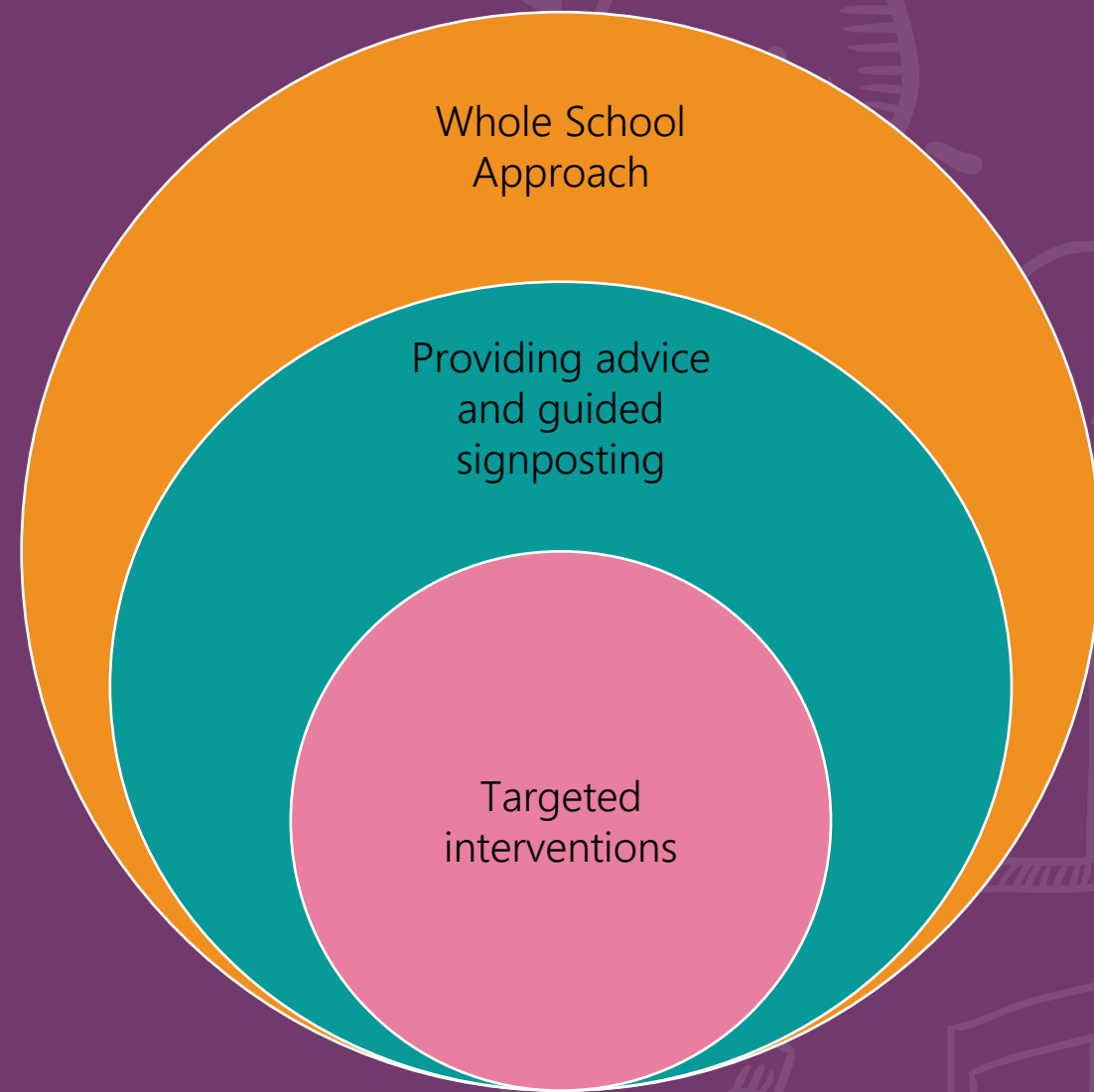




# We are Lewisham Mental Health Support Team.

We are based in schools, working in partnership with school staff, young people, parents, and other local organisations to support young people's emotional and social wellbeing.



# Individual interventions – Primary schools

delivered via the parent/carers

## Anxiety

- “Helping your child with fears and worries” by Cathy Creswell

## Behaviour

- GSH Parenting intervention based on ‘incredible years’



# Managing Meltdowns



South London  
and Maudsley  
NHS Foundation Trust

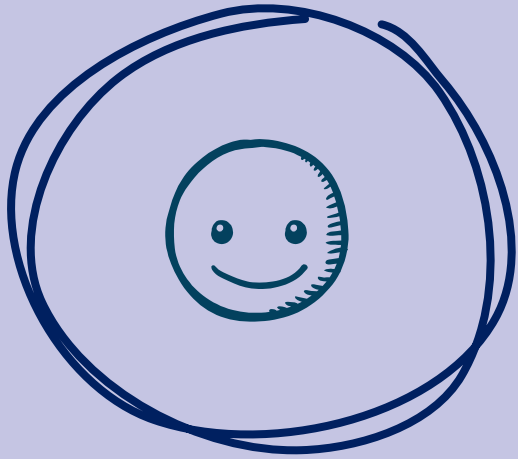
**Our Healthier  
South East London**  
Sustainability and Transformation Partnership

“A perfect parent is a person with excellent child-rearing theories and no actual children”

(Dave Barry)



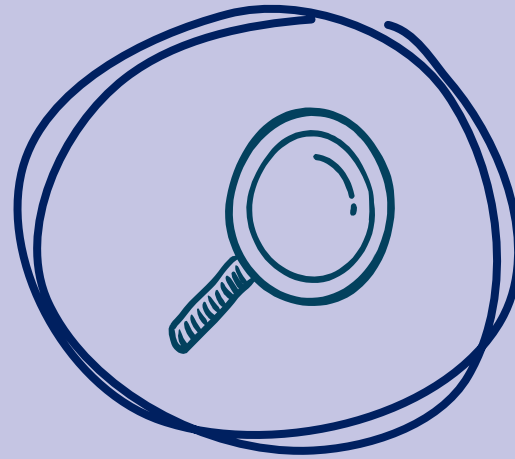
# We will cover.....



Stages of  
Emotional  
Development



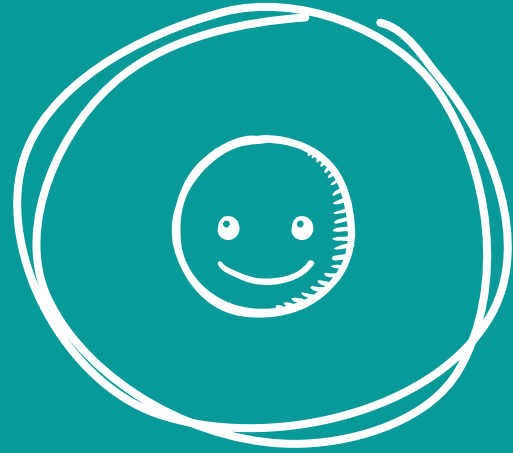
Zones of  
Regulation



What are  
Meltdowns



What to do  
During a  
Meltdown



# Stages of Emotional Development

# Stages of Childhood Emotional Development

Support with positive reinforcement and language/communication skills.

## 1. Noticing emotions: Birth – 1 year

Communicates needs and feelings through crying. Learning how things make them feel i.e. cuddle is soothing

## 2. Expressing emotions: 2 – 3 years

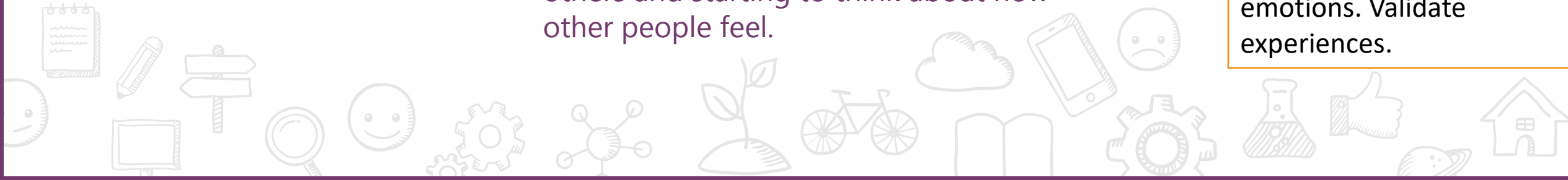
Developing more vocabulary and ways of expressing emotions. May have tantrums as their emotions become more complex.

## 3. Managing emotions: 3- 5 years

Support with routines, encouraging self-soothing and showing expressive emotions.

Nursery and reception age – learning from their social environment and facing challenges such as sharing, playing with others and starting to think about how other people feel.

Support with strategies to manage emotions and language to label emotions. Validate experiences.



# Stages of Childhood Emotional Development

## 4. Nuanced emotions: 6 –8 years

At age 6, brain development is laying the groundwork for emotional regulation, influencing their ability to handle social anxiety later in life.

Children in this age range begin to understand more nuanced emotions. They can struggle with big feelings and need support in managing emotional challenges.

Social circles become more significant, and children begin to form "best friend" bonds. This is also a time that they become more aware of how they compare to others and can be sensitive to criticism. At around age 7, recognising and responding to others' emotions (empathy) develops.

Talk to your child about happy and hard things. Validate feelings. Minimise overstimulation during meltdown. Have fun learning about different emotions with them. Help your child find solutions to a problem. Implement daily routine and structure.




## 5. Maturing emotions: 9-11 years

As children approach adolescence, their emotional experiences become more complex, and they begin to understand subtle social dynamics. Their self-concept becomes defined by their abilities, interests and social groups.

Hormonal changes play a role in affecting emotional stability. This can lead to heightened sensitivity, mood swings and concern about appearance. They can face challenges in managing feelings while striving for independence.

They may start to pull away from family activities in favour of spending time with friends. Children become acutely aware of others' opinions.

Children at this age begin to develop their own personal values and have a stronger sense of fairness and justice.



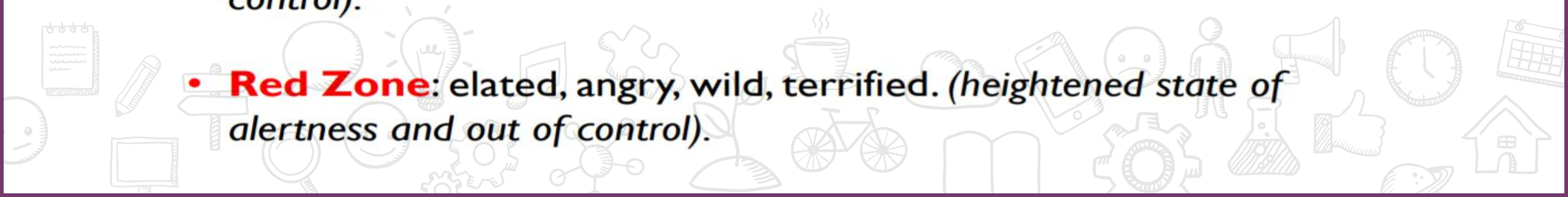
Support and facilitate independent activities.  
Promote honest and open communication in the family.  
Encourage children to express emotions without judgement. Model positive emotional regulation (e.g. relaxation techniques) and engage in family activities and shared experiences.  
Teach problem solving skills.



# Zones of Regulation



- **Blue Zone:** sad, sick, tired or bored (*low state of alertness – brain and/or body is moving slowly or sluggishly*).
- **Green Zone:** in control, calm, happy and ready to learn (*regulated state of alertness*).
- **Yellow Zone:** more intense emotions and states but able to maintain control, worried, frustrated, silly, excited, scared or overwhelmed (*heightened state of alertness but you still have some control*).
- **Red Zone:** elated, angry, wild, terrified. (*heightened state of alertness and out of control*).



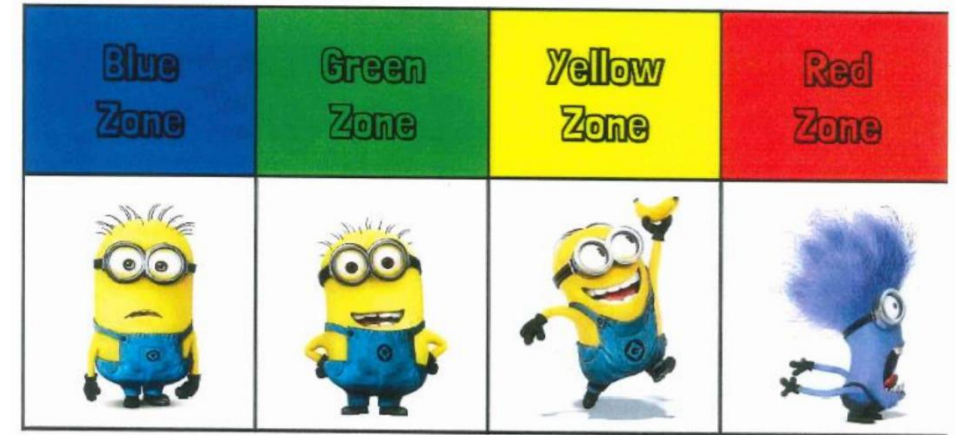
# The **ZONES** of Regulation®

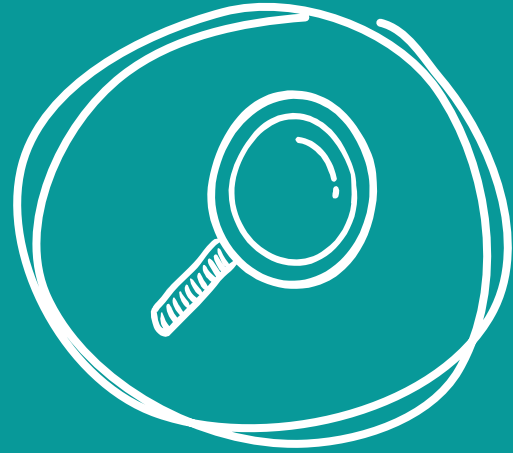
			
<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Mean Terrified Yelling/Hitting Out of Control



# Zones: Key Points

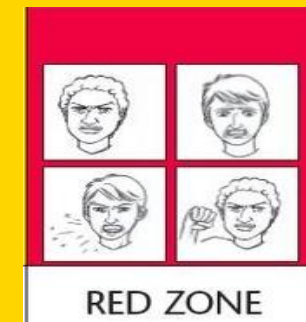
- There's No Such Thing as a "Bad" Zone.
- It's completely normal to experience emotions from all four zones throughout our lives. Everyone feels these emotions in their own way, and different situations can move us into different zones.
- You might even find yourself in more than one zone at the same time -for example, feeling happy and embarrassed at once.
- While we can't always control how we feel, we *can* choose how we respond. Learning to manage our emotions helps us make better choices. For instance, it's okay to feel frustrated—but it's not okay to hurt others because of it.
- Understanding our feelings is the first step toward managing them in a healthy and respectful way.





What is a meltdown

# What is a meltdown?



An emotional  
response

(to pressure or  
stress that leaves a  
child feeling  
overwhelmed &  
unable to cope)

Communication  
via  
behaviour

Shouting,  
aggression,  
curling-up, rocking,  
stamping,  
punching, hiding,  
withdrawing etc

A crisis  
to manage

Rather than a  
battle to be won or  
lost

# Tantrum

1. Usually driven by a want / goal
2. Cognitive function intact
3. Awareness of behaviour
4. Uses bargaining as a tactic
5. Stops if no audience
6. Once they have what they want, the behaviour stops
7. Can develop into a meltdown

## Both

Kicking,  
Punching,  
Screaming,  
Self-injury,  
Stomping,  
Swearing  
Biting

# Meltdown

1. Usually a reaction overload or feeling overwhelmed
2. Inability to think
3. Involuntary response
4. Will not bargain
5. Continues with no audience
6. Won't turn into a tantrum

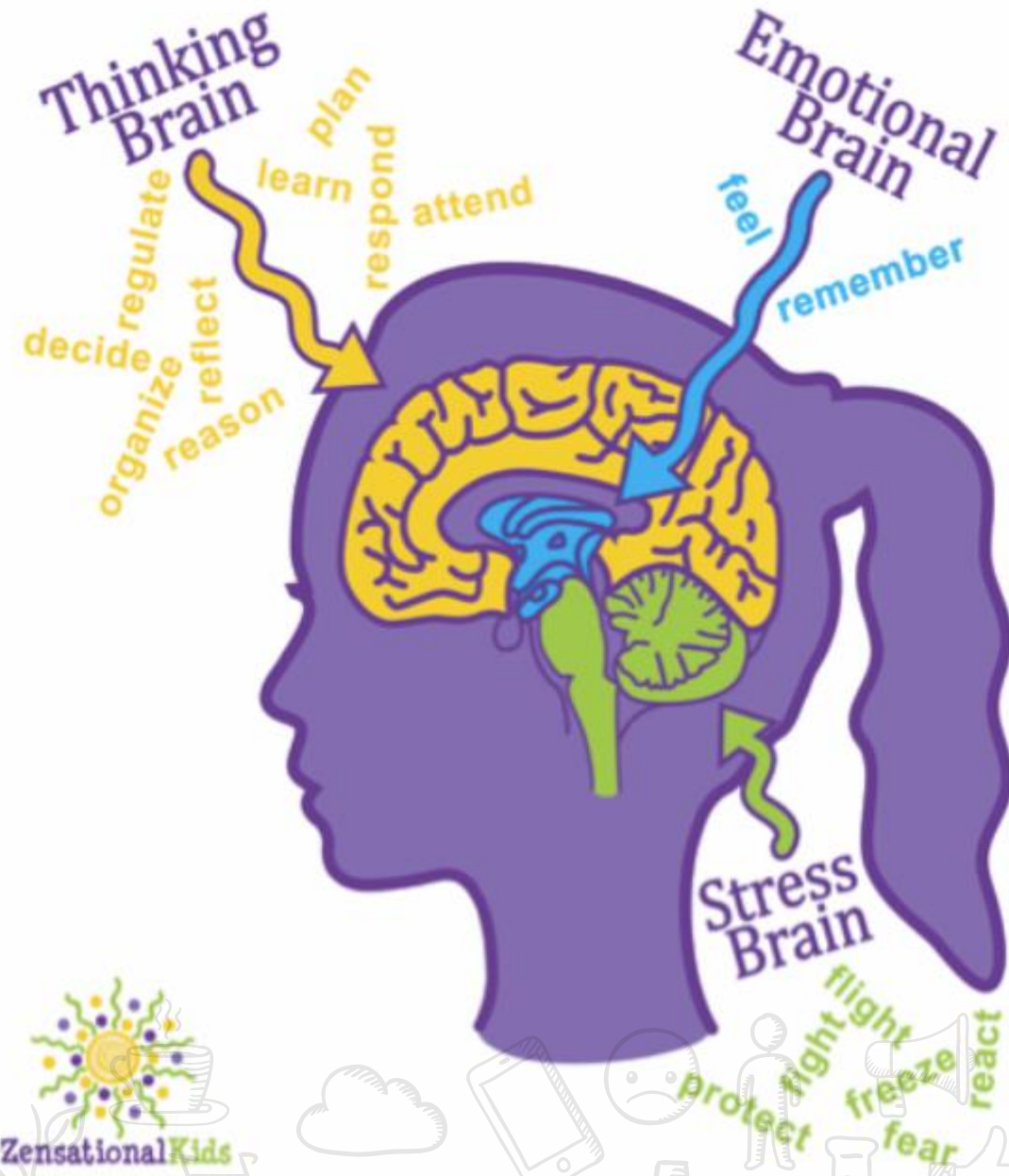
# Remember.....



Meltdowns (& tantrums) are a normal and common part of early childhood & an important part of development

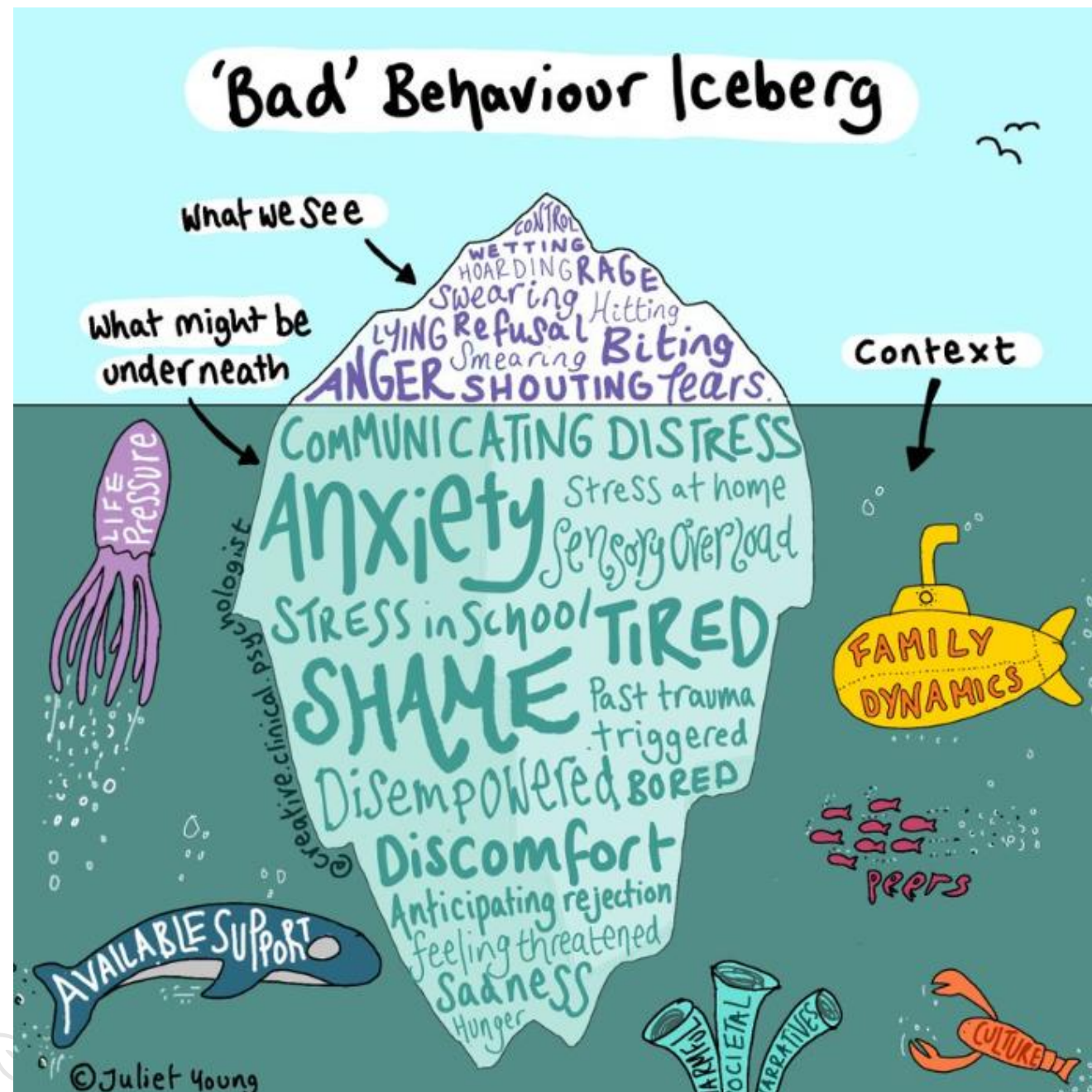


# Inside the brain during a meltdown



# Meltdowns

## Outside Vs Inside

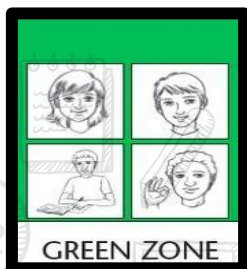




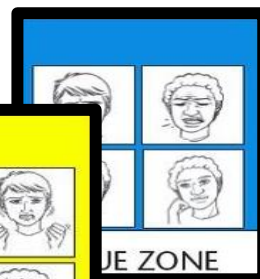
# Knowing what to do during a meltdown

# Meltdown Arc

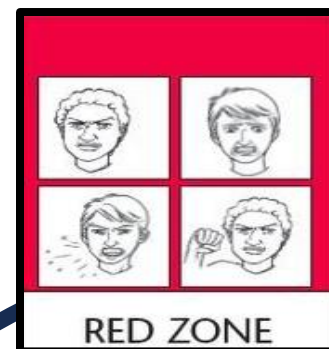
**Before trigger** -  
Child in green zone  
- no big emotions



**Escalation**  
Something triggers  
strong feelings -  
anxiety, anger, sadness.  
Could be blue or yellow  
zone.



**Dysregulated** -  
Higher  
functioning/  
thinking brain is  
off-line. Child is in  
fight, flight, freeze  
mode. Their lid has  
flipped



**Calming down** -  
Child begins to  
'put their lid' back  
on. May still be in  
blue or yellow  
zone.



**Back to normal**  
- Child returns  
to their  
baseline.

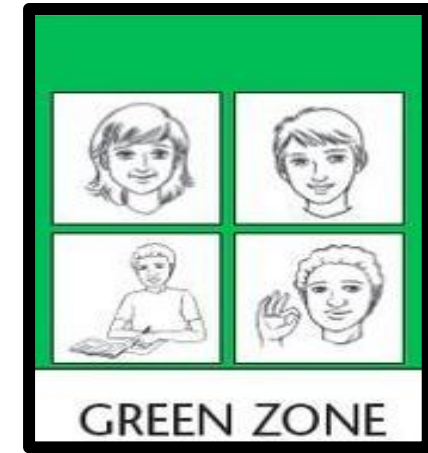


# BEFORE TRIGGER

- Everything is OK, or
- Predisposed for trouble, e.g.: dinner time, rough day, over-tired.

## Prevention Techniques

- “Front-loading” by trying to ensure enough sleep, exercise, good nutrition, consistent routines, and clear & consistent expectations
- Overall help the child to be their best self.

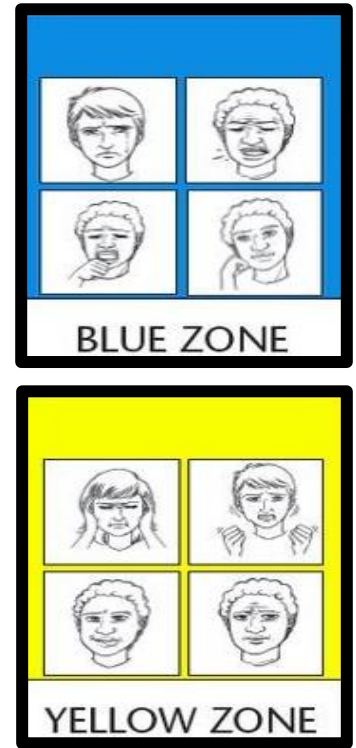


# ESCALATION

- Whining, Arguing, Yelling
- Physical tension in body builds

## De-escalation Techniques

- Keep yourself calm.
- Send de-escalation signals: take deep, slow, quiet breaths.
- Check your physical posture: your body should be relaxed, and not too tall or too close to your child.
- Slow your physical movements.
- Reduce or stop talking.
- Put on your "Face of Compassion."
- Let your child be "seen and felt."

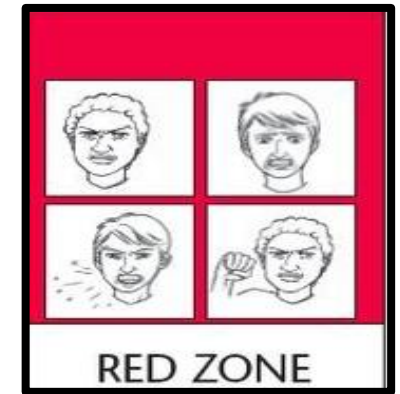
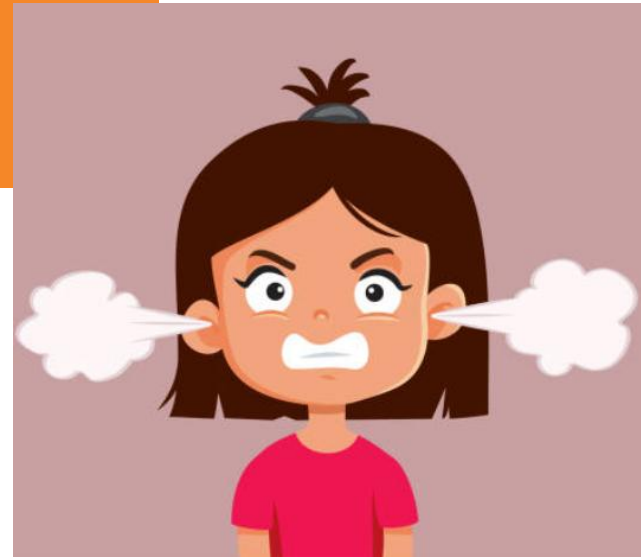


# DYSREGULATION ZONE

- Being “flooded” (i.e. brain isn't working).
- Fight, flight or freeze
- Screaming, hitting, throwing etc

## Self-management and healthy boundaries

- Avoid verbal interventions: i.e., talking, lecturing, rationalizing, fixing, advising, debating, correcting, threatening.
- Instead try: “Do you want a hug to help you with your feelings?”
- If your child is de-escalating, there is no need to intervene (you risk re-escalation).
- Time passing is helpful in de-escalation.
- Avoid rushing to the circle-back phase.
- Remember, you might need this time too, so check your own physical state before re-engaging

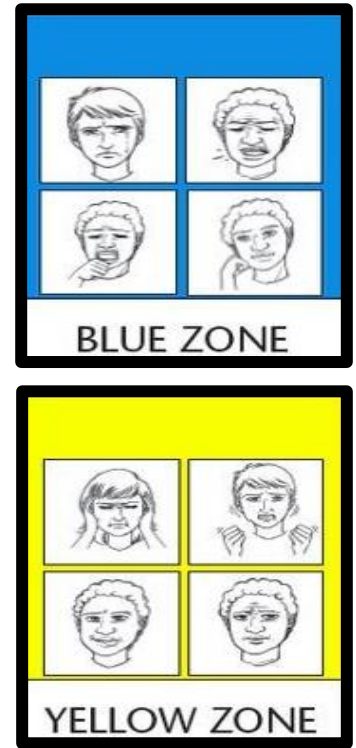


## CALMING DOWN

- Quieter voices, slower movements
- Hiding
- Physical “slump” or relaxation

# Wait

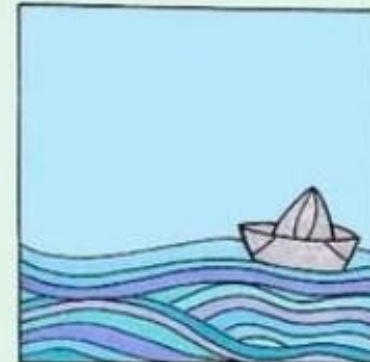
- Assure safety for living things.
- Keep or regain your own calm. Staying present when you are upset often makes things worse.
- Be available to help your child regain their regulation or manage their environment to help with this.
- Verbal interventions are still unlikely to work.
- Some children need space, others need you to be physically present, but generally without much talking or involvement



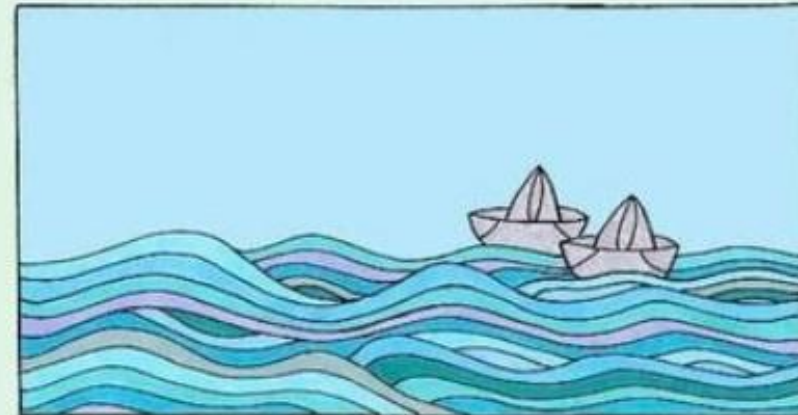
**WHEN THEIR STORM**



**MEETS OUR CALM**



**CO - REGULATION OCCURS**



@kwitens62

## Co-Regulation vs Self-Regulation

## Co-Regulation

Your child needs you to help them regulate their emotions

When they're upset, you need to soothe them and help them calm down.

They cannot use healthy coping strategies independently.

## Self-Regulation

Your child can calm down and cope with emotions all on their own.

They can walk away from a frustrating situation unprompted.

They can take a break, use a coping strategy to calm down, and return to an activity without adult support.

Most kids rely on co-regulation some, if not all, of the time. Even adults rely on co-regulation; for example, we seek comfort from our spouse or friends when we're upset. **Co-Regulation is normal and healthy.**

## Steps for offering co-regulation

*Using your presence and calm to reset your child's distressed brain.*

- 1 Regulate yourself  

- 2 Get close  

- 3 Make eye contact  

- 4 Listen  

- 5 Be curious and seek to understand  

- 6 Show empathy  

- 7 Listen again  

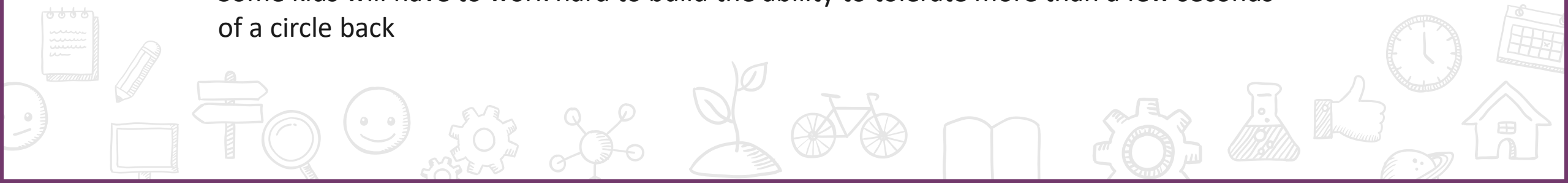
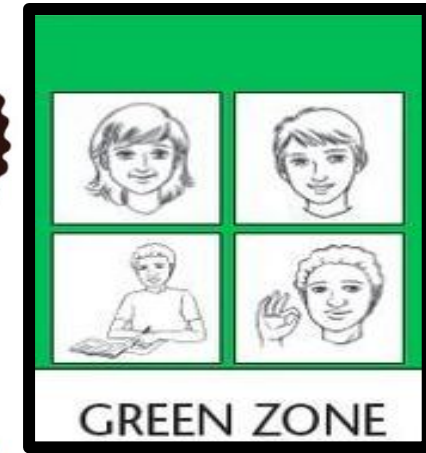
- 8 Offer warm affection (with consent)  


# BACK TO NORMAL

- Looks, acts, and reacts like your normal kid.

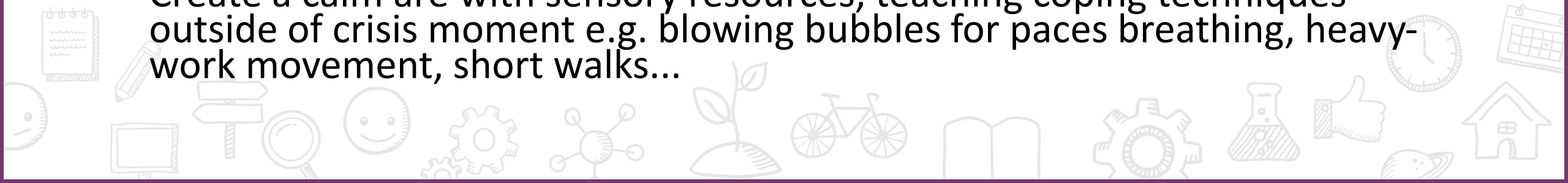
## Circle Back

- An hour or a week later, you can circle back to address important things related to the incident.
- Reparation & reconnect: apologise for your part & identify with your child something that you can do together to “make right” in some way.
- Teach: e.g. you can talk about the healthy coping skills you use when you have a hard time, that your child might also find helpful.
- Please note:
  - You don't need to do all of these every time
  - Not every situation needs a lesson and/or reparation
  - Some kids will have to work hard to build the ability to tolerate more than a few seconds of a circle back



# Advice for managing meltdowns for Autistic Children

- Prioritise immediate safety and hazards. If there is hitting, create distance and use soft barriers like cushions rather than grabbing.
- Lower stimulation quickly- Dim lights, turn off tvs and reduce strong smells. Avoid unexpected touch and adjust room temp or offer a cool cloth.
- Co-regulate with calm, minimal language. "you're safe" "I'm here". Don't try to reason through the reaction.
- Offer supportive tools but don't force them- noise cancelling headphone, weighted blanket, fidgets, soft toy, cool compress.
- After the meltdown: recovery, reflection and rebuilding trust-give time, gentle reconnection and gestures.
- Create a calm area with sensory resources, teaching coping techniques outside of crisis moment e.g. blowing bubbles for paced breathing, heavy-work movement, short walks...



# Useful Links

- [Meltdowns - a guide for all audiences](#)- National Autistic Society
- [Seven ways to deal with tantrums and meltdowns - CBeebies Parenting Helpline - BBC Tiny Happy People](#)
- [Home - Resources for Autism](#)
- [Open Emotion Wheel | Free Online Emotion Wheel](#)
- Book recommendations include: Good Inside By Dr Becky Kennedy (free youtube videos) and The Whole-Brain Child by Dr Daniel J.Siegel and Dr Tina Payne Bryson.



Thank You

Any questions?