



**Bangkok Patana School**  
*The British International School in Thailand*  
Established 1957

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# Strategies for Supporting Self-regulation

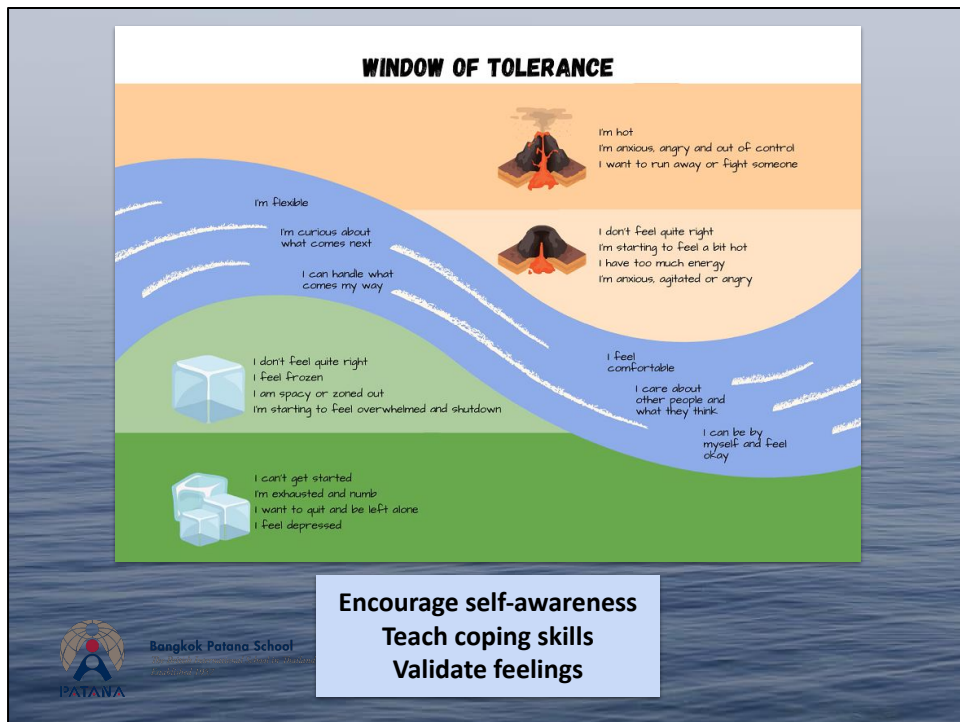
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What are your reasons for coming and what do you hope to gain from the session today?



Self-regulation is managing our emotions and feelings in a way that is appropriate for and fits the situation that we are in. So that may mean choosing and using coping strategies to help us. It means being self-aware so that we recognise the 'clues' that indicate we need to self-regulate and to enable us to maintain those positive social interactions.



This is a term used in psychology to describe the range of physical and emotional states where a person can effectively manage their emotions, thoughts, and the 'stressors' of life and problem solve and connect with others without becoming overwhelmed or shutting down. And for primary aged children, this 'window' is really important because they are still developing their skills of emotional regulation and so they may be more likely to encounter some dysregulation – for example during transitions, in social situations, if things feel hard.

To we want to help students to develop these skills so that they can better manage to self-regulate and stay within their 'window'

>Encouraging self-awareness of emotions and how their bodies feel when they become dysregulated.

>Creating a safe and calm environment.

>Teaching coping skills and strategies

> Validate feelings and that it is normal to experience a whole range of emotions – not trying to prevent those feelings

## What are the Zones of Regulation?

- Internationally renowned framework
- Identify and categorise and manage emotions
- Develops coping strategies and techniques
- Develops emotional vocabulary
- Consider what might move them into different zones
- Recognise the zones other people are in



Leah Kuypers



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This is Leah Kuypers and she is an Occupational Therapist who developed this approach as a way of having a clear framework and approach for children to begin to identify and recognise their emotions using four different colour categories. This helps children to think about what state of alertness they are in and to access and use coping strategies and techniques to help them to manage that, particularly if the zone they are in doesn't match the situation. It's a way of developing emotional language and a shared language so that children are better able to express their feelings and thoughts. It can also be a good starting point for thinking about what may trigger the emotional zone they are in. Children can also start recognising the zone that others might be in so they can empathise and think about how we can all affect each other.

Today is just an overview of the Zones, however there are many more elements including identifying triggers, and thinking strategies like the size of the problem.

## THE ZONES OF REGULATION®

### What it IS

It is a simple, common language to understand, talk about and teach regulation.

It is a consistent, metacognitive pathway to follow for regulation

It is a proactive, skills based approach

It is adaptable for individual people and places

### What it ISN'T

It is not a behaviour approach

It is not a discipline model or punishment

it is not a scripted curriculum

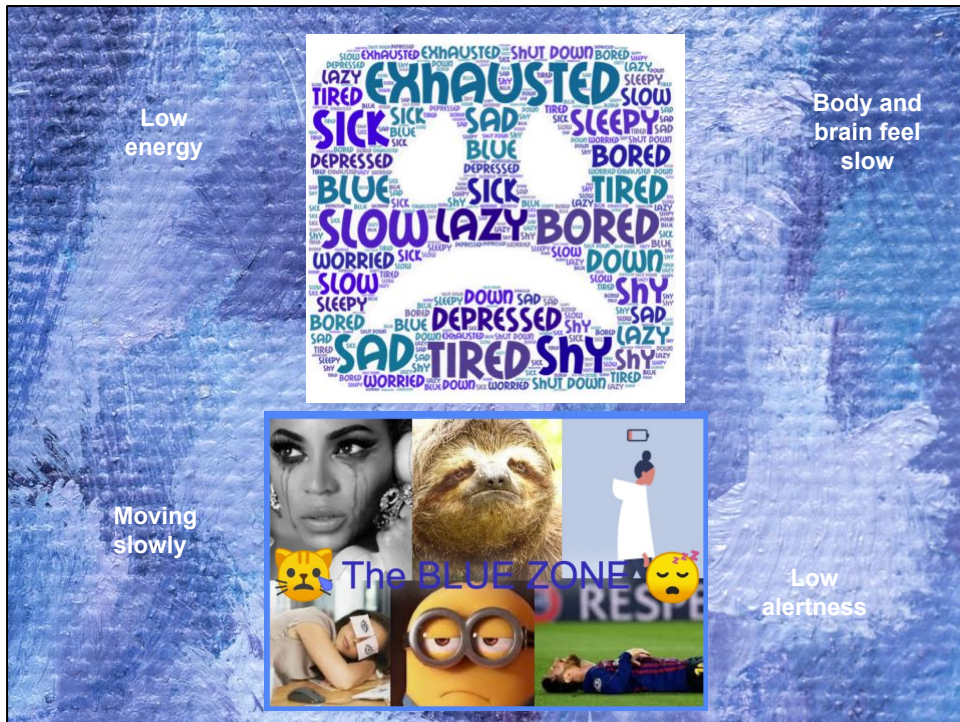
It is not 'one size fits all'

What is important to explain is what the zones are and what they are not – this is not a behaviour approach or a behaviour model with rewards and sanctions and it is not something that is going to work in the same way for every individual. It is not a magic way to change challenging behaviour. What it is, is a way of developing a shared language around emotions and regulation and it gives a consistent and metacognitive 'thinking' to approach self-regulation.



The Zones of regulation consists of four different colour zones. Each zone represents different levels of alertness, energy and levels of strength of emotions.





You might be in the Blue Zone if you are feeling low energy, your body and brain feel slow, and your levels of alertness are low. It might feel a bit like your battery has been drained, you might be tired or unwell.



The Green zone is the optimum zone for learning because you are focused, in control, well regulated, comfortable, you are alert and you feel fully charged but just to the right amount.



**Heightened alertness**

**Elevated emotions**

**Excitement**

**Frustrated**

**Silliness**

The Yellow Zone is the most complex to unpick because it contains such a wide variety of feelings and emotions - the key is that the level of alertness is slightly raised, it is not a calm feeling. Emotions are slightly elevated - this might be excitement or silliness, but it could also be frustration or worry. You are still able to manage these emotions and control yourself. We'll talk more about what that might feel like in your body, later.




Finally the red zone, this zone does involve a loss of control and has very intense and strong feelings and the highest levels of alertness. This is most likely for emotions like anger or rage however you might also be in this zone if you were to win the lottery!

# Zones Sort





Scared

Happy

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Spend a few minutes now sorting the emotions into the different zones - think about the following things - levels of alertness, how heightened is the emotion? Different emotions might fall into different zones for different people. Perhaps some could go in more than one zone?

## What are the Different Zones?

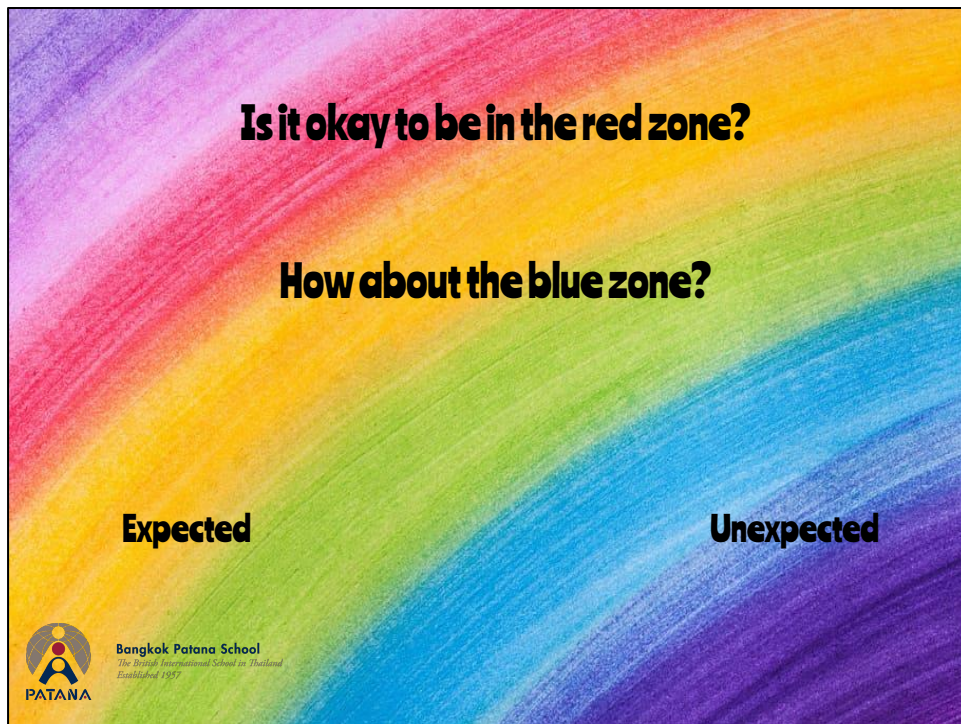
			
<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control



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Were there any that were difficult to place? When we did this with students something like 'happy' is a hard one to place – you could be happy feeling active and focused doing something you love in the green zone, but equally happy running around at playtime in the yellow zone. For some people feeling scared might be in the red zone, for others it might be in the yellow. And what about if you are tired, but also excited – what zone might that go into? We have probably all had some experience of an overtired child at a birthday party! So context and situation is important and so is the individual - it won't be the same for everyone.



All zones are okay. As our year 6 students reflected - experiencing all of these emotions is part of being human. We are all in the red zone at times and we are all in the blue zone at times and everywhere in between! However there are times when it might be unexpected to be in a zone - so it isn't the level of alertness that is appropriate for the situation and that is when we can use strategies to help us. For example - it is expected to be in the yellow zone when running around at playtime, but it's less likely to be expected when back in the classroom and starting a reading session. That might be a good time to select a strategy to help manage my zone.



## Scenario

- I am going to call one of you up here at random. We'll be doing something potentially embarrassing and silly...

- There may be some math involved...

- Here is a hint which might be helpful:

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

- Singing...



How do I know what zone I'm in?



How can we physically recognise what zone we are in?

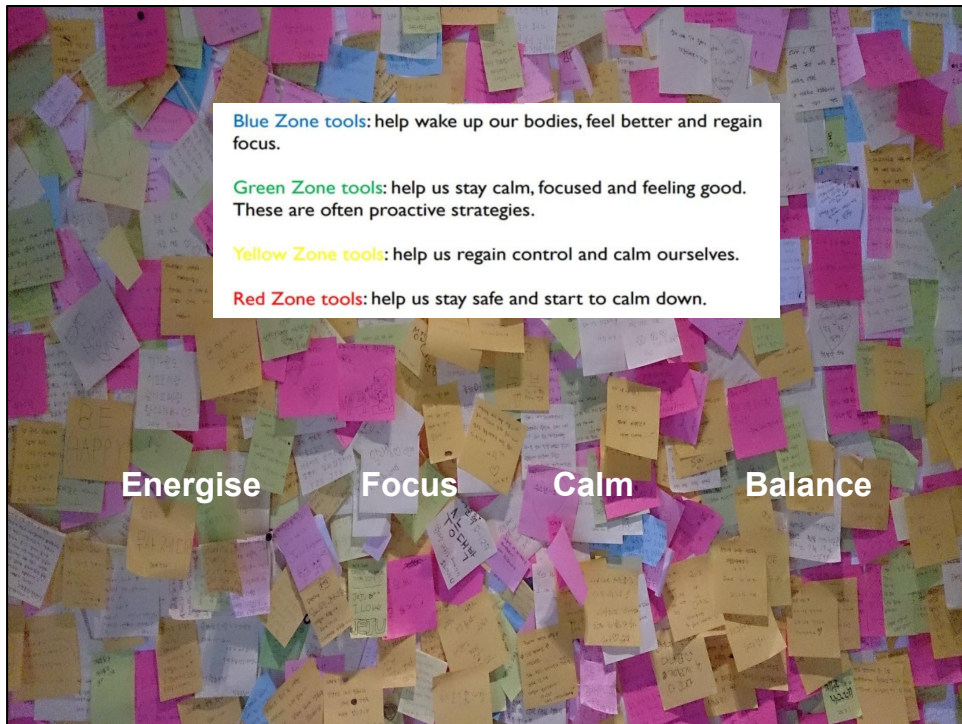


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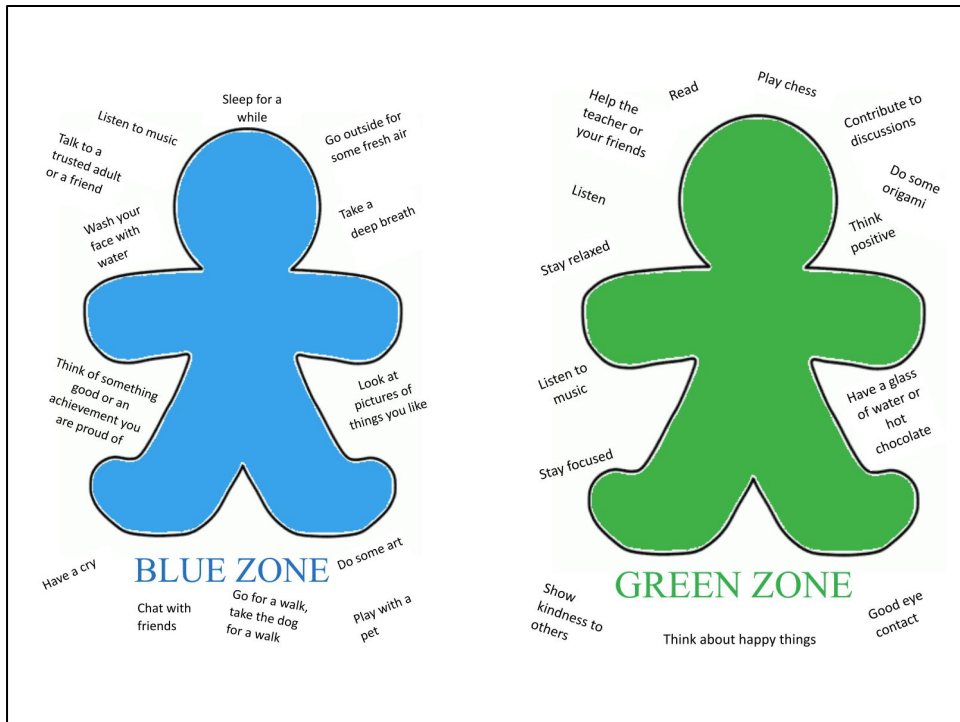
This leads on to how we - and our children can start to recognise the clues about which zone we are in or moving to. When put on the spot you probably got a sudden surge of panic, your alertness level immediately increased, you probably had some of the physical symptoms in the picture. In Year 6 we got the children to think about what it feels like in their body in each zone - perhaps heavy, slow, fuzzy head in the blue zone, tight muscles, clenched teeth or hands in the red zone. It is important to think about how our body feels in each zone - this is our early warning system - this is what gives us the clues that our level of regulation is changing and if we can have those conversations and start to help children to recognise what their personal 'clues' are then they can use this as a way of knowing when they might need to use a strategy to help them to regulate.



A key part of the Zones of Regulation is that the children think about what strategies might help them within each zone. It is important to do this when in a well-regulated state.

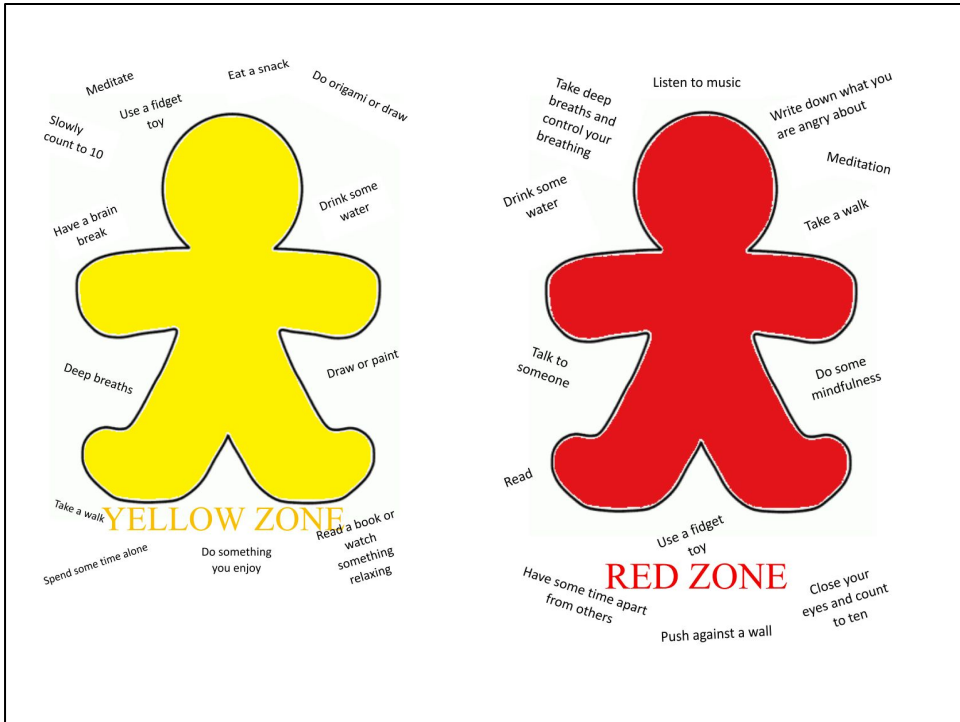


These strategies, or 'tools' will serve different purposes depending on the zone that the individual is in. So Blue Zone strategies will focus upon energise and waking up the body. Green zone strategies are generally proactive - making the most of being this calm, focused state. Yellow zone strategies will generally be calming and Red zone tools will similarly be calming and about keeping safe.



These 'Gingerbread Men' are examples of some of the strategies that students suggested themselves for each zone. From that they each select two or three that they think will work best for them.





So this is an example of a small number of strategies that could be chosen from. We are now going to talk about some of the steps that you could take at home to help your child with regulation.

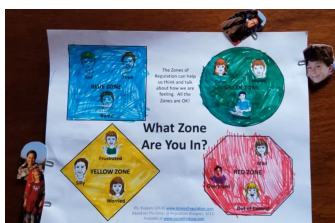
## Using the Zones at Home



Create your own check in  
Something to represent each zone  
Something to represent each person  
Start checking in!

Ask which zone are you in? Why?

Talk to your child about what makes them feel better or good when in each zone.



Model self regulation yourself using the Zones and the thinking process you are going through.



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You can create your own zones check in at home. Leah Kuypers suggests a number of ways that you can do this - including a lego representation with a model to represent each member of your family or a colourful sheet for each zone, you can add photos to show the different feelings and a peg for each member of the family to check in. You could even include your pet. Make it a habit to check in each day and to get the conversation going about the zones. Talk to your child about what makes them feel better or what strategies help them in each zone. The most powerful thing is to model the process yourself - "Oh, I'm feeling in the blue zone this morning - my body is feeling really tired. I think I am going to get a glass of cold water and go for a walk to energise myself."

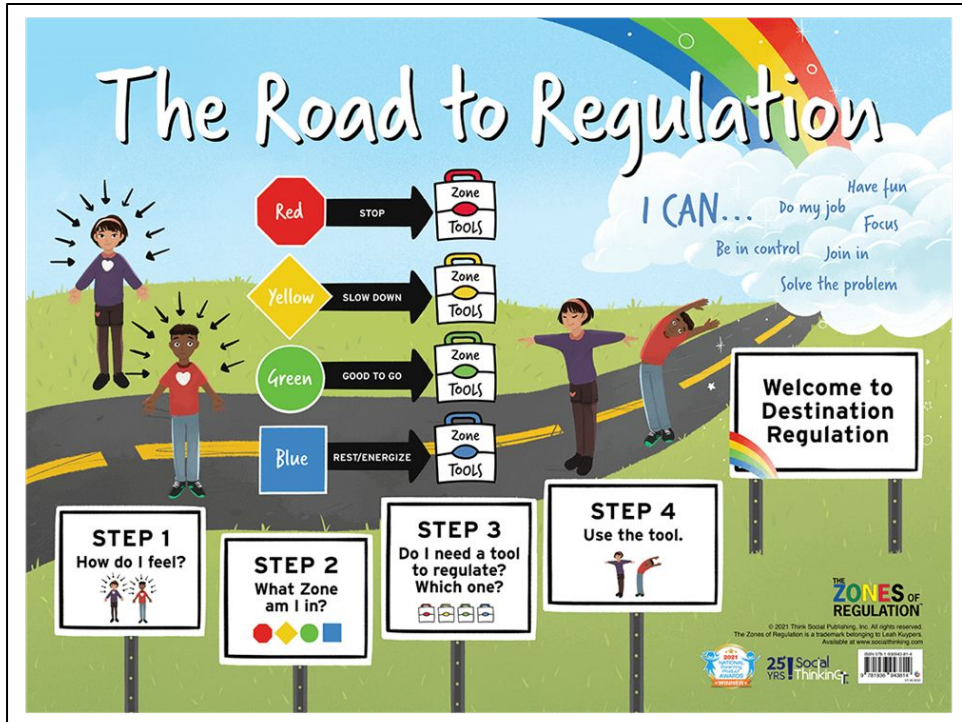
"I'm in the yellow zone this morning, I'm doing a presentation in front of a lot of people today and I can feel lots of butterflies in my stomach, I think I'm going to take some deep breaths to help me feel calmer inside."

As your child is developing this awareness of the zones and strategies, helping them to recognise and validate their feelings is really beneficial. "I can see that you are jumping a lot I think you might be feeling in the yellow zone, what do you think?"

## Calm Box or Bag



Something that could be helpful to develop with your child is a calm bag or box. You can have those discussions about what helps them to feel better in different zones and choose some things together to include - it might be bubbles to blow, a book to read, an 'ooze tube' to watch, quiet music to listen to, a favourite toy or blanket, a fidget toy. Enjoy making it together when well regulated. This is when those 'early warning' clues that we talked about are really helpful, these items then be used and enjoyed at the earliest time to help manage feelings.



4 steps - how do I feel, what zone am I in? do I need a tool/ strategy? Use that strategy.

## Co-Regulation

The art of caregivers providing just enough support for a child to manage their emotions.



**As a child's abilities increase over time, parents add less.**

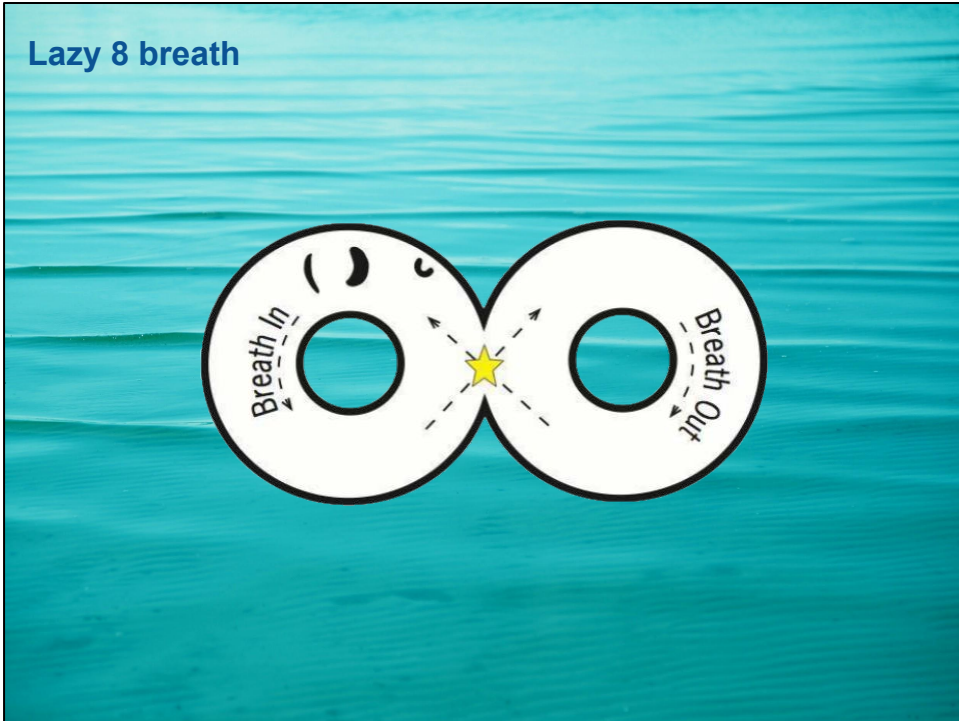
HELPING FAMILIES thrive

Model  
self-talk  
adult state of mind

don't invalidate emotions  
responsive parenting- child's needs/feelings/interests

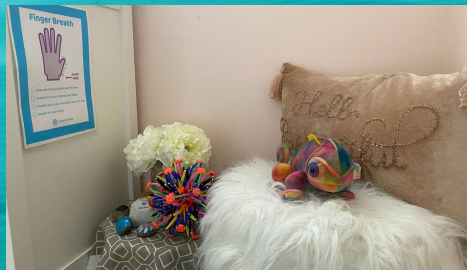


## Lazy 8 breath



Another strategy that is helpful and that should be practiced when well-regulated is calm breathing. The Lazy 8 breath is a nice one because it is a pattern that can be traced on the palm of your hand, in the air or on the carpet. Following the shape of the 8 around breathe in going around the 'head' of the 8 and out going around the tummy.

**Calm Corner  
Zen Den  
Peaceful Place**



Making a space within your home that can also be used as a peaceful space is also an idea - again that could be co-created. This shouldn't be used in a 'go to your calm space!' way, but as somewhere that can be developed to feel like a relaxing space which can be supportive and again perhaps be an option if your child is just starting to notice those changes that indicate they are becoming dysregulated.

Switching  
Tasks

Time  
Management  
and  
Awareness

## Why it's hard to switch tasks

(Let's call it Tendril Theory)

When I'm  
focused  
on  
something



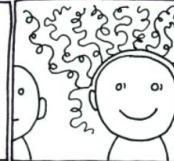
My mind  
sends out  
a million  
tendrils  
of thought



Expands  
into all  
of the  
thoughts  
& feelings



When I  
need to  
switch  
tasks



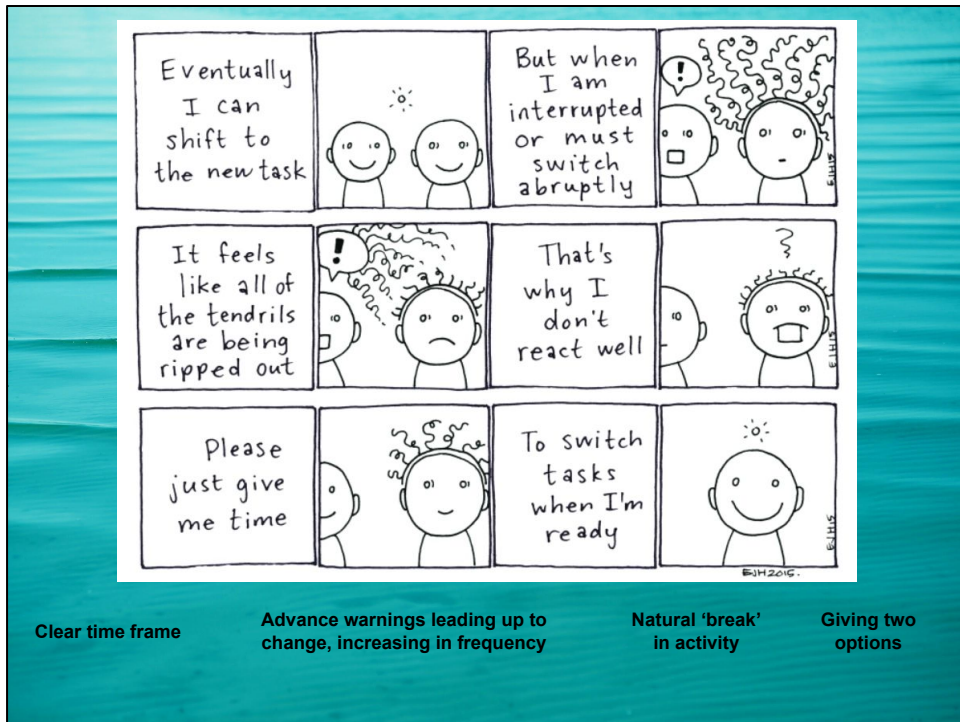
I must  
retract  
all of the  
tendrils  
of my mind



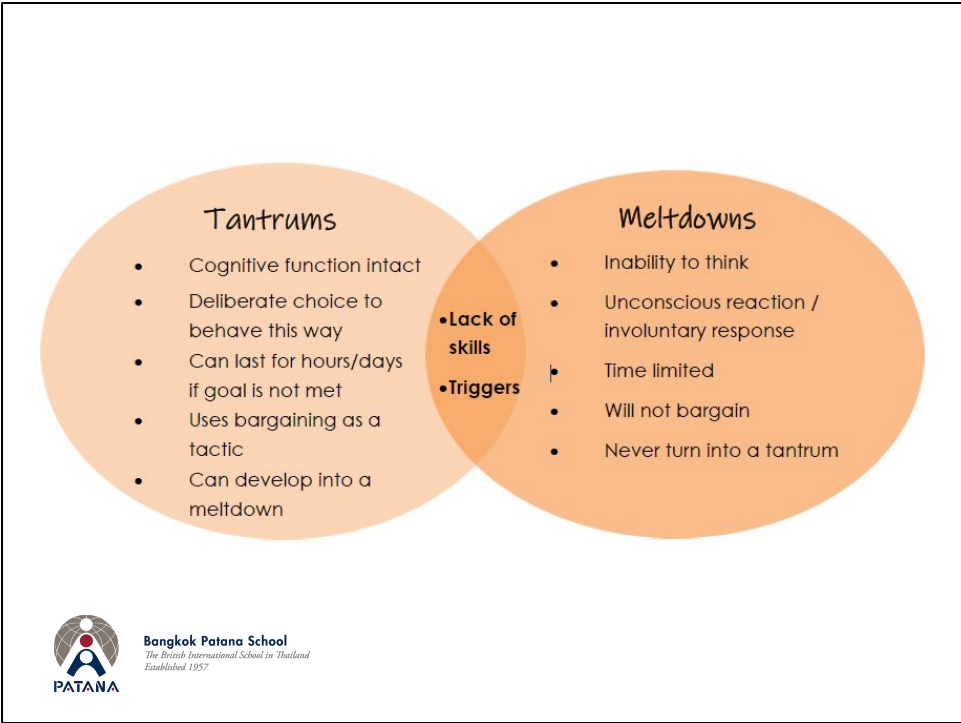
This  
takes  
some  
time



One of the things that a number of parents mentioned in the sign up document was about how they could support their child with switching task or from a preferred activity or helping them to manage time. This is a visual that help to explain why some children can find it challenging to make that 'shift' between tasks. The idea that when we are focused on something we send all our thoughts and feelings into that task and it can then take time to bring all those thoughts back out again.



If we suddenly or unexpectedly expect that change or shift it is like we are pulling all those thoughts away suddenly. Key suggestions are - give your child a clear time frame in advance of when the change is coming, give advance warning leading up to that change - in ten mins we will be tidying up, in 5 mins, 2 more mins.... Alternatively make the change at a natural break in activity and again prewarn - you can watch one more episode and then... Or give two options so your child feels they have some control - would you like to have you last 5 mins now or after you have brushed your teeth?



When our children see us expressing our emotions, they can learn that their own feelings are natural and permissible, can be expressed, and can be talked about. That's an important thing for our children to learn.

— Fred Rogers —

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