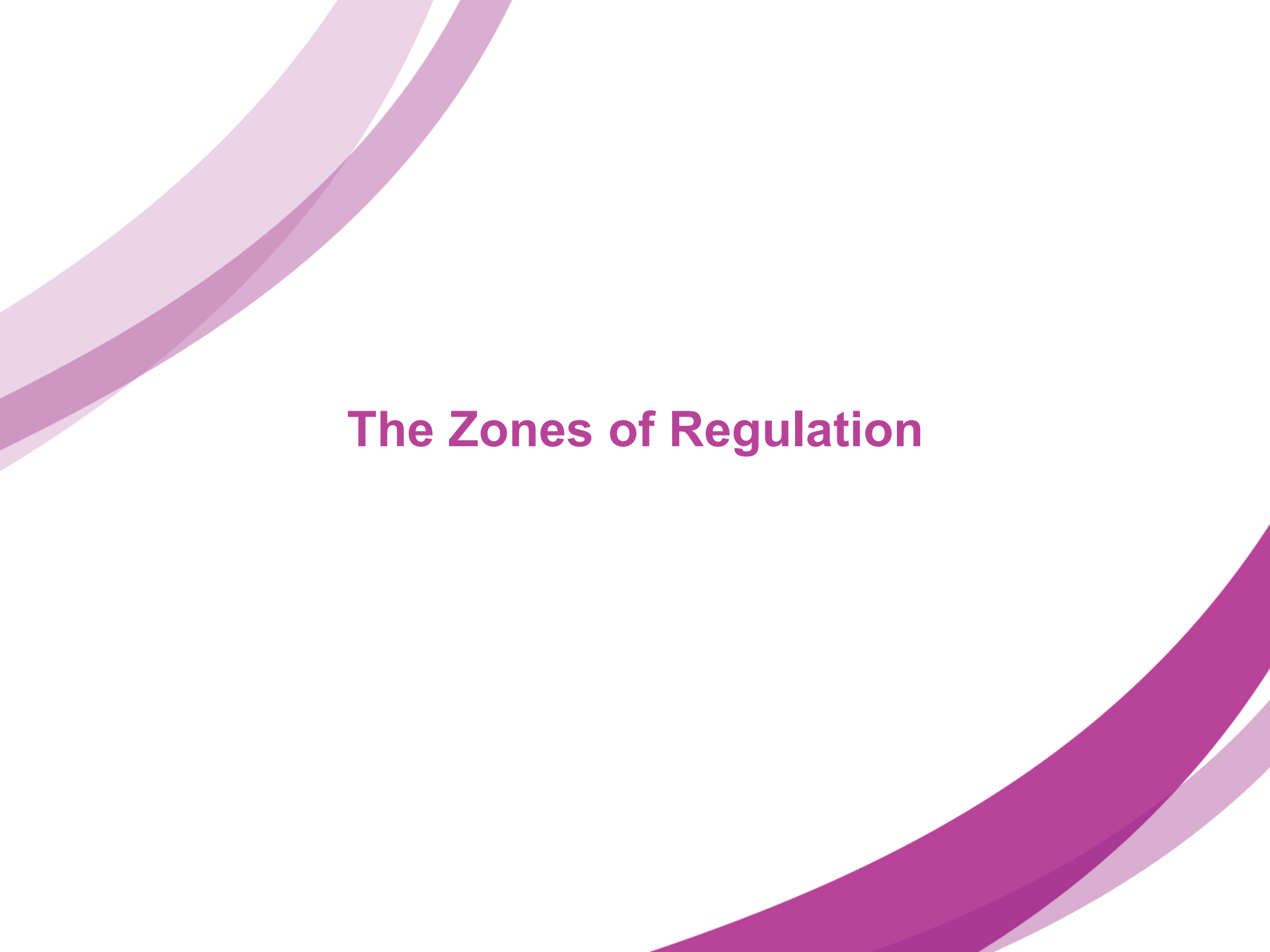
- “I can see that this feels too difficult for you to try right now” (Acceptance)
- “I know things can feel really difficult and frustrating sometimes” (Empathy)
- “Work can sometimes be really tricky and I know that it's so rubbish when we feel like we can't do something” (Acceptance and Empathy)
- “Hey, look at that worksheet Alex, it looks like a little mouse has nibbled right through it. I hope he's not going to eat my secret sweetie stash too” (Playfulness)
- “Alex, this is just feeling impossible for you right now.” (Acceptance)
- “I wonder what might be making things tricky for you today” (Curiosity)
- I know that it can feel really overwhelming when we feel rubbish at something. I can feel rubbish at things too, and when I can't do something I get angry with everything and I just want to scream (Empathy)
- I wonder what might be helpful for you in this moment (Curiosity)

Top tips

- Remember to stay **consistent** with a PACE approach. Persist with PACE even when you feel like it has not worked. To be thought of and related to in this way can be a very powerful experience for children.
- **Sit with the uncomfortable.** Our instinct can be to reassure children by saying 'it'll be okay', 'of course I like you', or 'but you are really good at homework.' These responses are attempts to make everyone feel better. However, they are like putting a sticking plaster on a big open wound. Sitting with the big negative feelings can be really uncomfortable and you may feel like you need to say more to make it better, but you don't.



Let's pause for a few moments to think about a situation you have encountered recently at home that it would be helpful to develop an emotion coaching script for.

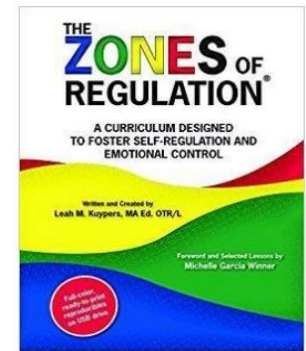


The Zones of Regulation

WHAT ARE THE ZONES OF REGULATION?

The different zones teach children:

- Vocabulary of emotional terms.
- How to recognise their own emotions.
- How to detect the emotions of others (read others' facial expressions) .
- What may trigger certain emotions.
- How others may interpret their behaviour.
- Problem solving skills.





THE FOUR ZONES

- Feelings can be overwhelming, but they can also simmer away quietly in the background.
- They have a variety of intensity and create different levels of energy that we experience uniquely within our bodies.
- The four zones sort feelings, energy and states of alertness into four colours. This makes the complex and nuanced task of regulation more concrete for learners.



LOW TO HIGH ENERGY

The ZONES of Regulation

			
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



Moving between the zones

- Children can move between the zones- it is natural and expected.
- Regulation- is matching the state to the situation.
- Body signals help us to identify the zone.



How do your emotions **FEEL** in your body?

FEELING BLUE



My body feels:

- Shaky, slow
- Low energy
- Low/no motivation
- Brain fog

GOOD-TO-GO!



My body feels...

- Relaxed
- Motivated
- Energized
- Focused
- Smiling

GETTING YELLOW



My body feels:

- Muscles a little tense
- Jaw clenched
- Voice louder
- Restless
- Fidgety

RED ALERT!



My body feels:

- Very tense
- Jaw firmly clenched
- Breathing quickly
- Heart beating fast
- Can't think clearly
- Face feels hot
- Very restless

Possible Body Signals

Moving Slowly
Slow Heartbeat
Foggy Thinking
Heavy Muscles

Possible Body Signals

Comfortable Body
Steady Breath
and Heartbeat
Focused Thinking
Relaxed Muscles

Possible Body Signals

Wiggly Movement
Faster Heartbeat
Faster Thinking
Tense Muscles

Possible Body Signals

Hot/Sweating
Pounding Heart
Racing Thoughts
Powerful Muscles

BLUE ZONE = LOW STATES OF ALERTNESS AND DOWN FEELINGS

- Tired
- Sad
- Bored
- Sick
- Exhausted

POSSIBLE BODY SIGNALS:

Heavy Limbs
Moving Slowly
Slow Heartbeat
Foggy Head



GREEN ZONE = CALM AND ALERT STATE



POSSIBLE BODY SIGNALS:

Relaxed Muscles
Comfortable
Body Temperature
Focused/
Engaged Brain

Calm
Proud
Happy
Content

YELLOW ZONE = ENERGY IS HIGHER AND INTERNAL STATES STARTING TO ELEVATE

Silly
Frustrated
Excited
Worried
Stressed

THIS IS MY
EXCITED
FACE



POSSIBLE BODY SIGNALS:

Wiggly
Heart Beating Faster
Body Warming Up
Muscles Tense
Thinking Faster

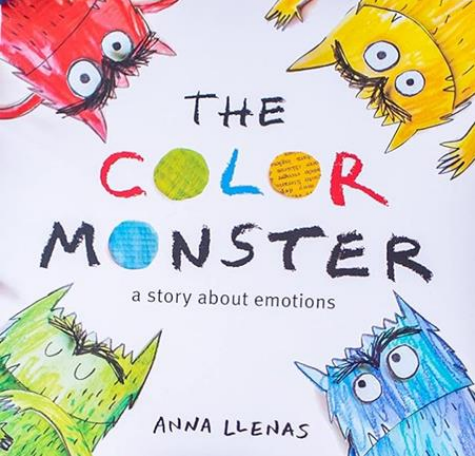
RED ZONE = EXTREMELY HIGH ENERGY **AND INTENSE, OVERWHELMING** **FEELINGS**

Elated
Overjoyed
Terrified
Angry
Devastated
Panicked
Out of control



POSSIBLE **BODY SIGNALS:**

Heartbeat Fast
Skin Flushed
Hot/Sweating
Muscles Tense



- Reinforce, reinforce, reinforce. Use books, songs, videos to reinforce Zones concepts over time.
- Take pictures of students, teachers, family members in their Zones to make this learning accessible and relevant. You may even want to incorporate favourite cartoon/ book characters.
- Model The Zones by checking in with your own Zone frequently, and modelling regulation strategies.

BLUE



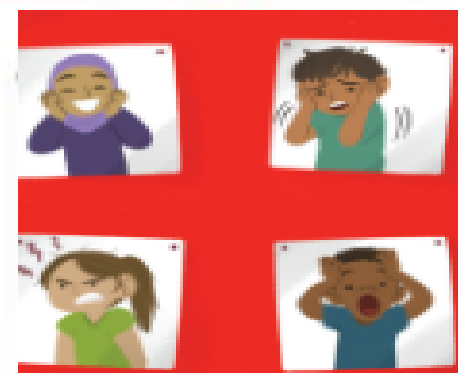
GREEN



YELLOW



RED



How you might feel

Sick

Sad

Tired

Bored

Moving slowly

How you might feel

Happy

Calm

Feeling OK

Focused

Ready to Learn

How you might feel

Frustrated

Worried

Silly/Wiggly

Excited

Loss of some control

How you might feel

Mad/ Angry

Mean

Yelling/ Hitting

Disgusted

Out of Control

What might help you

Talk to someone

Stretch

Take a brain break

Stand

Take a walk

Close my eyes

What might help you

Listen

Learn

Share your ideas with confidence

Show kindness to others

Be a good friend

Show resilience

What might help you

Talk to someone

Count to 20

Take deep breaths

Squeeze a stress ball

Draw a picture

Take a brain break

Carry out a mindful activity

What might help you

Stop what I am doing

Take deep breaths

Find and name 5 things (see, hear, touch)

Ask for a break

Find a safe space

Ask for help

Make sensible choices

Q & A

What's **one thing** you're going to take away from our workshop(s) together?

What will your **next steps** look like?

Queries and reflections are welcomed, please be mindful not to use children's names.





achieving for children

Champions for children and families

Thank You



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