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Foreword

for The Zones of Regulation®

By Michelle Garcia Winner

Teachers, parents, occupational therapists, counselors, speech language pathologists, and others are interested in learning about our students' different sensory, social learning, executive functioning, and emotional regulation needs, but they struggle to find ways to incorporate these different areas of need into a more integrated teaching approach. "Behaving oneself" requires our students to carry out a desirable action while simultaneously thinking, monitoring, and controlling their behavior on many fronts.

Over the past 10–15 years, it has become generally recognized that our students who have self-regulation challenges—whether we refer to these students as having an Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Non-Verbal Learning Disability, behavioral challenges, etc.—appear to benefit both from some common treatment approaches and from increasing their understanding of their learning needs. This has led to the creation of specific programs to help explain their learning differences, such as the SCERTS® Model (Prizant, et al. 2006), Ziggurat Model (Aspy & Grossman 2007), The Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS) (Henry & Myles 2007), as well as the ILAUGH Model (Winner, 2000). These programs highlight areas that our students need to learn more about, including the following:

- Sensory integration and regulation, helping them learn to manage sensory input from the environment so they can process and respond in ways in which they are expected to function.
- Emotional self-understanding and emotional self-regulation. Emotions can confuse or overwhelm our students. It's key to help them learn to understand the connection between their sensory systems, their emotions, and their ability to relate to the world in ways that make others feel comfortable relating to them.

- Executive functioning and cognitive control of behaviors. These brain-based skills, such as impulse control, sustaining attention, planning, problem solving, and self-talk, serve as the foundation to manage one's functioning in life and overcome the hurdles that stand in the way in reaching a goal.
- Visual scaffolds and visual teachings. Our students, even the "highest functioning" ones, usually benefit from structured visual information. Not only does visual structure cater to the visual learning style of many of our students, but it also encourages us as caregivers to take abstract lessons and present them in more concrete, visually based teachings. Even students who are not visual learners can benefit from highly visual, well-organized material, just as those of us who are not auditory learners can benefit from clear auditory instruction.
- Social Thinking® and related Social Thinking vocabulary. The teachings of Social Thinking provide explicit language-based concepts from which people can develop a better understanding of social perspective taking and interpretation of social emotional responses.
- Development of self-awareness. This is a critical factor in any program encouraging internal regulation of any concept or related skill.

In addition, many other resources, such as Carol Gray's Social Stories® (*The New Social Story Book*, 10th Anniversary Edition, 2010) and *Comic Strip Conversations* (1994), and Dunn Buron's and Curtis's *The Incredible 5-Point Scale* (2004) help to foster the development of some of the different areas described above for students.

In 2009, I first heard Leah Kuypers speak on The Zones of Regulation®, a concept she developed based on her graduate studies and teaching experience and then documented when a graduate student in Education. While writing The Zones of Regulation curriculum she also received guidance from Kari Dunn Buron, one of the two creators of *The Incredible 5-Point Scale*. The Zones, as the concept is referred to in this book, integrates all of the above-mentioned approaches and teaching tools to help students better understand their needs regulation. The goal of The Zones is to help students develop social, emotional, and sensory regulation.

The Zones provides teachers and parents with very clear instructions to guide their students through a set of sequenced lessons, encouraging students to learn about their own regulation system and how they can adjust it. The Zones uses four colors to help students visually and verbally self-identify how they are functioning in the moment given their emotions and states of alertness. Lessons are designed to help students understand their

different internal emotions, sensory needs, and thinking patterns that result in each student shifting from one zone to another. Students explore a variety of tools (sensory supports, calming techniques, and thinking strategies) that they can use to regulate what zone they are in and are taught when, why, and how to use their tools.

The Zones of Regulation also incorporates core teachings from Social Thinking to help students learn more about perspective taking to better understand how being in the different zones impacts others' thoughts and feelings around them. In addition, The Zones curriculum helps students gain an increased vocabulary of emotional terms, skills in reading facial expressions, insight on events that trigger their behavior, problem solving skills, and much more.

As I heard Leah discuss The Zones of Regulation, I was impressed by how she interlaced selected lessons from Social Thinking, such as Social Behavior Mapping, with her knowledge of sensory regulation, and with The Incredible 5-Point Scale into a very practical tool to help students develop improved social emotional behavioral awareness and related responses.

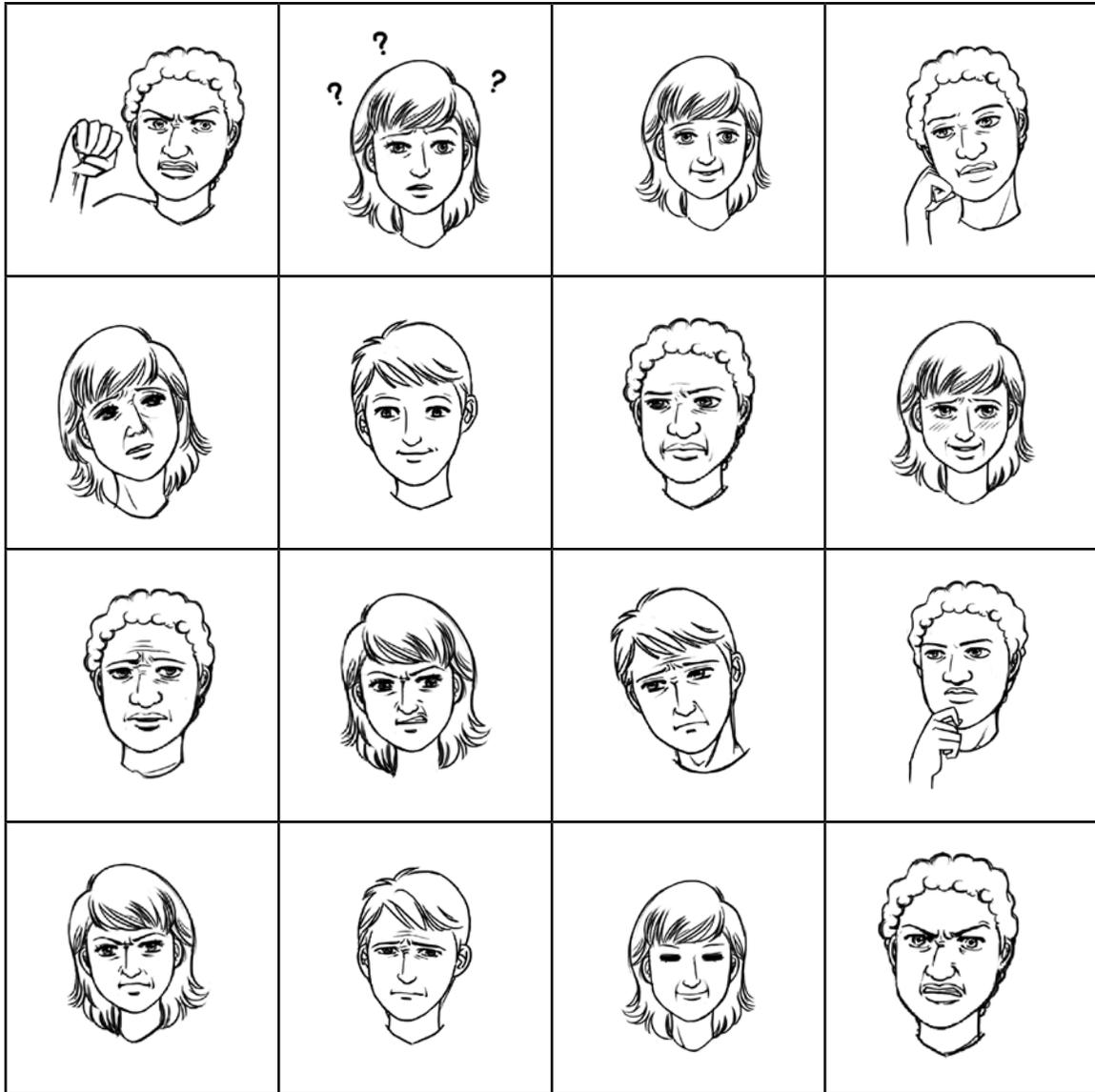
When Leah agreed to work with me to publish this book, we closely collaborated to refine her lessons to aid non-specialized adult caregivers (e.g., teachers and parents), who may have relatively little background knowledge related to those with social learning challenges. By using this book, such non-specialists will be able to help students with these challenges to use The Zones techniques across the home, community, and school environments.

At the same time, specialists who have more basic teaching knowledge will appreciate the melding of different areas of learning needs into one tool they can incorporate into their work with school-age students. Educators and parents as well as specialists can simplify these lessons as needed for students with more involved learning challenges or modify them to be more appropriate for those who are more sophisticated learners.

I am thrilled to finally see this book in print and hope these teachings will help all of our students better evaluate their current social emotional zones and make better choices to regulate their thoughts, actions, and sensory needs in a manner that helps them feel proud of themselves for working to be more responsible members of their community.

Michelle Garcia Winner

ZONES Bingo





Critical Vocabulary

“You can change (impact/affect) my feelings.”

Lesson: Our Behavior Impacts the Feelings of Those Around Us⁴

You can now talk about the fact that when you see students doing expected behaviors it makes you feel more positive (proud, happy, etc.). You can also explicitly make the connection that when you see a student doing what is unexpected, this makes you feel more negative (frustrated, uncomfortable, angry, etc.). To have this lesson be effective, you **MUST** emphasize observing and talking about students who are doing what is expected or justified in the situation. Students are more likely to work towards making others feel good when they are aware of their own impact, even if they won’t admit it.

How to use this lesson in the classroom

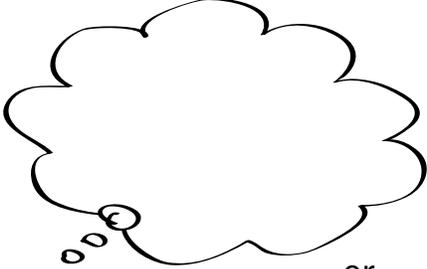
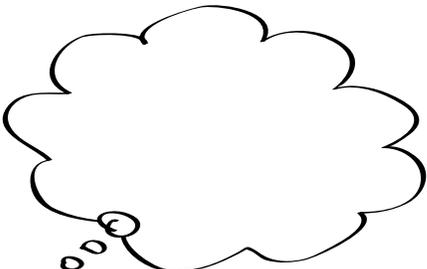
1. Use a poster or pictures (such as a printout of Zones Emotions—Reproducible C) that show various emotions to help students think of “feeling” words.
2. Discuss the fact that all people have feelings. Explain that even right now, while in the group, the students have reactions and feelings about the room, the people, and the lesson.
3. List emotion words describing how the students feel when you or they are doing what is expected (e.g., safe, good, happy).
4. List emotion words about how students feel when you or they are doing what is unexpected (e.g., yucky, bad, sad, mixed up).
5. Discuss that people’s feelings can be changed by the behavior of others around them. Read aloud a passage or story where people’s behavior changes based on how they feel. One example is *Miss Nelson Is Missing* (1977). In this book a teacher is frustrated by the behavior of the students in her classroom so she comes back disguised as a witch. This subsequently impacts how the children behave, and once they start to follow the rules, Miss Nelson (the teacher) returns.
6. What books can you think of that provide examples of how one’s behavior impacts another’s feelings? Discuss the connections between behavior and feelings.
7. Use the concept “you can change (impact/affect) my feelings.” For younger children, address the simple concept that “you can change my feelings.” For older students, use more sophisticated terminology by saying “you can impact or affect my feelings.” Identify students whose recent behaviors give you a positive reaction/feeling.

4. Adapted with permission from Winner’s *Think Social!* (2005), page 40

Understanding Different Perspectives

When I am in the **GREEN ZONE** and it is expected...

Other kids might feel  around me.

Other kids might be thinking  or 

Other kids might say  or 