

Emotional Vocabulary and Regulation

Why it matters?

Children who can understand and name their feelings are better able to manage emotions, communication needs, build relationships, and engage in learning.

Research shows that strong emotional literacy supports:

- Behaviour regulation
- Social skills and friendships
- Mental wellbeing
- Academic success



The Zones of Regulation - A Whole School Approach

Schools can use The Zones of Regulation framework to support emotional understanding and self-regulation. This evidence based approach teaches children to:

- Recognise their emotions
- Notice how different emotions feel in their body
- Understand how emotions affect behavior
- Learn strategies to regulate their feelings.

The Zones use four colours to group different emotions, explicitly teaching emotion words, how their body feels in different emotional states, and strategies to move between zones.



Blue zone ●

Low energy

Feelings: sad, tired, bored, unwell
Children may feel down, slow, withdrawn, or low in energy.

Green zone ●

Regulated & ready to engage

Feelings: clam, happy, relaxed, focused
This is the ideal learning zone where children feel settled and ready to engage

Yellow zone ●

Heightened emotions

Feelings: worried, excited, nervous, frustrated
Children may feel unsettled or overly excited and need support to calm or refocus.

Red zone ●

Very intense emotion

Feelings: angry, overwhelmed, panicked, out of control
Children need adult support and calming strategies to return to a safer emotional state.

Emotional Vocabulary and Regulation

Regulation strategies to teach



It is always important to work with each individual child regarding what strategies work for them.

Some population simple strategies to consider:

- Deep breathing
- Movement Breaks
- Sensory toys
- Quiet time
- Talking to a trusted adult

Children should be taught that all emotions are okay, but not all behaviors are okay. The focus is on understanding emotions, and learning safe, healthy ways to manage them.

How families can support at home

Parents can help by:

- Naming emotions during daily routines: 'You seemed frustrated when the tower fell down'
- Talking about feelings in books and stories
- Modelling calm regulation strategies
- Encouraging children to describe how they feel before their emotions become out of control.

Using similar approaches at home and school supports consistency and confidence.



Where can I find out more?

More detailed information about the Zones of Regulation framework can be found on the official website: <https://zonesofregulation.com/>

The website provides:

- Parent guides
- Explanations of each zone
- Practical strategies and tools
- Resources for supporting emotional regulation at home and in school