It's Ok to Have Red Zone Feelings, but Red Zone Behavior is Unexpected: An extension of The Zones of Regulation® for Individuals on the Autism Spectrum

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Objectives

- Focus on the importance of self-regulation and emotional control for students with ASD
- Learn about a system that extends The Zones of Regulation for students with ASD
- Learn about teaching strategies, self-monitoring tools, and data tracking systems related to a system to extend The Zones of Regulation
Introduction

- Individuals with ASD have a critical need to develop skills in the areas of self-regulation and emotional control.
- The Zones of Regulation curriculum is a comprehensive system to teach self-regulation skills by identifying different levels of emotional arousal, and teaching strategies to make conscious decisions about behavior in each zone.
- Benefit from support materials that are concrete, literal, and visual.
- Zones of Regulation creates a concrete representation of a highly abstract concept.
- Students with ASD have benefitted from additional instruction in the difference between feelings and behavior.

Emotional and Behavioral Regulation

Zones of Regulation

Autism Spectrum Disorders
It’s OK to Have Red Zone Feelings, but Red Zone Behavior is Unexpected: An Extension of The Zones of Regulation® for Individuals on the Autism Spectrum
Social Thinking®
(Michelle Garcia Winner)

- Expected and unexpected behaviors
- Size of the problem
- Flexible thinking (Superflex® vs Rock Brain®)

www.socialthinking.com

The Zones of Regulation®
(Leah M. Kuypers 2011)

- Blue Zone
- Green Zone
- Yellow Zone
- Red Zone

-> System of conceptualizing and teaching self regulation

www.zonesofregulation.com

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SCERTS® (Prizant et al, 2006)

- Emotional Regulation
- Mutual regulation
- Self-regulation

www.scerts.com

Extending The Zones of Regulation
Begin with the lessons of The Zones of Regulation

Once students can reliably identify what zone they are in (blue, green, yellow, or red), introduce the idea that within each zone there are 2 elements:

- **Feelings**
- **Behaviors**

Adaption of The Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Zone</th>
<th>Green Zone</th>
<th>Yellow Zone</th>
<th>Red Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Mad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Silly</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td></td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving slowly</td>
<td>Listening to teachers</td>
<td>Wiggly</td>
<td>Yelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying on desk</td>
<td>Doing my work</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not doing my work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not following directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rationale:

- I found that my students quickly began to mistakenly identify that the “red zone” is “bad” and did not want to label themselves in this zone.
- Students with ASD have often have very concrete thinking styles, and struggled with understanding the difference between feelings and behaviors in the different zones.

Extension and Modification:

- Using The Zones poster and other printed materials from the curriculum, I describe emotions and behaviors that define each zone.
- Teach a set of lessons similar to those in The Zones curriculum to reinforce the identification of emotions at each zone level (blue, green, yellow, and red) and behaviors in each zone.
- Increased focus on identification of feelings in self and others.
Reinforce the concept of expected and unexpected behaviors in the learning environment, and use that as a basis for decision making in each zone.

- For example, a student may feel mad (Red Zone) and that is perfectly ok.
- In the Red Zone, there are unexpected behaviors (hitting people, etc.) and expected behaviors (taking a deep breath, asking for help, etc.).

Use that as a basis for decision making with the tool box of strategies.

New teaching materials

- Teaching materials to identify and track emotions and behaviors throughout the day.
  - This is similar to some of the teaching in The Zones curriculum (e.g. My Zones Across the Day), but extends the teaching for students to identify their emotions and their behaviors.
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Tool Box Strategies

- We then develop tool box strategies
  - Combine mutual-support systems (with the aid of an adult as needed) and self-regulation system
  - Based on the SCERTS model
  - Including mutual regulation tools helps the younger and lower functioning students access this system
Sample of Tool Box Strategies

- Ask for help
- Ask for a break
- Take space
- Deep breaths
- Lazy 8 breathing
- Drink of water
- Snack
- Jump, bounce
- Squeeze object
- Count to 5
- Social stories
- Listen to Music
- Turn the lights off
- Calming sequence
- Size of the problem
- Take a walk
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The goal:

- The goal is for students to be able to:
  - Identify what zone his/her feelings are in
  - Use the tool-box system to make good decisions about his/her behavior before (s)he engages in escalated behavior

“It is ok to have Red Zone feelings, but Red Zone behavior is unexpected.”
Sample IEP Goals and Objectives

1. Sam will improve his ability to self-monitor his own behavior
   1. Objective: Sam will identify his current emotional state on a leveled chart indicating differing levels of emotional arousal
   2. Objective: Utilizing a leveled chart system, Sam will identify his current level of behavioral escalation
2. When experiencing emotional or behavioral arousal, Sam will select a strategy to help himself return to a calm state
   1. Objective: When experiencing emotional arousal (e.g., feeling sad, mad, etc.), Sam will utilize a tool-box chart to identify a strategy to respond without behavioral escalation
   2. Objective: When experiencing behavioral escalation, Sam will utilize a tool-box chart to identify a strategy to de-escalate his behavior, with adult facilitation

The system to achieve the goal

- Starts with teaching the difference between feelings and behaviors in all zones
- Teaches expected and unexpected behaviors in all zones
- Develop tool box strategies for all zones
Extension

- Also includes self-monitoring tools, tracking tools for teachers, and a system for monitoring progress towards the development of self-regulation skills
- Allows for the collection of self-report data (initially guided by the adult until the child is reliable in self-report throughout the day which serves as a communication tool and a progress-monitoring tool
- Provides a method for tracking the implementation of regulation strategies (via the “tool box”) which is invaluable for measuring progress towards IEP objectives

My Zones During the Day

Teaching Forms

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Teaching Tools

My Zones Tool Box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Zone</th>
<th>Green Zone</th>
<th>Yellow Zone</th>
<th>Red Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I feel...</td>
<td>When I feel...</td>
<td>When I feel...</td>
<td>When I feel...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad, Tired, Sick, Bored</td>
<td>Happy, Calm, Focused</td>
<td>Frustrated, Worried, Silly, Excited</td>
<td>Mad, Angry, Afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can...</td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>I can...</td>
<td>I can...</td>
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Data tracking

- Using the teaching form and monitoring forms, progress can be easily monitored
- Can track the following
  - Incidents of dysregulated feelings and escalated behaviors defined by frequency of Blue, Yellow, and Red Zone incidents
  - Tracking of expected and unexpected behaviors defined for each zone
  - Tracking of the use of tool box strategies both self-regulation and mutual regulation strategies
  - Monitoring the development of self-regulation skills defined as the occurrence of dysregulated feelings (Blue, Yellow, or Red Zone) with the absence of escalated behaviors

Data Tracking Tool
Evaluating Success

"Feeling in the Red Zone without having Red Zone behaviors)
Case studies

For more information:

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