Information for Parents about The ZONES of Regulation

Dear Parent/Carer,

As part of our Health and Wellbeing curriculum at Viewlands Primary we are introducing the school community to The Zones of Regulation. This curriculum is designed to help children gain skills in self-regulation.

Self-regulation is also known as self-control, self-management, or impulse control. It is about maintaining the best state of alertness of both the body and emotions for a specific situation. For example, when a child plays team sport, it is best to be highly alert, which would not be helpful in the library.

The lessons and learning activities are designed to help the children recognise when they are in the different zones, and use strategies to change or stay in the zone they are in. The children will increase their emotional vocabulary, gain skills in reading other people's facial expressions, develop perspective about how others see and react to their behaviour, and gain insight into events that trigger their behaviour. They will also learn calming and alerting strategies, and problem-solving skills.

It is important that all team members (families, school staff, children) are familiar with the language used in The Zones curriculum. This supports the children as they practice self-regulation. They learn the skills more quickly and are more likely to apply them in many situations.

You can support your child in their learning by doing the following:

• Talk about the Zones, and which zone you are in. (More information about each zone can be found below) You could make comments aloud, so your child understands it is natural that we all experience the different zones and use strategies to control (or regulate) ourselves. For example, "This is really frustrating me and making me go into the Yellow Zone. I need to use a tool to calm down. I will take some deep breaths."

• Help your child become aware of their own zones and feelings by pointing out what you notice about them.

• Help your child to work out ways to self-regulate so their behaviour is expected for the situation they are in.

• Share with your child how their behaviour is affecting the zone you are in and how you feel.

• Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and needs by checking in.

• Talk about your child's triggers and Zones tools.

Everyone experiences all the zones at one time or another—the Red and Yellow Zones are not the "bad" or "naughty" zones. The Zones of Regulation is not about blame or punishment. It is about helping to identify the most appropriate zone for the situation and learning to adjust behaviour accordingly.

Best wishes

Viewlands Zones Working Group

Background information that may be useful in discussion with parents

What is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation describes an individual's ability to adjust their level of alertness and how they display emotions through their behaviour to achieve the most appropriate state for their given situation. A person who can self-regulate well is likely to remain calm and organised when under considerable added stress. Someone who struggles with regulation will have difficulty coping and is likely to display socially inappropriate behaviour, such as excessive temper. There are three components of self-regulation - sensory processing, executive functioning and emotional regulation.

Sensory Processing

Sensory processing describes how we make sense of, organise and use information received by our senses. It includes adjusting how much input we receive to avoid becoming overwhelmed. It also describes how we filter out sensory input that we don't need, so that we can concentrate on what's important. Some children may find it difficult to filter out background noise, traffic, clothes itching, a hard seat, the smell of lunch etc, in order to concentrate on the one truly important stimulus – the teacher's voice! Some might need additional opportunities for movement or deep pressure, and if this is not built in to their timetable they seek it naturally by rolling on the floor or bumping into others, for example. The Zones help children understand what sensory supports they need to help them feel regulated and ready to learn.

Executive Function

This refers to the cognitive process involved in the conscious control of our thoughts and behaviours. Executive functioning is like a control centre which determines our thoughts and actions. Executive functions that affect the ability to self-regulate are: attention shifting (multi-tasking), working memory (ability to update new information and forget what's no longer relevant), self-talk, flexible thinking, planning, and inhibition. The Zones can help pupils to consciously adjust their actions, leading to better control and problem-solving abilities.

Emotional regulation

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to control your emotional reaction so that it is appropriate and proportionate to a stimulus. It requires moderating, refining and evaluating the intensity and timing of your response. The Zones helps identify the size of a problem, motivation, and other people's perspective, which in turn lead to the ability to modify a response.

These neurological components are interdependent in the process of self-regulation, and it is essential to look at all three elements.

What are the Zones?

The Zones of Regulation is a framework which allows children to categorise complex feelings and use tools or strategies to move between the Zones. States of alertness and emotion are grouped into four coloured zones:

The Blue Zone describes low alertness, e.g. when sad, tired, sick or bored. Movement and thinking is slow and sluggish.

The Green Zone describes a regulated state of alertness, e.g. when calm, focused, content or happy. This is the zone required for good learning and social activity. To move into this zone shows control.

The Yellow Zone describes a heightened alertness, but the individual has some level of control. They might be worried, anxious, silly, excited or confused. They may appear fidgety or unsettled. They are beginning to lose some control.

The Red Zone describes extremely heightened feelings or alertness. They are experiencing rage, panic, terror, elation, or explosive behaviour. This person is not in control of their body or behaviours.

For further reading see "The Zones of Regulation" by Leah M Kuypers, or visit

https://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html