

Supporting Big Emotions at Home and School

Emotion Regulation in the childhood years

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Aims of session

- What is emotion regulation
- Emotion regulation and brain development
- Introduction to the '3Rs' of Emotion Regulation
- Regulation as parents
- Introduction to the zones of regulation

What is emotion regulation

- Being aware of my emotions - *what am I feeling?*
- Understanding and accepting my emotions - *why am I feeling this way? What are my emotions telling me?*
- Managing how I express my emotions - *How do I want to express my emotions?*

(Gratz and Roemer, 2004)



Why is it important

- Emotion Regulation skills are linked to overall wellbeing
- Linked to relationship satisfaction
- Related to academic and vocational performance
- Understanding of ourselves, others and the world around us – perspective taking and empathy





Learning Emotional Regulation

People aren't born with emotional regulation, it has to be learnt.

Research suggests there are at least three process that influence a child's growing ability to regulate their emotions:

- Neurological maturation
- Temperament and developmental status
- Parental socialisation and environmental support

What does emotion dysregulation look like





What does Emotional Dysregulation look like?

Tantrum

Melt Down

Shutting Down

Shouting

Aggression

Storming Off

Withdrawal/Silence,

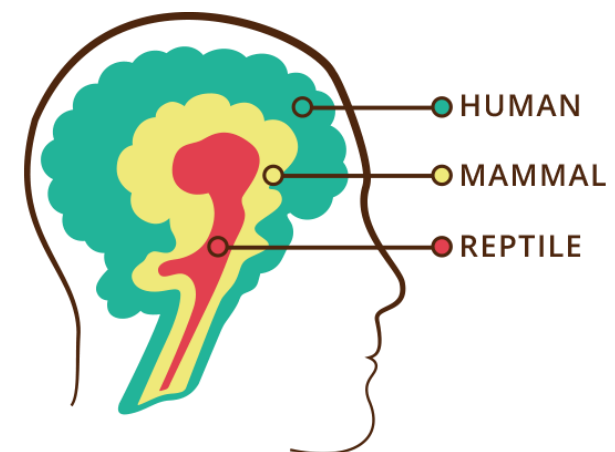
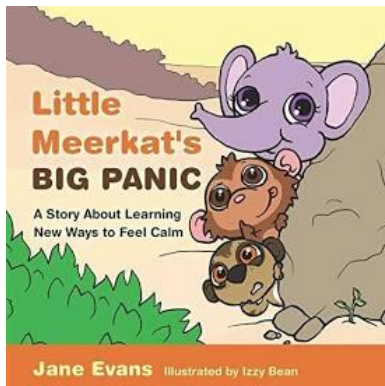
Appearing Distracted

Tearful

Anxious or panicky

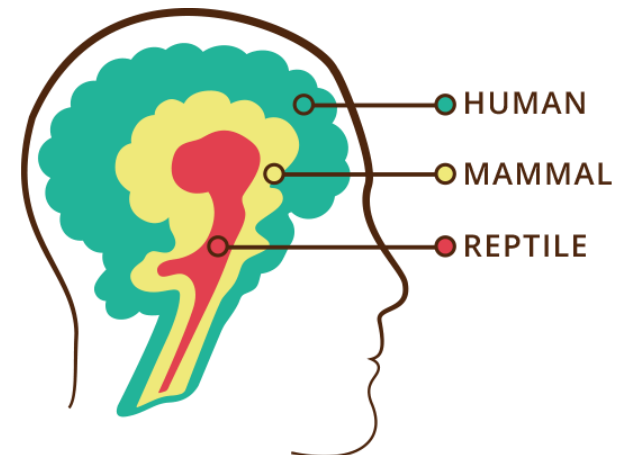
Development of Emotion Regulation

- Three levels
- Primitive/Reptilian Brain 200 million+ – Spotting and reacting to dangers
- Mammalian Brain 20-50 million years – Safety in relationships / Attachment system
- Human Brain - 300,000 approx. years – abstract thinking, imagination and problem solving



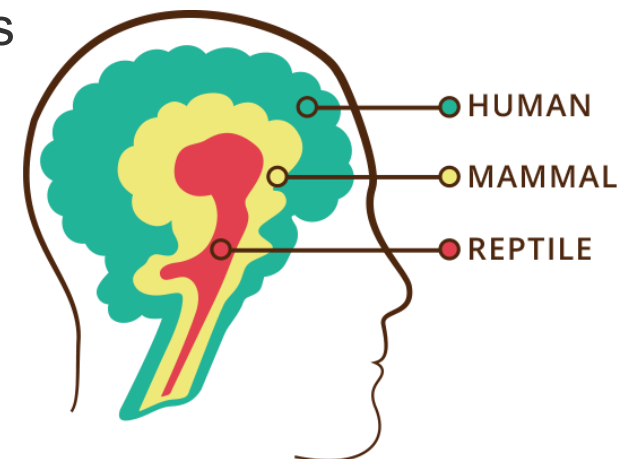
Development of Emotion Regulation

- 'Primitive/Reptilian Brain'
- Oldest, >200 million years
- Survival & Threat Response in the moment & Recuperate (low stimulation)
- 'Fight/Flight/Freeze/Fright'
- Not thinking



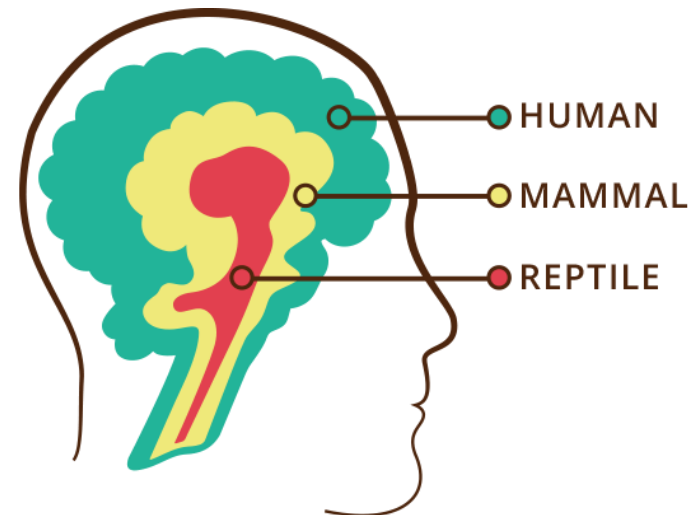
Development of Emotion Regulation

- 'Mammalian Brain/Limbic System'
- 20-50 million years
- How experiences and relationships make us feel
- Safety in relationships
- Social acceptance and position
- Attachment (~~attention~~)-seeking behaviours

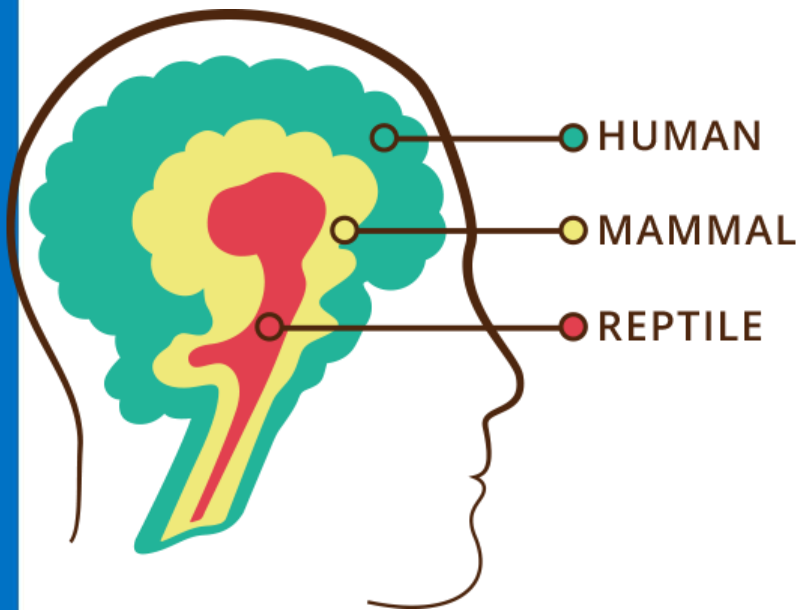


Development of Emotion Regulation

- Human Brain
- 300,000 years old
- Imagination
- Problem solving & Planning
- Abstract thought
- *Developing until 35+ years*



Working with brain development – 'Connecting before Correcting'



Human brain – higher level thinking, problem solving, imagination, planning and organisation > **3. REASON**

Mammalian brain – belonging, connectedness, social brain > **2. RELATE**


Reptilian brain - Survival, safety, threat response, meeting basic needs > **1. REGULATE**

Reference: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Three-Rs.pdf>

‘Connect before you correct’



How does this make you feel?



I hate
you!

I can't do
it!

I'm
stupid.

I'm not
eating
that!



Common responses...

Refuting: “You don’t hate me”
“You’re not stupid!”
“You love carrots!”

Questioning: “Why.....?”
“What’s happened?”

Providing Alternative Evidence / Persuading:
“Yesterday you said I was the best mummy!”
“You’re so good at maths”
“You’ve eaten carrots lots of times”

Giving Advice:
“People won’t like you if you say that”
“Let me help you....”
“Why don’t you try...”



'WINS'

A helpful tool to approach these conversations

WONDER



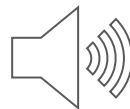
IMAGINE



NOTICE



SOUNDS



I **WONDER** if you felt ignored or left out? Have I got that right? Tell me more about that.

I can **IMAGINE** that it was really upsetting for you, I would feel upset about that too.

I **NOTICED** that what he said made you really angry. Can you tell me more about that?

It **SOUNDS** as though you are feeling anxious about that, is that right? What else are you feeling?

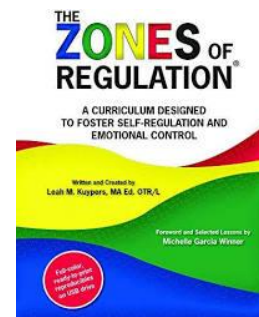
You can remind the child that it is okay to feel several emotions at once



Part 2 – Zones of Regulation

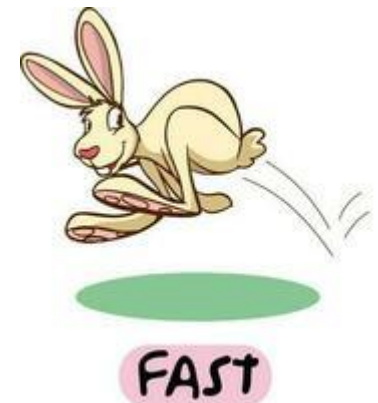
Tools for Regulating and Relating

- Identifying emotions and how fast or slow these are moving (E-Motion)
- Linking emotions to different situations
- Finding ways to communicate and manage emotions in ways that I can be proud of



Tool 1: Identifying Emotions – how fast are they moving?

- All emotions can be put on a scale between 'slow moving emotions' or 'fast moving emotions'
- This can give a shorthand to identifying what emotional state we are in
- It can be a lot to expect children to answer 'which emotions are you feeling?' and in moments of stress or dysregulation, sometimes emotions are mixed up



Zones of regulation



AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: PRECISION REGULATION

** WHAT TO LOOK FOR **

	LETHARGIC Parasympathetic I (PNS I)	CALM Parasympathetic II (PNS II) <i>Ventral Vagus</i>	ACTIVE/ALERT Sympathetic I (SNS I)	FLIGHT/FIGHT Sympathetic II (SNS II)	HYPER FREEZE Sympathetic III (SNS III)	HYPO FREEZE Parasympathetic III (PNS III) <i>Dorsal Vagus Collapse</i>
		◀ "Normal" Life ▶			◀ Threat to Life ▶	
PRIMARY STATE	Apathy, Depression	Safe, Clear Thinking, Social Engagement	Alert, Ready to Act	React to Danger	Await Opportunity to Escape	Prepare for Death
AROUSAL	Too Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme Overload	Excessive Overwhelm Induces Hypoarousal
MUSCLES	Slack	Relaxed/toned	Toned	Tense	Rigid (deer in the headlights)	Flaccid
RESPIRATION	Shallow	Easy, often into belly	Increasing rate	Fast, often in upper chest	Hyperventilation	Hypo-ventilation
HEART RATE	Slow	Resting	Quicker or more forceful	Quick and/or forceful	Tachycardia (very fast)	Bradycardia (very slow)
BLOOD PRESSURE	Likely low	Normal	On the rise	Elevated	Significantly high	Significantly low
PUPILS, EYES, EYE LIDS	Pupils smaller, lids may be heavy	Pupils smaller, eyes moist, eye lids relaxed	Pupils widening, eyes less moist, eye lids toned	Pupils very dilated, eyes dry, eye lids tensed/raised	Pupils very small or dilated, eyes very dry, lids very tense	Lids drooping, eyes closed or open and fixed
SKIN TONE	Variable	Rosy hue, despite skin color (blood flows to skin)	Less rosy hue, despite skin color (blood flows to skin)	Pale hue, despite skin color (blood flow to muscles)	May be pale and/or flushed	Noticeably pale
HUMIDITY						
	Skin	Dry	Increased sweat	Increased sweat, may be cold	Cold sweat	Cold sweat
	Mouth	Variable	Moist	Dry	Dry	Dry
HANDS & FEET (TEMPERATURE)	May be warm or cool	Warm	Cool	Cold	Extremes of cold & hot	Cold
DIGESTION	Variable	Increase	Decrease	Stops	Evacuate bowel & bladder	Stopped
EMOTIONS (LIKELY)	Grief, sadness, shame, disgust	Calm, pleasure, love, sexual arousal, "good" grief	Anger, shame, disgust, anxiety, excitement, sexual climax	Rage, fear	Terror, may be dissociation	May be too dissociated to feel anything
CONTACT WITH SELF & OTHERS	Withdrawn	Probable	Possible	Limited	Not likely	Impossible
FRONTAL CORTEX	May or may not be accessible	Should be accessible	Should be accessible	May or may not be accessible	Likely inaccessible	Inaccessible
INTEGRATION	Not likely	Likely	Likely	Not likely	Impossible	Impossible
RECOMMENDED INTERVENTION	Activate, Gently Increase Energy	Continue Therapy Direction	Continue Therapy Direction	Put on Brakes	Slam on Brakes	Medical Emergency CALL PARAMEDICS

*Observe client states: To modulate arousal with brakes. Adjust in yourself: To think clearly & prevent vicarious trauma & compassion fatigue.

© 2000, 2014, 2016 Babette Rothschild Sources: Multiple medical & physiology texts; P.Levine 2010; S.Porges, 2011

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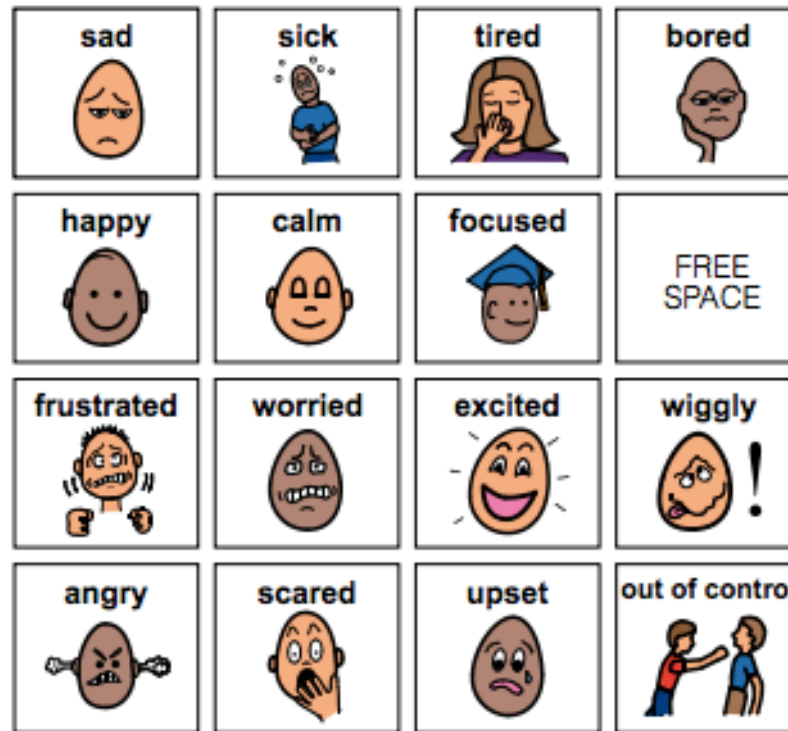
ZONES OF REGULATION!

Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
			
Sick Sad Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Good to Go Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Anxious Excited	Mad Angry Mean Yelling/Hitting Out of Control I Need Time and Space

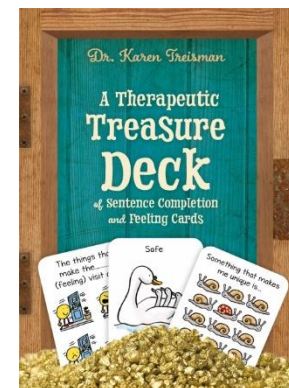
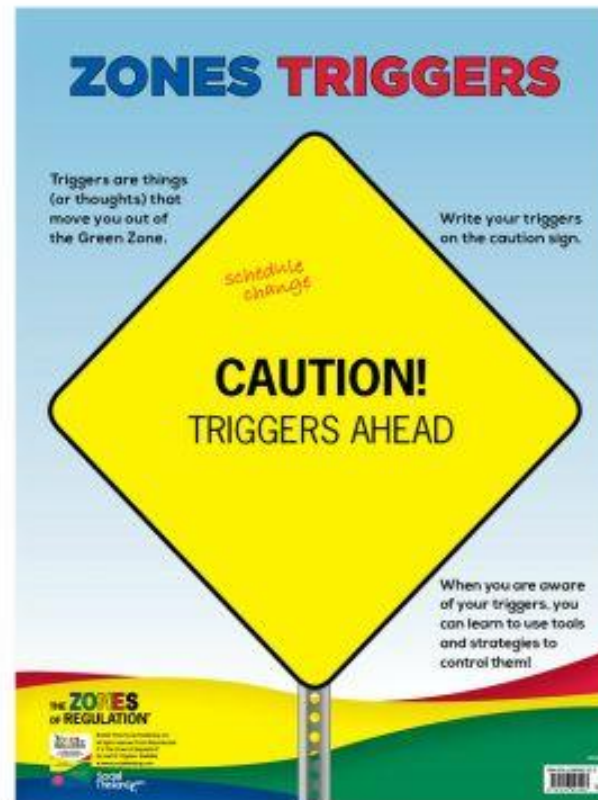


ZONES

BINGO

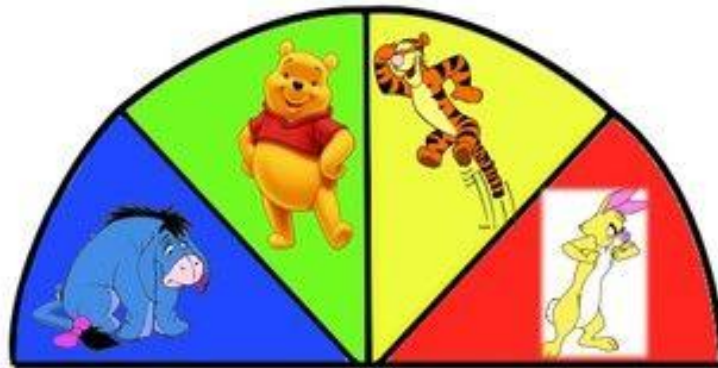


Tool 2: Linking to situations and triggers

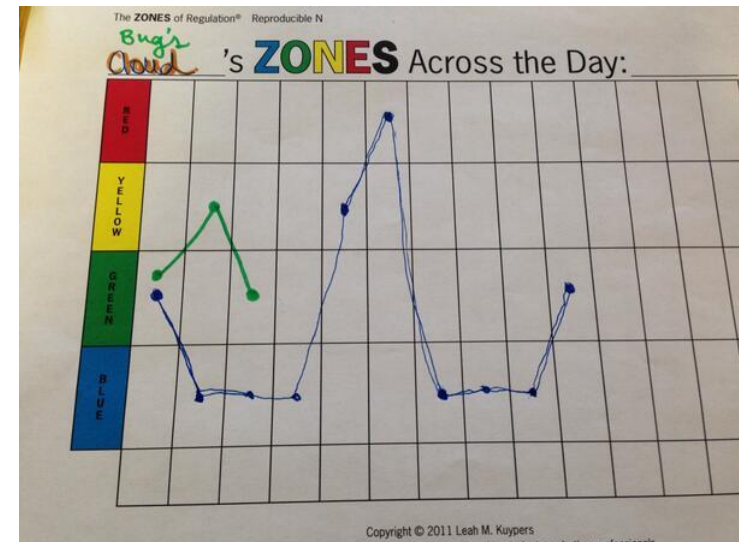


Linking emotions to situations and triggers

- Using lots of hypothetical/safe examples
- Movies and tv characters
- Famous people and celebrities
- For some children, might be difficult to name triggers*



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Tool 3: Developing an emotion regulation toolbox - **Regulating**

THE ZONES OF REGULATION[®]

BLUE ZONE
Icons: Nervous, Worried, Embarrassed, Sad, Mad, Scared

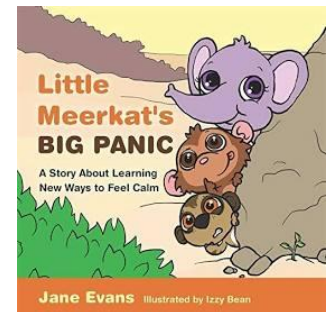
GREEN ZONE
Icons: Calm, Good, Proud, Happy, Grumpy, Annoyed

YELLOW ZONE
Icons: Frustrated, Worried, Scared, Embarrassed, Mad, Annoyed

RED ZONE
Icons: Aggressive, Mad, Scared, Frustrated, Mad, Angry

Blue Zone Tools	Green Zone Tools	Yellow Zone Tools	Red Zone Tools
Stretch	Drink water	Deep breaths	Take a break

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DISTRACTION







Webinars September – December 2025

- Helping your child with common fears & worries
- Supporting big emotions at home (zones of regulation)
- Building resilience
- Understanding & supporting sleep





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Questions and feedback

-please complete a 30 second survey before going

*Thank
you!*



Contact:

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