What are the Zones of Regulation?

The Zones of Regulation is an approach used to support the development of children's self-regulation skills. The different emotions children feel and the impact of these on their state of alertness are categorised into four coloured zones – blue, green, yellow and red.

Blue Zone	Green Zone	Yellow Zone	Red Zone
Low level emotions, not ready to learn	Calm state, optimum level to learn	Emotions are elevating, 'some' control	Emotions are heightened, loss of control
bored ill tired sad lonely disappointed	calm content focused relaxed happy	annoyed worried / nervous silly excited, frightened distracted confused embarrassed jealous	enraged inconsolable hysterical terrified over elated

How do the Zones of Regulation help children?
- Develops vocabulary to talk about emotions
- Helps children to recognise their own emotions
- Enables children to detect the emotions of others
- Allows them to recognise what might trigger certain emotions
- Challenges them see how others may interpret or being impacted on by their behaviour
- Gives them tools for problem solving and regulation

A person who can self – regulate is able to:

- Remain calm in a stressful situation
- Cheer themselves up after a disappointment
- Know when they are experiencing an emotional overload and adjust.

Why are we using this approach within the BeDifferent Federation?

- It gives the children and adults shared vocabulary – a common language – to talk about emotions
- It is simple for all to understand
- It teaches healthy coping and self-regulation strategies

Tools and strategies

Nursery and Reception children have been introduced to the coloured zones and emotions of sadness, fear, worry and anger. They will have daily emotional check ins and opportunities to reflect on how they are feeling across the school day.

Children in Year 1 to 6 have been taught the coloured zones and have discussed strategies to help regulate their emotions. Some useful strategies include:

Blue zone

This is where we need to help our bodies wake up, feel better and regain focus. What can I do if I am in the blue zone?

Green zone

This is where we are feeling calm, focussed, happy and ready to learn. We are well regulated and proactive. What can I do if I am in the green zone?

Yellow zone

This is where our feelings are heightened but we are still in some control. We need help to calm ourselves. What can I do if I am in the **yellow zone**?

Red zone

This is where we are feeling completely overwhelmed. We need help to stay safe and calm down. What can I do if I am in the red zone?

When I am
RED
I feel...

mad

angry

afraid

I am...

yelling

hitting

out of control

MY RED
STRATEGIES
To help me get to green, I can...

take deep breaths

hug or talk to someone

take a break

size of the problem

count

Use a stress ball
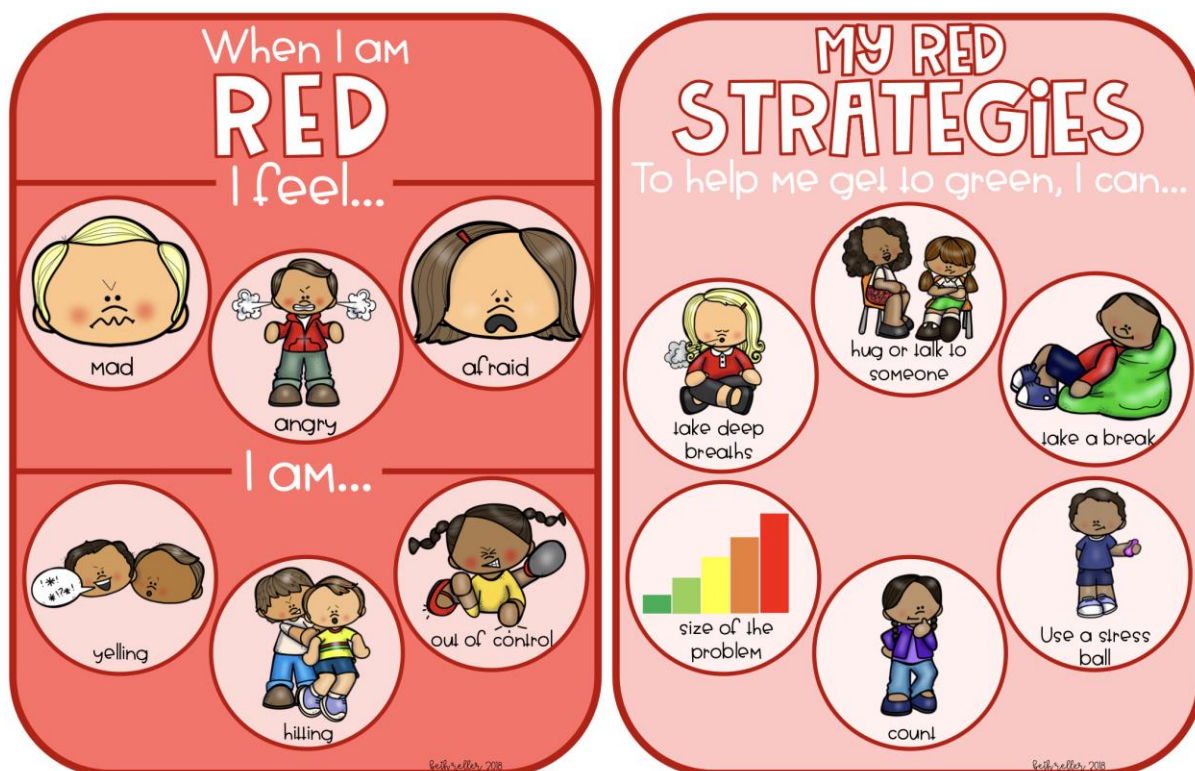
Important things to remember:

- There is no 'bad' zone.
- Everyone experiences all of the zones at different times and within different circumstances.
- We can't change the way children feel but we can help them manage their feelings and behaviours and to validate their feelings: 'I can see you are angry and I understand, but it is not okay to …'
- You can be in more than one zone at a time
- If a child is confident using words to describe their emotions, they might not always need to relate this to a zone. However, making links to the zones will help them to choose the right strategy to manage their feelings.
- If a child is in the red zone, you must limit the verbal – this is not a teachable moment! Instead, discuss the use of calming tools to help the child calm and regulate.

Other example of sensory breaks include:
- Squeezing playdough
- Scrunching paper into a ball
- Use of fidget toys
- Blowing bubbles
- Listening to calming music
- Bouncing on a trampoline
- Rolling on an exercise ball
- Drawing
- Reading
- Counting
- Breathing exercises

If you are interested in exploring this further or would like to discuss how to support your child with developing their emotional regulation skills at home, please speak to your child's class teacher.