

THE

ZONES

OF REGULATION®

Lesson 11: Exploring Tools for Calming

Lesson 11: EXPLORING TOOLS FOR CALMING

GOALS FOR THIS ACTIVITY

- Clients learn about and try out calming techniques that can be utilized to calm their body and mind
- Client's gain insight into how calming technique help regulate zones
- Clients reflect on which tools are effective in regulating themselves

Kuypers, Leah M., *The Zones of Regulation*. (2011). San Jose, CA: Social Thinking Publishing, 112-120.

MATERIALS

- One Zones Tools worksheet (Reproducible R) for each client. If one was started for sensory support tools, continue to use that same one.
- The Six Sides of Breathing visual (Reproducible S)
- Lazy 8 Breathing visual (Reproducible T)
- My Calming Sequence visual (Reproducible U)
- One blank piece of paper for each client
- Colored pencils in colors of the zones

Kuypers, Leah M., *The Zones of Regulation*. (2011). San Jose, CA: Social Thinking Publishing, 112-120.

OVERVIEW

In this activity, clients practice several calming techniques together and reflect on the techniques using the Zones Tools worksheet. The calming techniques used are:

- Learning to Take a Deep Breath
- Six Sides of Breathing (a breathing technique that uses a hexagon to structure breaths)
- Lazy 8 Breathing (a breathing technique that uses a lazy eight to structure breathing)
- Count to Ten
- Calming Sequence (a meditative routine to follow that repeats steps consisting of muscle contraction and deep pressure input)

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OVERVIEW continued:

These calming techniques incorporate both a physiological component that helps to calm the sensory and nervous system as well as a cognitive component to calm the mind. Often these tools can help clients to regulate their emotions—to help get them out of the autonomic “fight, freight, or flight” state that the body goes into when reacting to intense situations.

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PREPARATION

- Copy visuals of calming techniques that will be introduced (Reproducibles S, T, and U)
- Make one copy of the Zones Tools worksheet (Reproducible R) for each client if the students don't already have one. (If students completed Lesson 10, they can continue to use the same worksheet.)
- Make a list of the calming tools they will explore on the board that the clients can refer to for spelling if they aren't spelled out in the schedule.
- Practice how to do and teach these techniques by reading the description in the Activity steps and consulting the visuals included with this lesson.

NOTE TO PROVIDER:

Several of the techniques used in this activity incorporate deep breathing, yet many clients have a difficult time coordinating the rhythm of deep breathing. Often a client may appear to be hyperventilating rather than relaxing when you first attempt deep breathing exercises. If, while introducing the calming techniques below, you identify clients struggling with the coordination of deep breathing, set aside some time to address this skill before continuing to move on through the lesson. Play some relaxing music, dim the lights, and have clients lie down on the floor and place their hands over their stomachs.

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NOTE TO PROVIDER continued:

Ask them to pretend they have a balloon in their stomach that they slowly blow up so they can feel it expand with their hands. Then, instruct them to slowly let out the air (without making any sound effects.) You can also try placing a book or object on their stomachs so they can watch it rise and fall with their breath. The goal is for clients to use their diaphragm to help them take deep breaths, which helps to reduce muscle tension and get more oxygen into their bloodstream. Challenge clients to see who can take the slowest deep breath.

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NOTE TO PROVIDER continued:

If it's needed and would be all right with the clients and company policy, you might try lacing your hands on their lower rib cage to help facilitate the breathing through light manual manipulation. Often clients laugh, giggle, or act out the first time deep breathing is introduced as is often the case when they are uncomfortable with learning any new skill. Set aside time every day to work with clients on learning how to take deep breaths when they are in calm states, and soon the laughter will subside.

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LEAD-IN

1. Introduce to the clients that they will be learning about calming technique that often help relax people's minds and bodies. Invite clients to share any strategies they currently use to calm down that would work in the Red or Yellow Zone:

--We've talked about how it is often unexpected to be in the Red and Yellow Zones. Now we need to figure out some tools or strategies we can use to help us get back to the Green Zone. Do any of you have a strategy that you use to help you calm down?

LEAD-IN continued:

2. Inform them they will learn new tools to add to their existing ones and review the goal of the lesson with clients. Review how it feels to be calm, highlighting the physiological feel of the body and brain. Refer them to their Me in the Green Zone (Lesson 5) self-portrait in their Zones Folder for cues.

--How do you know that you are calm? What do you look like? How does your body feel? How do others think about you when you are calm?

ACTIVITY

1. Explain to clients they will be working on exploring zone tools that may help them to calm down when they are in the Yellow or Red Zone.
2. Give each client a “The Six Sides of Breathing” handout. Explain to clients each of the calming strategies written on the board. If clients don’t already have a Zones Tools worksheet, give one to each student.

ACTIVITY continued:

3. Lead the clients through The Six Sides of Breathing exercise (see the handout for instructions). Practice for at least five cycles. Ask clients to reflect on whether they found this calming. Have them use the worksheet to record their response about in which zones, if any, they might find this useful.
4. Draw a large numeral 8 lying on its side (lazy 8) on a large whiteboard or posterboard on the wall. Have clients draw their own lazy 8 on a piece of paper or give each client a Lazy 8 Breathing visual. Lead clients through the Lazy 8 breathing by having them trace the lazy 8 with their finger and inhale when they go around one side of the 8 and exhale when they cross over to the other side of the number. This activity also helps with crossing the midline (i.e., manipulating objects with the right hand that are placed on the left side of the body) and using both hemispheres of the brain, helping to increase body awareness and skills in reading and writing. Have them record their response on their Zones Tools worksheet.

ACTIVITY continued

5. Hand out the Calming Sequence visual (Reproducible U) and lead clients through the Calming Sequence, repeating the routine five times. Kari Dunn Buron introduced using the meditative technique of calming sequences with students with special needs in her book *When My Worries Get Too Big* (see “Recommended Resources”). Ask clients to reflect on if they think this is calming for them. Have them record their response on their Zones Tools worksheet.

ACTIVITY continued:

6. Lead clients through a counting-to-ten exercise. Using a slow, quiet voice, model for clients how they can count to ten in their head with their eyes opened or closed. Explain that this gives them time to think and make a plan before reacting. You could introduce the phrase “One hold steady, two hold steady, three hold steady, Ten I’m ready.” To help clients more easily learn and remember the counting-to-ten tool. Ask clients to reflect on if this is calming for them. Have them record their response on their Zones Tools worksheet.

WRAP-UP

Assess clients' knowledge by asking the following:

- *How does having different types of calming techniques benefit us?*
- *Can you think of a time over the last week that one of these techniques would have been helpful?*
- *If you would have used a tool, how would it have affected what those around you thought about you?*

WRAP-UP continued

Instruct clients that they will continue to explore using the tools and record how the tools make them feel so they are able to find the most effective tools to help them regulate. Have clients save their Zones Tools worksheets in their Zones Folders. The lessons in the next chapter will explore ways to teach clients when and how to use their tools to regulate when in the different zones.

WAYS TO GENERALIZE LEARNING

- As discussed in the introduction to the chapter, it is imperative to set aside time daily for clients to practice the tools. Incorporating a time to practice one calming technique a day into a daily routine will make it easier for the to continue to use them. Good times to try are after a transition from a stimulating activity, such as playing outside or before an activity that requires focusing, such as homework or a difficult task.
- Give copies of the calming techniques and instruct parents to practice with the clients once a day as part of their daily routine (such as before homework or bed).

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HOW TO ADAPT THIS LESSON

- You can record answers for clients if they experience difficulty writing. If a client is unable to judge in which zone the calming techniques would be beneficial, help by pointing out your observations of the client using the technique and whether or not you thought it appeared calming or alerting for him or her.
- If a client has a tool he or she already uses, make sure to include that on the Zones Tools worksheet. If a client helps create the strategy with you, they are more likely to practice it. The Six Sides of Breathing is based on an idea from a former student, and the visual and the activity were developed in collaboration with the student. He had initially made numerous self-defeating statements, such as teaching him tools was useless. However, after his role in creating The Six Sides of Breathing, he reported that he used it several times a day and it had helped reduce his time in the Yellow Zone and feelings of depression.

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ADDITIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITY FOR LESSON 11

My Green Zone Book

Have clients create a book with pictures they feel are calming and would help move the back to the Green Zone. Ask clients to find pictures and help them find images from magazines or the Internet that would help them feel relaxed and calm when they are in the Yellow or Red Zone. The book could include pictures of people, favorite items, preferred activities, serene landscapes, or anything else they think would be helpful. A book can be made by taking a large sheet of green construction paper, folding and cutting it into eighths, and binding on edge with staples. Have clients put a title and the author (their name) on the front page. If clients are able to do so have them write captions next to each picture to explain its calming qualities. Assess clients' abilities to identify images by evaluating the pictures they cut out before clients glue them in. Clients can add their Green Zone book to their toolboxes.

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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES TO BUILD ON ZONES

- Using the previous “My Green Zone Book” activity as a model, create a book or a sectioned color-coded poster depicting pictures cut from magazines or printed from the Internet, personal photos, or drawings depicting people, places, things, thoughts, or ideas of the child in each of the four zones.
- Create a self-affirming poster: write phrases (for example, “I like myself,” “I am a good person,” etc.) on the poster. A picture or drawing of the child could be included on the poster.
- Make a poster of the child’s positive attributes: place a drawing or picture of the child when he or she is calm in the center of the poster and write positive (true) attributes of him or her around the picture. For example, kind, thoughtful, smart, creative, a good sport, role model for younger children, a good older sibling, plays nicely with neighbors, etc.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES TO BUILD ON ZONES continued

- When you sense a meltdown or tantrum forming, take a break and, perhaps using a timer, everyone performs a specified form of physical activity (i.e., jump up and down, run in place, clap, spin, do jumping jacks or push-ups, laugh) for several minutes (range chosen by adult).
- Use a mirror for positive/self-affirming talk, have the child make faces portraying different emotions (this will give the child an idea of what he or she looks like, as well as identifying how he or she feels inside, when experiencing each emotion).

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