

THE
ZONES
OF REGULATION®

LESSON 12: EXPLORING TOOLS - THINKING STRATEGIES

Overview



This lesson includes activities for 3 different effective thinking strategies to teach clients to self-regulate:

- Size of the Problem
- Inner Coach versus Inner Critic
- Superflex® versus Rock Brain

Overview (continued)



- It is not recommended that clients are taught all of these strategies in one session
- It is best to separate the lesson into 3 different learning activities taught on different days
- You may want to spend more than one session on any of these learning activities to help students solidify that concept

Goals



- Clients are able to provide examples of big, medium, and small problems
- Clients learn to analyze a situation and rationalize how big a problem is
- Clients gain insight that the size of their reaction or expected response must match the size of the problem
- Clients understand how use of the *Size of the Problem* can help to regulate them to an expected zone

Thinking Strategy Activity: Materials



- One *Size of the Problem*: Big vs. Little Problems worksheet (Reproducible V) for each participant
- Copy of *Size of the Problem* visual (Reproducible W) to post and share with others (optional)
- Clients' ZONES Tools worksheets

Preparation



- Write a scale from 1-5 on a white board or paper, with 5 on the top.
- Write “People see as Big Problems” next to the 5 and 4, “People see as Medium Problems” next to the 3, and “People see as Little Problems” next to the 2 and 1.

Lead-In



- Explain that when participating in group activities, they may sometimes get upset over what we call “little problems or glitches.” (example: someone else might get what the client wanted—like a favorite color game piece or being chosen first)
- Other times they may have an idea of how to do something, but the rest of the team choose to do it a different way
- Work on the fact that some problems are really big while others are little and can simply be ignored. Problems require different reactions, emotions, and solutions based on their size.

Vocabulary



- What is the size of the problem? *Is it a big problem or a little problem?*
- Big Problems: *problems that many people share and that have no easy, quick, or pleasant solution*
- Medium Problems: *problems some people share that are able to be resolved in an hour to a couple of days*
- Little Problems: *problems that only affect one to two people and can be ignored or solved in a matter of minutes*

Activity



- Big problems involve Red Zone reactions
- Medium problems involve Yellow Zone reactions
- Small problems involve Green Zone reactions (which is little to no reaction)

Activity (continued)



Different problem levels impact a situation over time. Brainstorm different types of problems: For example:

- The results of a tornado or earthquake, being seriously hurt, or a death in the family can last for years (big problems)
- Arguing can make people upset for hours and make them feel physically bad (medium problem, depending upon the situation)
- The feeling experienced when not getting the color game piece desired ends as soon as the game is over, perhaps as soon as the game starts (small problem)

Wrap-Up



- Discuss with client his or her emotions in situations listed.
 - *What happens when you have a Red Zone response to a problem that isn't a 4 or 5? For example, if you tear up your paper and storm away when you make a mistake on your work?*
 - *When using Size of the Problem as a tool, how can it change the outcome (i.e., recover quickly vs. not getting work done and people feeling like you overreacted)?*

The goal is to slowly work with clients on understanding that their emotional response prevented them from getting their work done on time or prevented them from playing the game that they stormed away from.

Size of the Problem Worksheet

Big vs. Little Problems

People see these as Big Problems	5	
	4	
People see these as Medium Problems	3	
	2	
People see these as Little Problems	1	

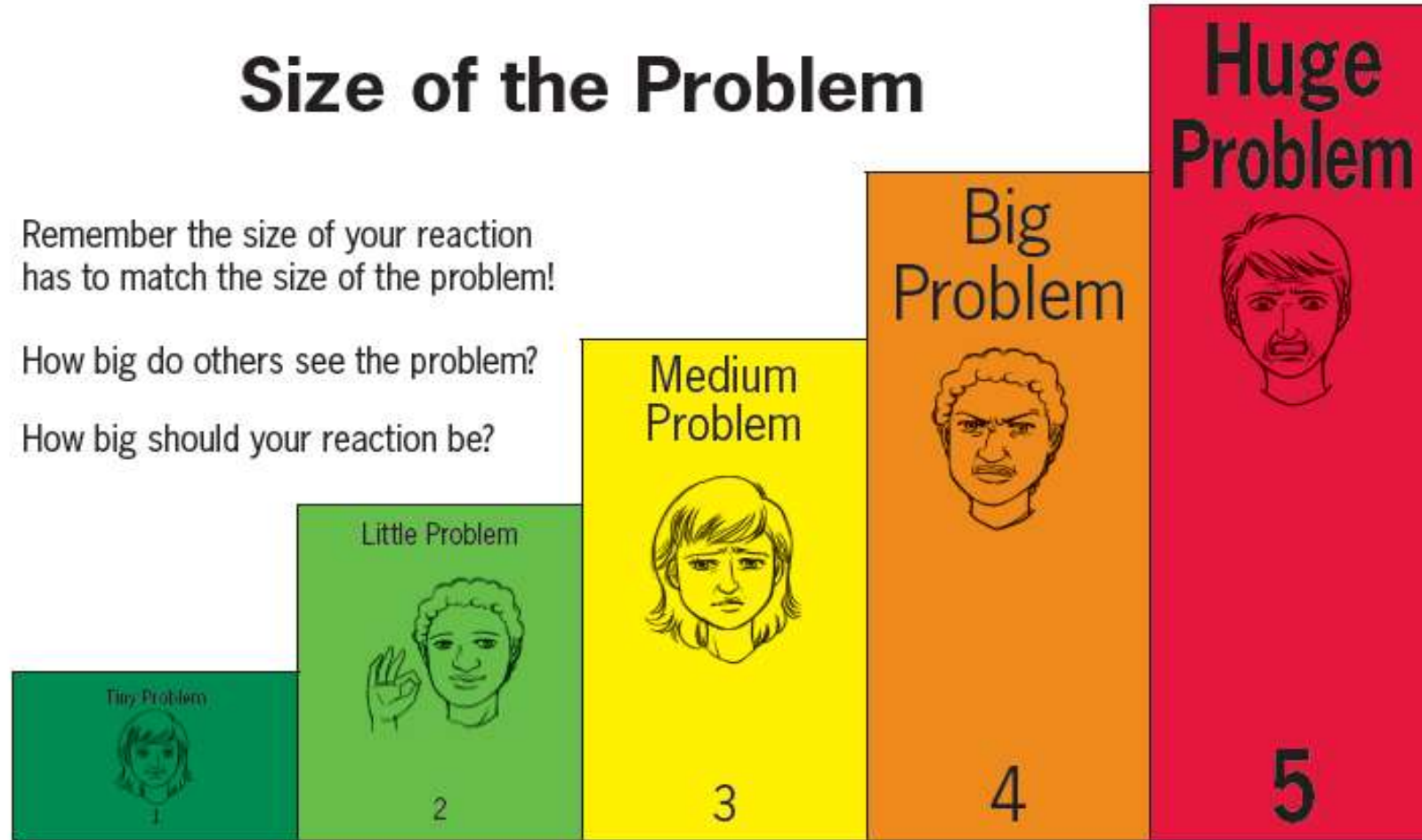
Adapted for *The Zones of Regulation*® from the original work of Winner's *Think Social* (2005), pages 44-46, www.socialthinking.com and Buron and Curtis' *The Incredible 5-Point Scale* (2003).

Size of the Problem

Remember the size of your reaction has to match the size of the problem!

How big do others see the problem?

How big should your reaction be?



Visual adapted by Leah Kuypers, Donna Brittain and Jill Kuzma for The Zones of Regulation® from the original work of Winner's *Think Social!* (2005), pages 44-45, www.socialthinking.com, and Buron and Curtis' *The Incredible 5-Point Scale* (2003), www.5pointscale.com

Inner Coach vs. Inner Critic



- **Materials & Preparation (copy worksheets):**
 - Inner Coach and Inner Critic worksheets (Reproducibles X & Y); ZONES Tools Worksheet (Reproducible R)
- **Lead-In:**
 - Describe to client that everyone uses self-talk. Ask him to consider what he would say to himself if he reached for something in a hot oven (example: “It’s hot, be careful, use a pot holder”). Self-talk consists of what people may think in their head, but not necessarily say it out loud.
 - Self-talk can sometimes take a negative tone, which is called their “inner critic.” The goal of this activity is to replace the negative talk with more positive self-talk, their “inner coach.”

Activity



- Give the client a set of the Inner Coach and Inner Critic worksheets. Use the Inner Coach worksheet first. Describe positive self-talk: we all have an inner coach who helps to cheer us on and help us through difficult circumstances. Brainstorm together different things their inner coach might say to them. Complete the Inner Coach worksheet.
- Explain that in addition to an inner coach, we also have an inner critic who works to put negative thoughts in our head, like “You can’t do it, don’t even try.” Brainstorm together different things their inner critic might say to them. Complete Inner Critic worksheet.
- Discuss that their brain is in control of those to whom they listen and allow to have power. Use the Zones Tools worksheet to have client indicate in which zone(s) they feel the inner coach would help them.

Inner Coach



Inner coaches help us use positive self-talk to give us the courage and strength to get through stressful situations.

Difficult times I may need my inner coach are:

My inner coach reminds me to use strategies to keep myself calm.

To help me get to the Green Zone, my inner coach reminds me to:

My inner coach also helps to keep positive thoughts in my head so I can be successful.

My inner coach might say to me:

Inner Critic



Inner critics use negative self-talk that get us nowhere. It puts defeating thoughts in my head.

Times my inner critic gets to me:

My inner critic does not help and instead ends up making a situation worse.

My inner critic might say to me:

I am in control of who I listen to—the inner coach or inner critic.

I can use my inner coach to defeat my inner critic by telling it:

ZONES Tools Worksheet

Name of Tool	Circle the zone or zones you think the tool would help in.				
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None

	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None
	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red	None

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Wrap-Up



- Assess client knowledge by asking these questions:
 - *How can using the inner coach as a tool help you?*
 - *Can you think of a time over the last week when using the inner coach would have been helpful?*
 - *If you had used the inner coach as a tool, would it have affected what those around you thought about you? If so, how?*


Ways to Generalize Learning



- As circumstances arise when client could benefit from using their inner coach, ask what their inner coach can say to help them out. If client makes negative, self-defeating statements, point out that it sounds like the client is giving too much power to his/her inner critic and remind him/her to use inner coach instead.
- Share worksheets and vocabulary with parents and others who work closely with the client and encourage them to also remind the client to think about his/her inner coach.

Superflex® vs. Rock Brain©






A flexible thinking pattern in which a person is able to consider different points of view or ways to do something



SUPERFLEX THINKING



A rigid thinking pattern in which a person gets stuck on an idea and has difficulty considering other options or ways to do something



ROCK BRAIN THINKING

SUPERFLEX Curriculum



- Based on the notion that a super hero (Superflex) lives in all of us.
- Superflex is always trying to defeat the “Team of Unthinkables” that invades our brains and tries to make us do unexpected behaviors.
- The “Team of Unthinkables” includes various cartoon characters, each designed to help clients identify a different socially unexpected behavior.

Team of Unthinkables



- Glassman: makes us have an explosive reaction
- Mean Jean: makes us say disrespectful comments to others
- Energy Harry: gives us too much energy
- Brain Eater: distracts us from what we should be thinking about
- And several others

Using TEAM OF UNTHINKABLES



- As clients learn about the Team of Unthinkables, ask them to categorize into which zone each Unthinkable puts them.
- Clients work to increase their awareness of who is on their Team of Unthinkables and to find strategies to defeat their Team of Unthinkables through use of their own Superflex thinking.

Using models of Superflex and Rock Brain,

- Explain that a pretend hero, Superflex, lives in all of us.
- Using the foam model , demonstrate how Superflex is flexible and bendable.
- Allow clients to manipulate Superflex while explaining to them that their brains are similar, as they too are flexible (like when we change our minds).
- Using the character made out of duct tape, introduce Rock Brain, who tries to invade our brain and make it get stuck on a thought or way of doing something.
- Allow clients to manipulate Rock Brain while asking them if they can bend or flex Rock Brain.
- Follow up by asking what they think would happen if they had a Rock Brain.
- What zone would they be in?

Superflex vs. Rock Brain



- Demonstrate with Superflex and Rock Brain characters how Rock Brain will try to crush Superflex (squish Superflex with Rock Brain).
- But Superflex is stronger and will always bounce back and defeat Rock Brain (release your hand allowing Superflex to expand again).
- Discuss with students that by thinking about Superflex, clients can change their thinking pattern to consider other options and defeat Rock Brain to stay in the Green Zone.
- Brainstorm with clients instances when they think using Superflex thinking would help them.

Superflex vs. Rock Brain Review



- Once clients understand the concept of Superflex versus Rock Brain thinking, point out that this is another tool they can use to help change their zones.
- Have clients assess in which zone Superflex thinking would benefit them and indicate this on their Zones Tools worksheet.

Superflex vs. Rock Brain Wrap-Up



- Assess clients' understanding of the concept by asking them to respond to these questions:
- When was a time you used Rock Brain thinking?
- Describe what happened and how it affected others.
- What do you think would have happened if you would have used Superflex thinking instead?
- How would this have changed what others thought or felt about you?
- How can using Superflex thinking affect your zone?

Using Superflex to defeat Rock Brain (Generalizing learning; applying concepts)



- Once clients understand Superflex versus Rock Brain thinking, you can point out to them at other times when you see them using Superflex thinking to help stay in the Green Zone.
- Conversely, you can also let them know when you notice them using Rock Brain thinking that is putting them in the Yellow Zone.
- Ask them to call on Superflex to help them defeat Rock Brain by using flexible thinking and helping them use a tool to regain control.
- Given the sensitivity of the client, it may be best to process this with them once they are back in the Green Zone.
- Share the concept and vocabulary with parents so they can be infused in the home and community.