Emotional Regulation

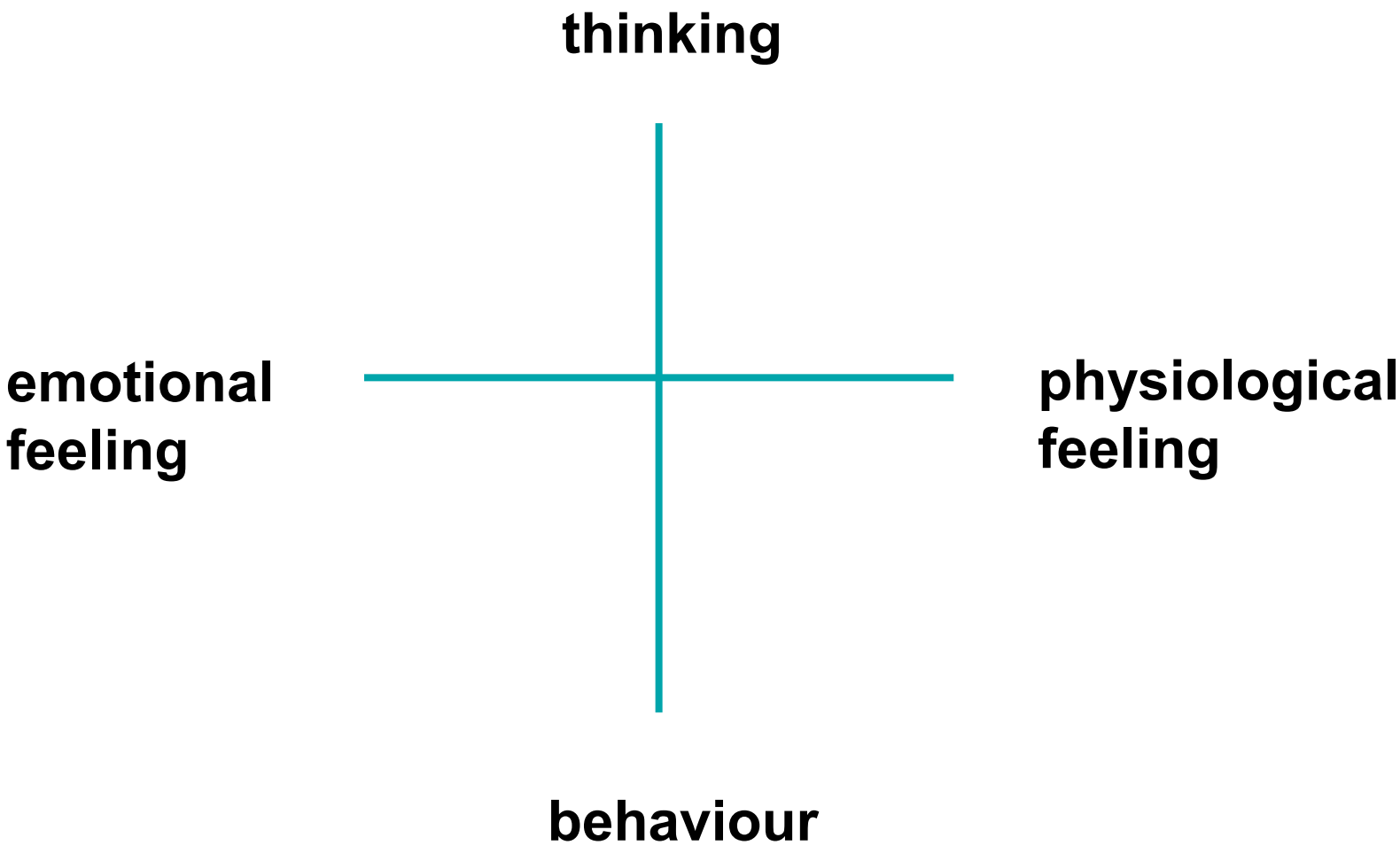
1.What is Emotional Literacy?
2. What is Self-regulation?
3.Behaviours we may observe
4. Understanding why a behaviour might be happening.
5. Increasing desirable behaviours.
6. Managing feelings.

What is emotional literacy?

Emotional Literacy

Emotional literacy is the ability to ‘recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions’. (Peter Sharp, 2001)

Emotional Literacy



What is self-regulation?

Components of Self Regulation

- Self-Control/Emotional Regulation
- Resiliency
- Executive Functioning
- Self-Management
- Anger Management
- Impulse Control
- Sensory Regulation/Modulation (Penzenik, 2021)

ASC and emotions

The majority of children with an autistic spectrum condition experience the world in a very different way to everyone else.

Behaviours we may observe

Behaviour to Communicate

Expressing a need – for example, smelling dinner cooking might signal food to a hungry child

- Expressing something the child does not want – for example, seeing a spider nearby triggers a wish to avoid it, or wearing a particular outfit could trigger the need to avoid something the child finds too difficult, such as a family gathering or somewhere new.

- Emotional overload – something relatively insignificant triggers the feeling that this is ‘the last straw’.

Function of behaviour

- Working out the function of a type of behaviour will help to understand what your child is trying to communicate. You need to enter your child's world and try to see the world as they do.

Causes of behaviour

- Confusion or fear produced by unfamiliar events and situations
- Interference with daily routine or repetitive activities
- Inability to understand explanations or instructions
- Lack of knowledge about how to behave appropriately

Causes of behaviour

- Inability to communicate needs and feelings
- Over-sensitivities
- Specific fears of situations or objects
- Pressure to do tasks that are too difficult.

Patterns

Once we have worked out why a type of behaviour is happening, we can work out if there are patterns.

Focus on one area first

Start with one or two areas to support

Could be the behaviour which is of most concern.

Select a behaviour which you feel confident in tackling.

Narrowing behaviours supports understanding why a behaviour is occurring and work out ways to change it or manage it.

Trying to tackle several areas at once can make it difficult to achieve any positive changes in any area, which can affect your confidence greatly.

Setting

There are lots of ways to make the world easier to understand, and here are some suggestions:

Environment

Keeping the environment around the child calm with low amounts of stimulation can avoid anxiety. Things that might set off a sensory reaction can include intense sounds, touch, taste, vision, smell and pain so these should be reduced as far as possible.

Attention

- Paying attention is often a problem area for children with an autistic spectrum condition, as they may prefer to pay attention to other things that interest them especially if social interaction is not enjoyable. Their focus might switch from one thing to another very quickly, especially in the case of sounds, so keeping their environment quiet can be helpful.

Organisation

- This might not come naturally to these children as they focus on small details rather than seeing the bigger picture. Visual cues can be very helpful to reinforce spoken instructions or plans, and can include pictures, objects and even written instructions (depending on their ability). A visual timetable of what is happening each week, combining routine and visual cues, can also help with understanding the sequence in which things happen. It has the added bonus of allowing the child to be more independent, without the need for being told what is happening and when.

Improving communication

- Difficulties with communication are often a major feature in many behavioural difficulties for children with an autistic spectrum condition. Improving a child's ability to communicate as well as the way we communicate with them can be a key part of many behavioural interventions. There are a number of strategies that can improve communication with and understanding of others, such as:

- Providing as wide a range of communication and social opportunities as appropriate to your child as possible

- Use words that your child will understand

- Avoid sarcasm, metaphors or ambiguous phrases

- Use concrete terms especially regarding abstract concepts such as time

Improving communication

- Be positive when offering instructions, for instance, do not tell your child what not to do but focus on what they should be doing
- Say things in the order in which they will happen
- Repetition can help with memory as can visual clues. It is often easier for someone to remember something if they have a picture to go with the instruction.

Social skills development

- Difficulties with social interaction can also be a major cause of difficulty and distress for people with an autistic spectrum condition. Not knowing how to behave or what is expected can lead to anxiety and behavioural difficulties. Possible strategies that can be useful in starting to develop social understanding and skills include:

Social skills development

- Social skills training – This approach involves teaching a child the skills necessary to cope with social situations directly. It may include instruction around a variety of areas depending on the child's needs. Some of these could include eye contact, appropriate use of gesture, appropriate distance from others, understanding non-verbal communication, appropriate topics for conversation and how to start and finish a conversation. Social skills groups are run in some parts of the country and can sometimes be useful in developing skills.

Social skills development

- The important thing is that social skills are used in a variety of contexts so that the person is able to start transferring their skills to various environments, rather than in just the one setting where they may have learnt the skill.

Social skills development

All the evidence indicates that this is most likely to produce long-lasting change.

- Social stories – This approach has been developed to help those with an autistic spectrum condition to develop their understanding of relevant social cues and learn appropriate responses. Social stories can relieve some of the anxiety of social situations by providing structure and guidelines for expected behaviour.

Increasing desirable behaviours

- Positive reinforcement – This refers to a strengthening of a particular behaviour by following it with something desirable such as favourite foods (edibles), toys or objects (tangibles), activities, praise or social reinforcement or sensory based reinforcement such as a tickle. For any of these to lead to an increase in desired behaviour, it is essential that the child and their particular likes, interests and level of ability are taken into account.

Increasing desirable behaviours

- If they are not motivated or do not enjoy what has been chosen to reinforce the preferred behaviour, it will have little impact. The thing chosen to reinforce preferred behaviour also needs to be ‘novel’, that is, an activity or object that is not readily available.

Increasing desirable behaviours

- It also needs to be changed as often as necessary to make sure your child does not get bored or tired of it. You will need to plan ahead and have a variety of items to use as reinforcement, but remember to take your own resources into account. It is far better to offer something small and manageable and to be able to continue to offer this each time.

- Reinforcement works best when it is provided immediately after the desired behaviour has occurred and when it is given every time the child behaves in the desired way. It can gradually be faded out over time, but not too quickly. The item used for reinforcement should be given alongside verbal praise that clearly describes the behaviour you are praising, such as “That’s nice sharing, Jack!”

Token systems

For some children, using token systems is a very useful way of increasing the number of times preferred behaviour happens.

Token systems are a type of positive reinforcement that involve your child collecting points, ticks, stars, sticker, small objects or symbols that might not be enough to reinforce behaviour on their own, but which can eventually be swapped for a larger item to reinforce preferred behaviour.

So, for instance, three stars might means that your child gets to play their favourite game for five minutes. Token systems usually work best for 'higher functioning' children who are able to wait for their reward and understand visual symbols. Verbal praise and encouragement should still be provided as your child achieves each token.

Prompting

This is a technique that can help your child learn new skills by providing the level of assistance needed to finish a task or activity. The following suggestions are ranked in order from the most intrusive and supportive to the least: physical, gesture, verbal or environmental. Prompting is paired with reinforcement to strengthen each stage of learning a

Shaping

This refers to the process by which you gradually reinforce preferred behaviour that have been broken down into steps and start to put them together until you are able to create the desired response.

An example of shaping may be a child eating independently. Initially, reinforcement might be needed to the child reaching for the spoon, then once this stage is mastered, reinforcement would be held back until the child picks up the spoon and so on until the child is spooning food into his or her mouth. An alternative example might be the process of greeting someone and starting to have a conversation.

Ways to support

Communication

- Back up your spoken word with visual supports i.e. objects, photographs, pictures or written word.
- Give clear, slow, direct instructions.
- Give time for processing the spoken word – 10 second rule i.e. up to 10 seconds to respond.
- Avoid sarcasm, jokes and open ended questions.
- Provide a clear visual timetable of day's events.
- Be aware of literal interpretation of language e.g. "get a grip" "wind your neck in".

Behaviour

- Tell the person what you 'want them to do', not 'what not to do'.
- Always respond calmly and slowly.
- Do not stand too close to the person.
- Organise the environment – define areas/have clear boundaries.
- Encourage a positive, consistent routine.
- Be aware of sensory issues in the environment for people with Autism and make adaptions.

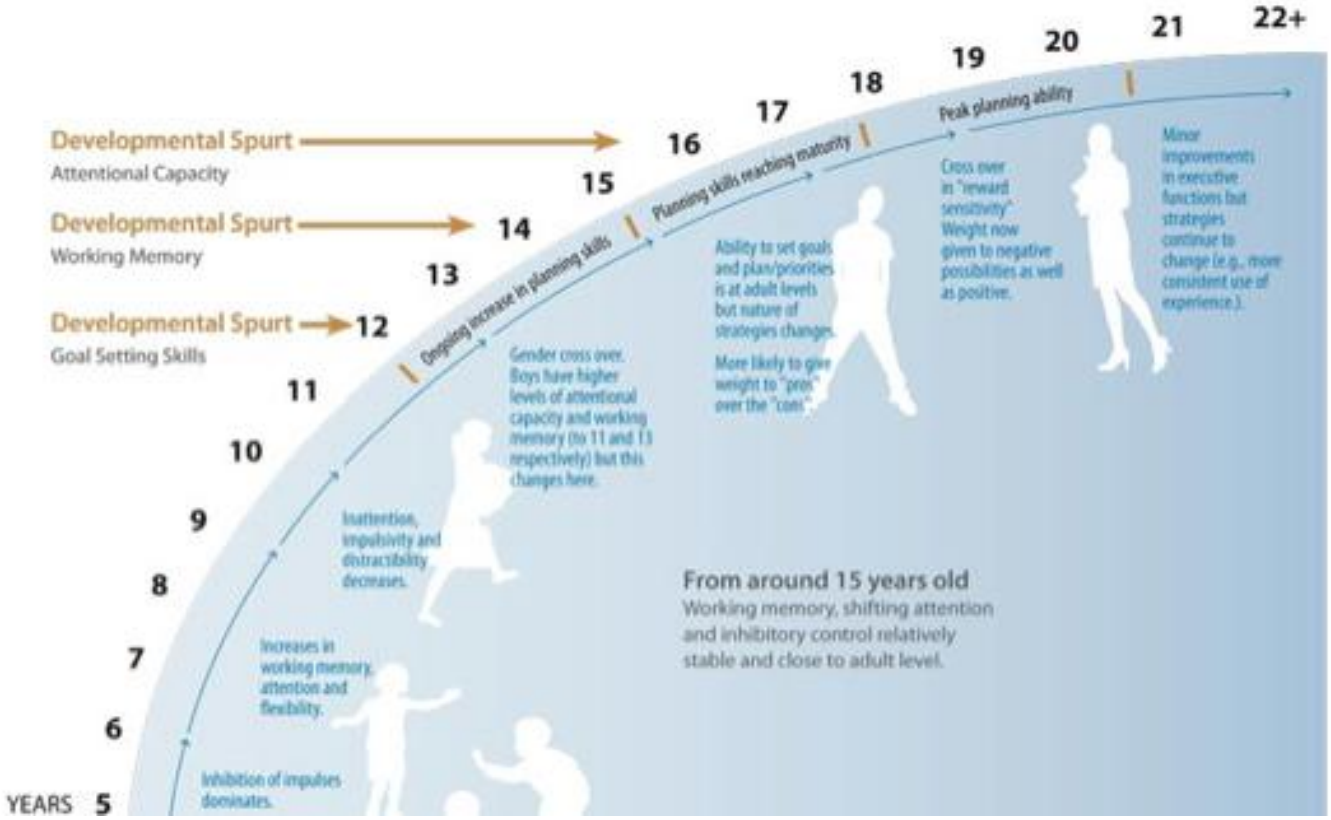
Managing feelings

Emotions and Learning

- **"emotions fundamentally drive** cognitive **learning** and… educators need to engage the affective dimensions of pupils' minds."

- *The neurobiological evidence suggests that the* ***aspects of cognition that we recruit most heavily in schools****, namely learning, attention, memory, decision making, and social functioning, are both profoundly* ***affected by*** *and subsumed within the processes of* ***emotion****."* (Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007).

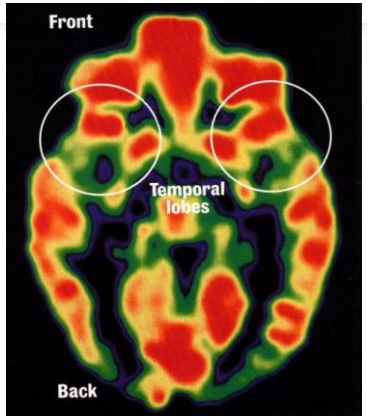
Brain Development and Maturation

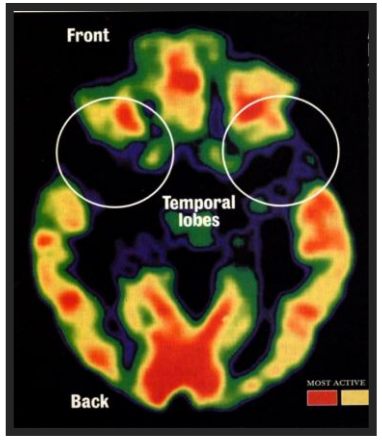


Social Emotional Development: Skills to Expect at Different Ages | Understood - For learning and thinking differences

- **Ages 3–4 years**
- Start to show and verbalize a wider range of emotion
- Are interested in pretend play, but may confuse real and "make believe"
- Are spontaneously kind and caring
- Start playing with other kids and separate from caregivers more easily
- May **still have tantrums** because of changes in routine or not getting what they want
- **Ages 5–6 years**
- Enjoy playing with other kids and are more conversational and independent
- Test boundaries but are still eager to please and help out
- Begin to understand what it means to feel embarrassed
- **Ages 7–8 years**
- Are more aware of others' perceptions
- May complain about friendships and other kids' reactions
- Want to behave well, but aren't as attentive to directions
- Try to express feelings with words, but may resort to aggression when upset
- **Ages 9–10 years**
- Share secrets and jokes with friends
- May start to develop own identity by withdrawing from family activities and conversations
- Are affectionate, silly, and curious, but can also be selfish, rude, and argumentative

Life Experiences and Brain Development

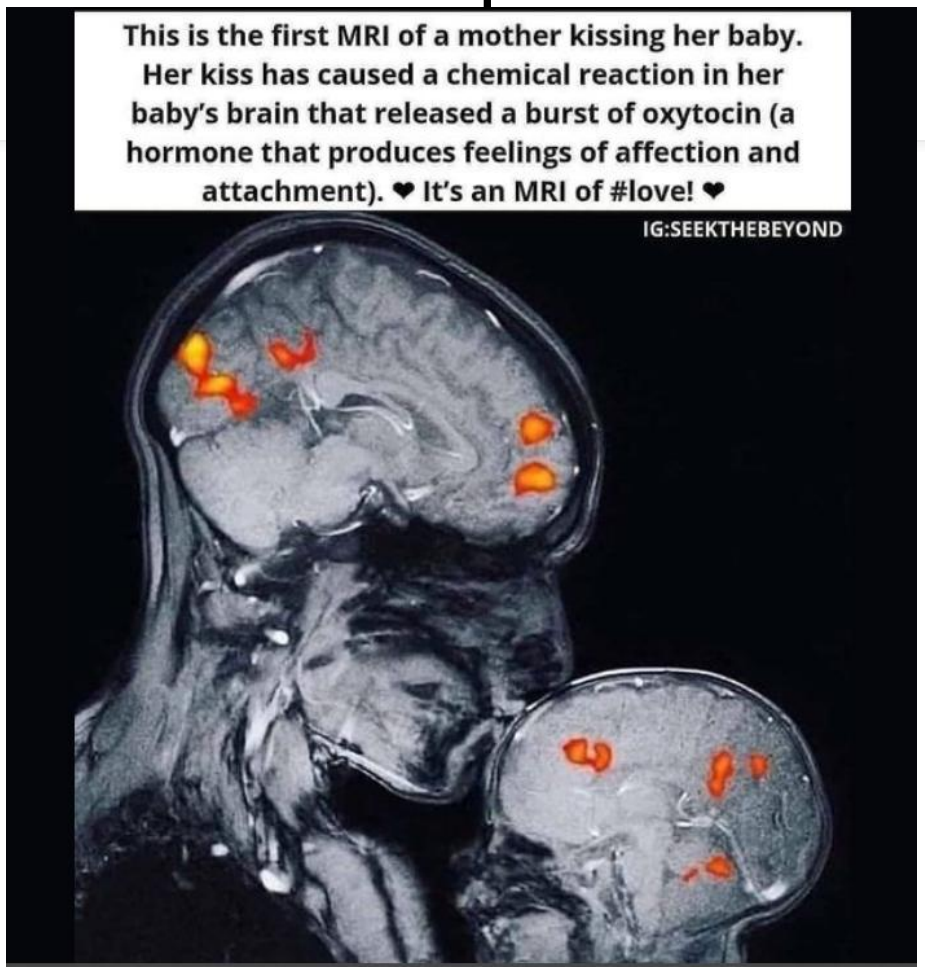




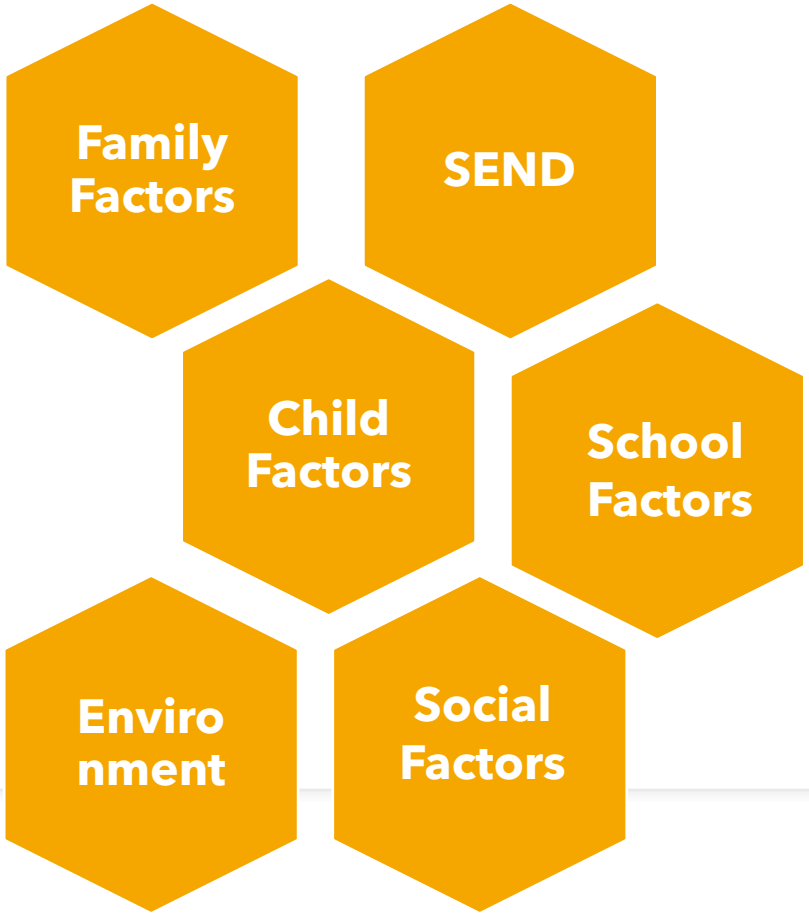
The child's prefrontal cortex (higher brain) is functionally less mature at birth than the limbic system (lower brain), so young children are easily overwhelmed by emotions.

Because neural connections between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex are developing and proliferating, children need help and time to think, reason and calm themselves down.

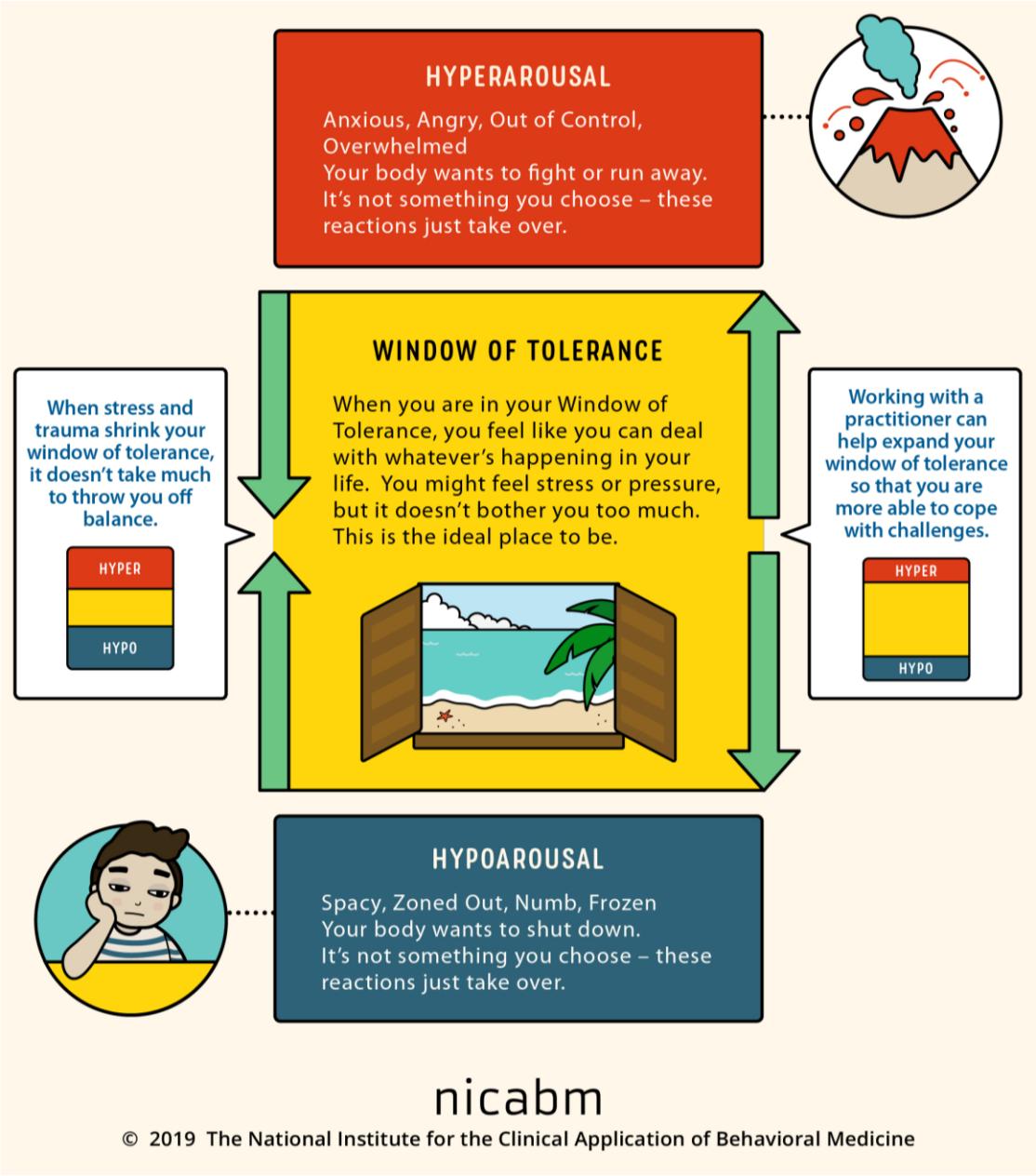
With consistent, supportive, emotional responses from adults, a child's frontal cortex will develop the essential pathways that, over time, support self-regulation to better manage alarm states in the limbic system.

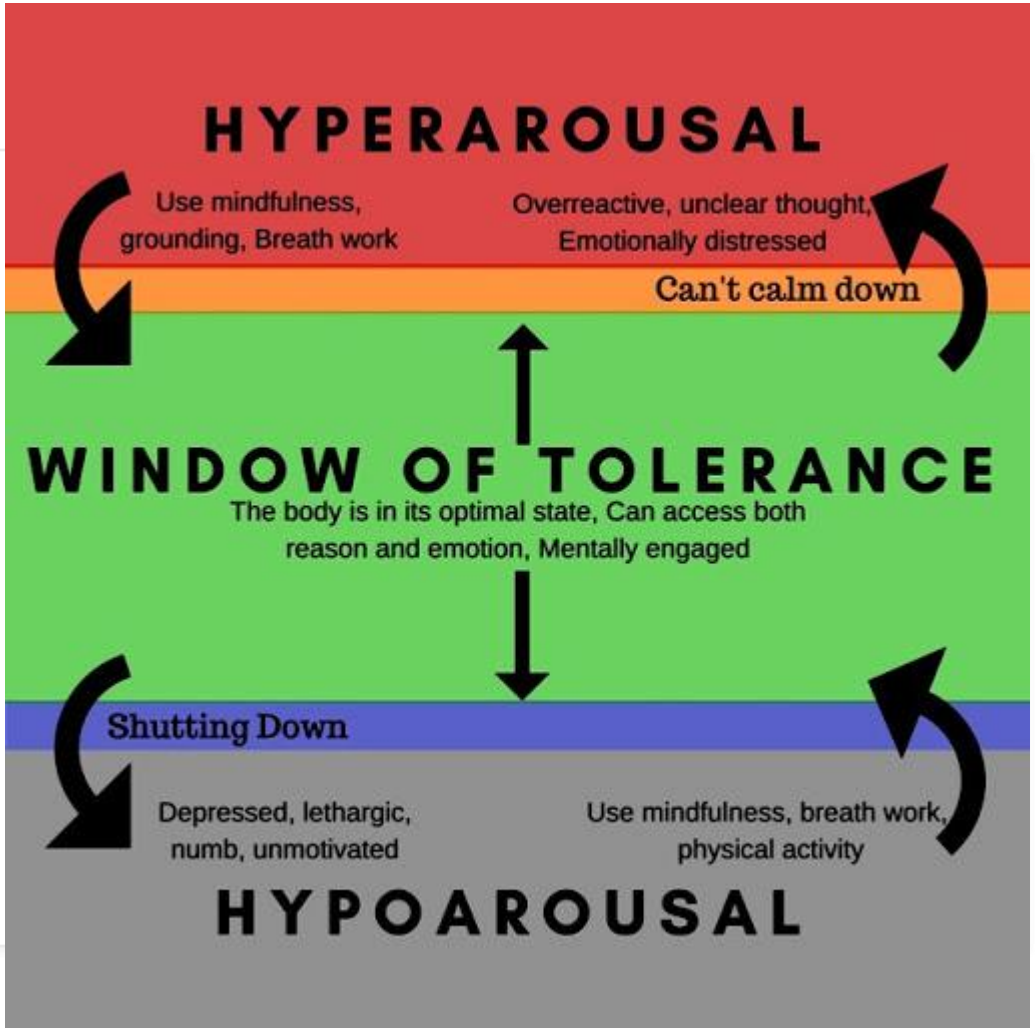


Factors which impact Emotional Regulation



Window of Tolerance



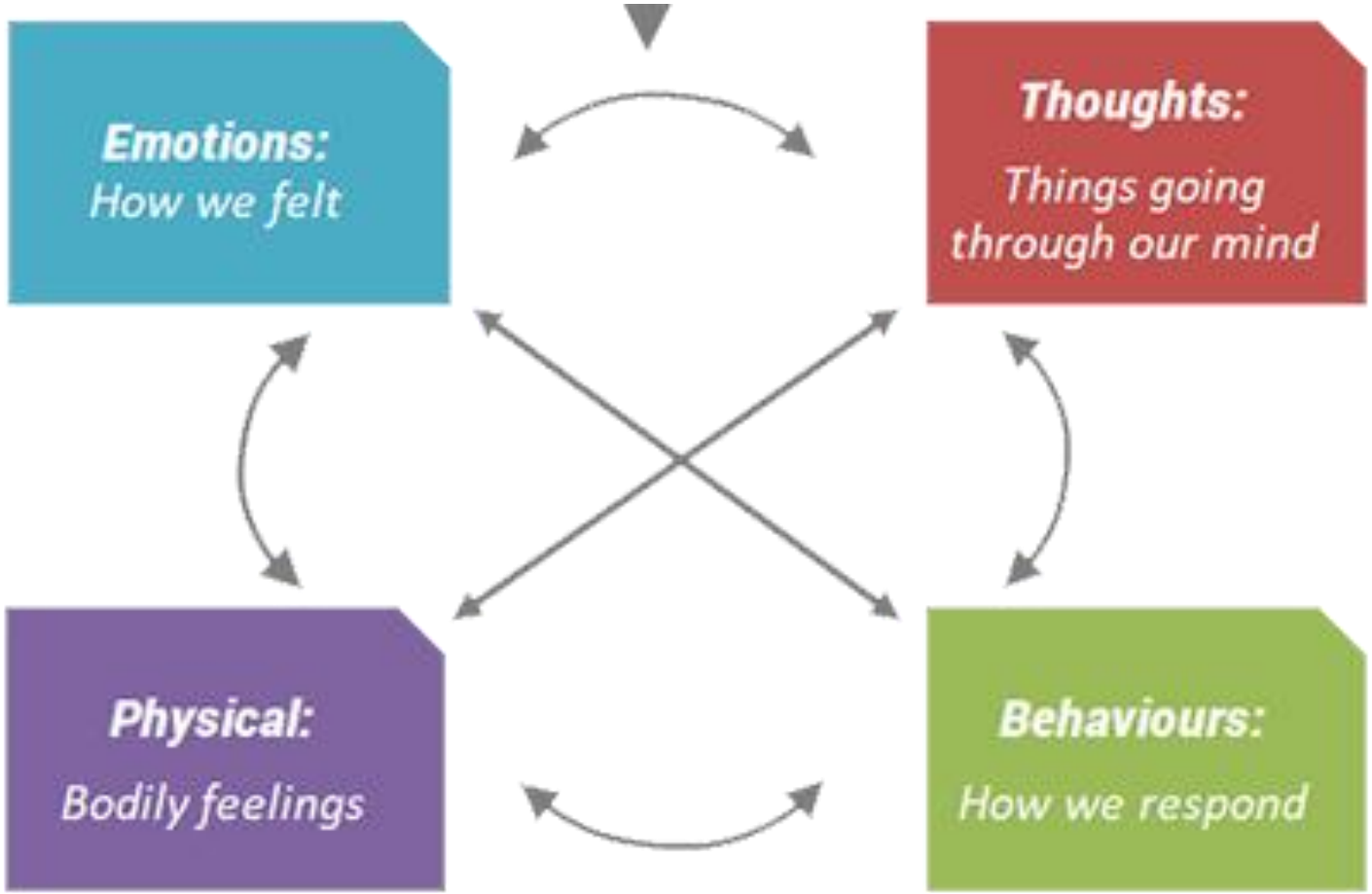


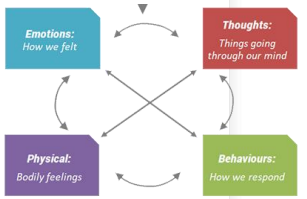
Siegel (1999)

Bing Videos

What are Zones of Regulation?

Intuitive
Label some of natural behaviours
Systematic
Cognitive behaviour approach
Teach self-regulation

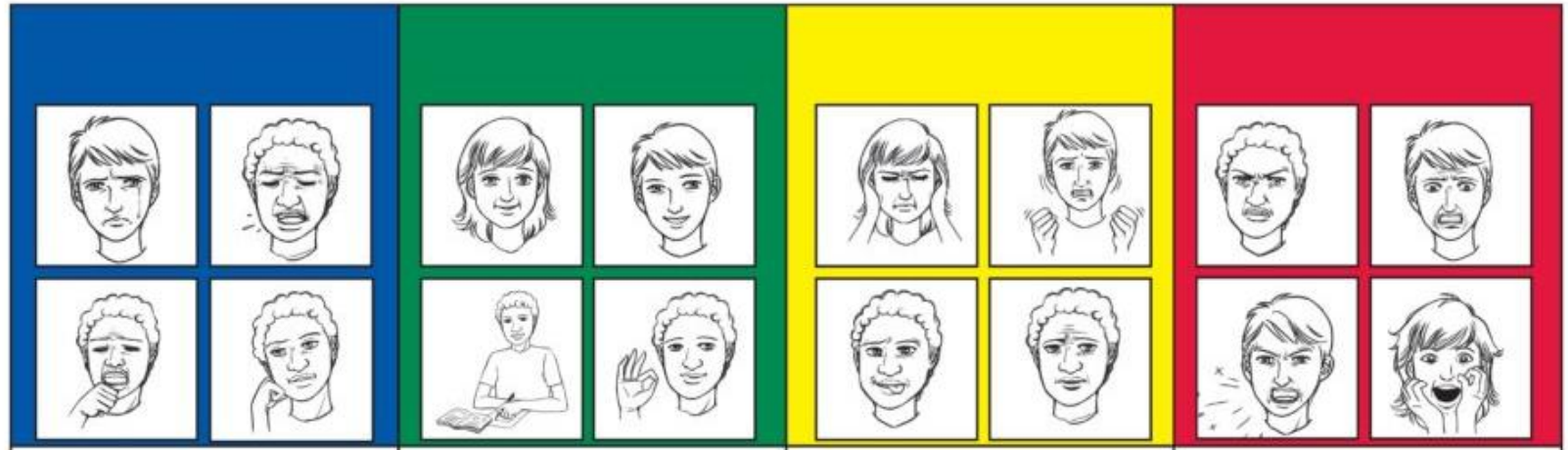




Zones of Regulation Summary

- Four Zones
- Promotes child self-awareness
- Pre-prepared Toolbox
- All zones are OK
- Adults assist children to remain or return to green

The ZONES of Regulation®



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

Blue Zone

Low state of alertness

- **Low arousal**
- **May feel:**
- **Sad**
- **Sick**
- **Tired**
- **Bored**

Heightened state of alertness

- **Intense anger, but some control**
- **May feel:**

- **Stress**
- **Anxiety**
- **Frustration**
- **Nervousness**
- **Excitement**
- **The Wiggles**
- **Silliness**

Yellow Zone

Heightened state of alertness

- **Intense emotions**
- **No control**
- **May feel:**

- **Elated**
- **Angry**
- **Rage**
- **Terror**
- **Devastation**

Red Zone

Calm state of alertness

- **Optimal learning occurs**
- **May feel:**
  - **Happy**
  - **Content**
  - **Focused**
  - **Calm body**
  - **Ready to learn**

Green Zone

Language

There is no such thing as a bad zone.

The key is the language we use:

I can see you are in the red zone (comment on what you see)

But the actions you are doing are not acceptable.

Language

As adults we need to support children to recognise which zone they are in:

Physical signs

Emotional signs

Action signs

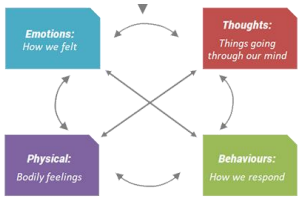
We need to provide the language for the children to use.

Language

We are the children's role models

We need to share which zone we are in, how this is making us feel and what we can do to move zones.

The language we use is vital.



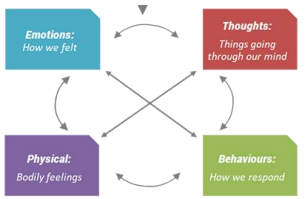
What do you notice about yourself in each Zone?

What do you notice about children in each Zone?

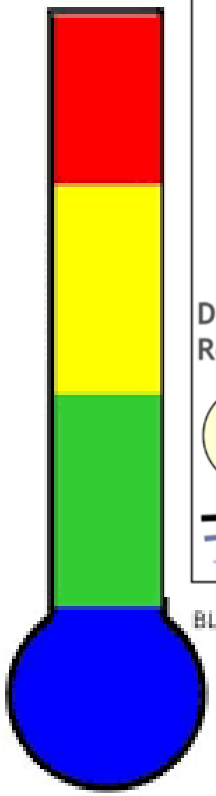
Why is each Zone important?

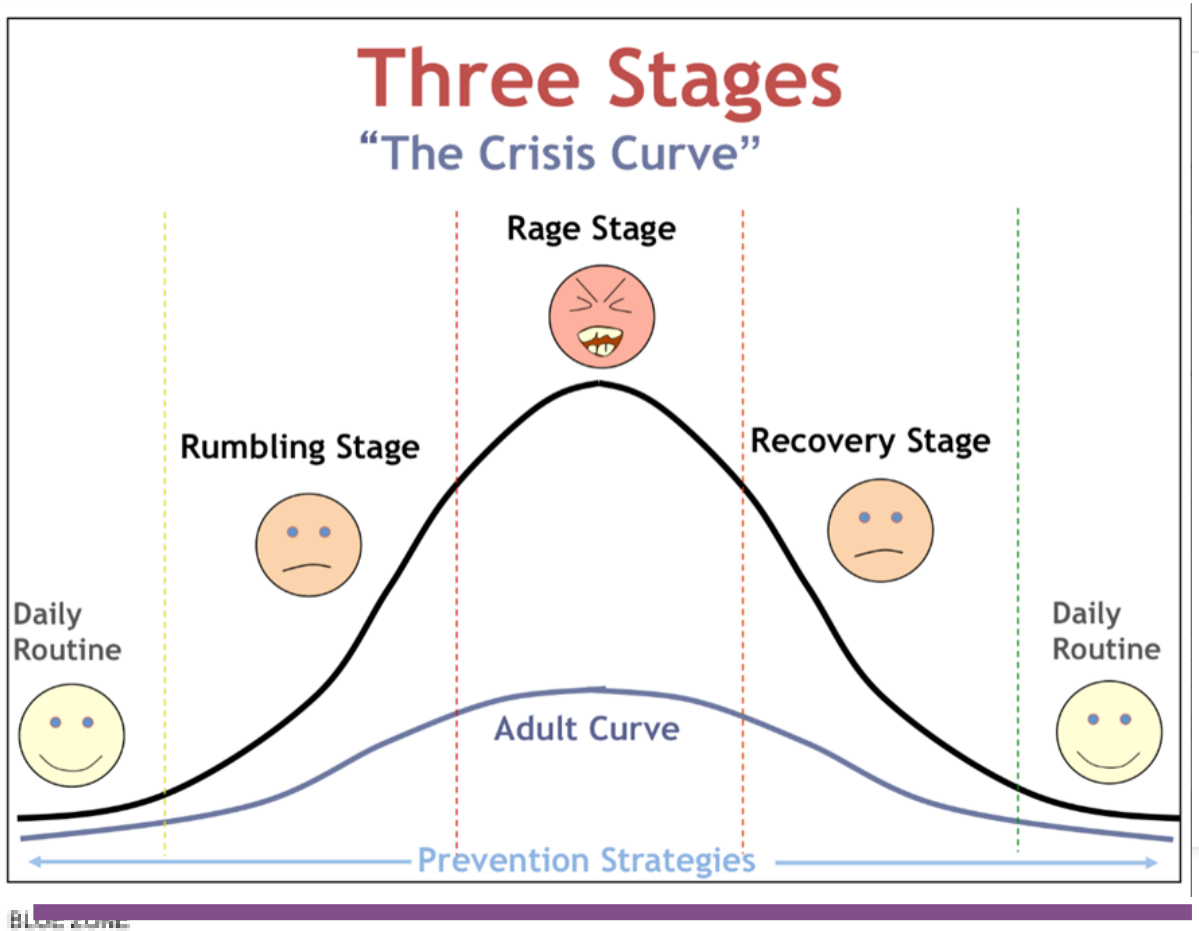
What does a Zone tell us?

Zones and Emotional Crisis

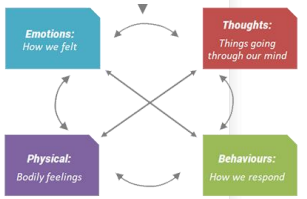


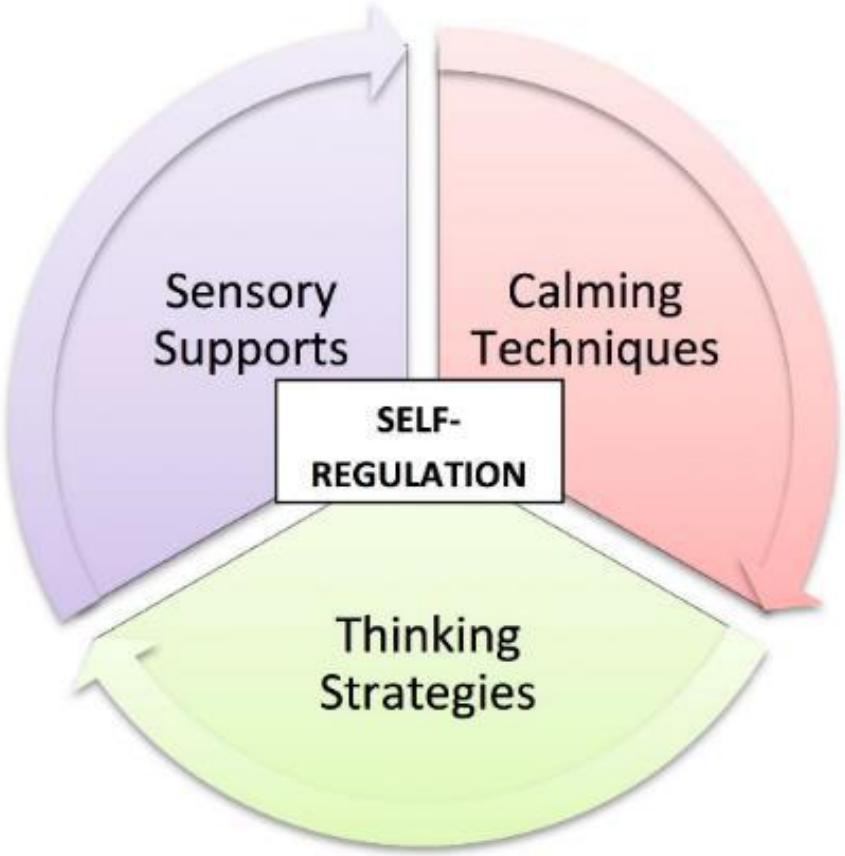
[Resources / Tip 5: MANAGE CHALLENGING MOMENTS WITH POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS (crporegon.org)]

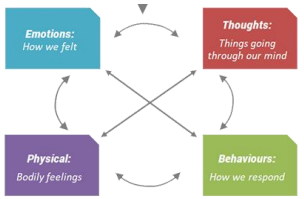


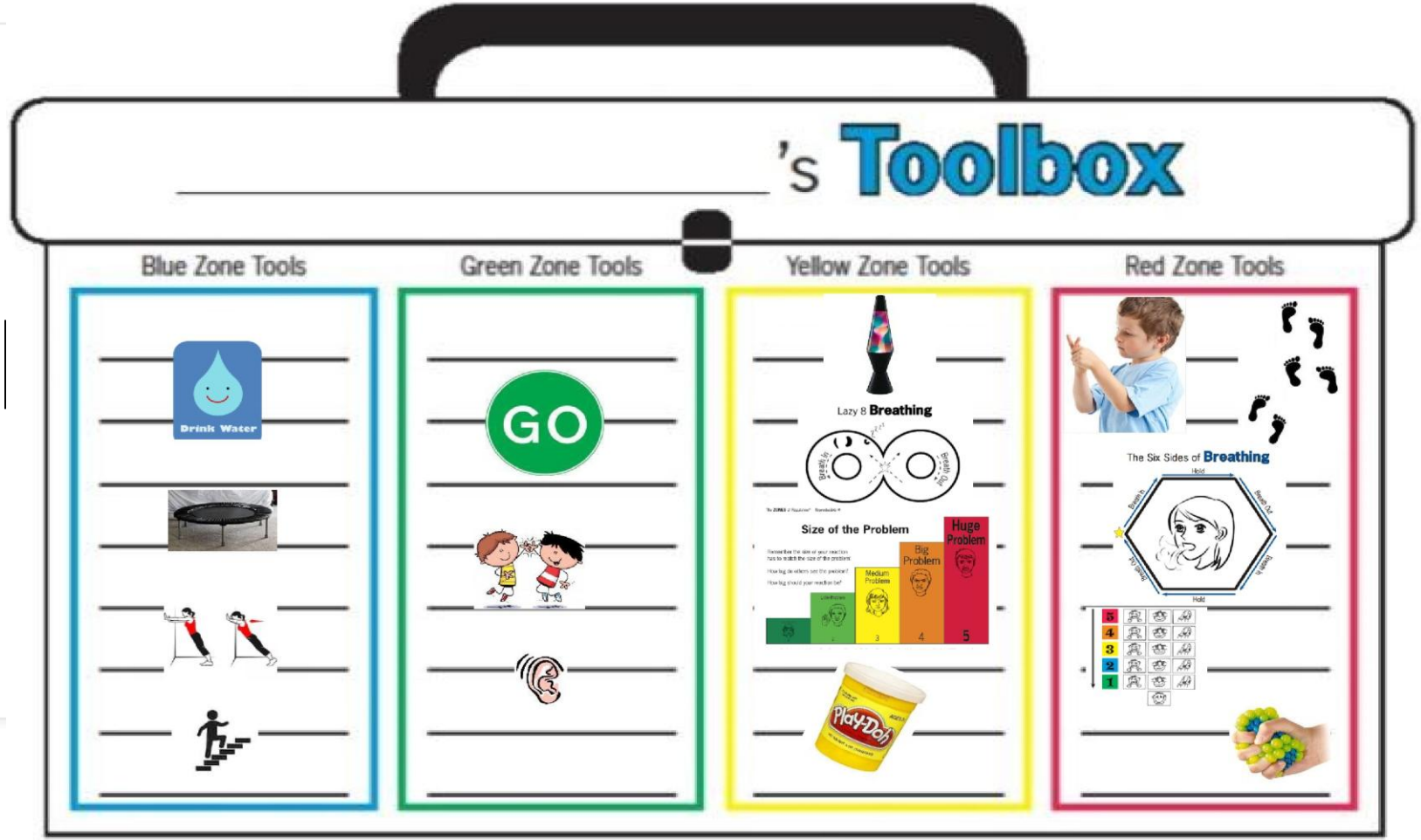


Zones Strategies in a Nutshell






Emotions:
How we felt
Thoughts:
Things going through our mind
Physical:
Bodily feelings
Behaviours:
How we respond


_____'s Toolbox
Blue Zone Tools
Drink Water
Green Zone Tools
GO
Yellow Zone Tools
Lazy 8 Breathing
Size of the Problem
Medium Problem
Big Problem
Huge Problem
Play-Doh
Red Zone Tools
The Six Sides of Breathing

ZONES during the day