I Own My Zone

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I Own My Zone: A Counseling Group for Children
to Lean How to Self-Regulate

A Thesis Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By
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In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in
Counseling

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Abstract
The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate a child’s ability to self-regulate in relation to success at school. You will find information in this literature review regarding self-regulation including, the development of self-regulation and neurological components such as sensory processing, emotional regulation, and executive functioning. The teacher’s role in providing students with success in the classroom. Understanding the importance of parental support, the home environment and how that effects student’s success in the classroom. Finally, the integration of home and school and how they can work together to benefit the students. Self-regulation is an important element in a child’s school experience, it allows for positive peer interaction, positive self-talk, and school success. Each of these aspects are taken into consideration when developing a group manual focusing on the importance of self-regulation skills in young children.
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Introduction

Everyone has the ability to self-regulate, some individuals need more guidance than others. Fostering the skills to self-regulate is vital in young children. Self-regulation is the body’s way of being safe and getting what needs to be done for a specific situation (Kuyper, 2011). This consists of, regulating one’s emotions, impulses, and sensory needs to meet the needs of the environment, behave appropriately on a social basis, and reach goals set for oneself (Kuyper, 2011). With the implementation of I Own My Zone, a group to teach children tools to self-regulate, children are able to examine their big feelings and practice tools to help calm their bodies. When looking at a child’s ability to self-regulate, it was often not academics that hindered the child from the classroom, it was disruptive behavior (Kuyper, 2011). This group will aide in providing awareness of different resources to help children self-regulate. This is important for parents and educators to understand to provide the child opportunities for school success.
Literature Review: Fostering Self-Regulation in Students

To answer the question, how can home and school work together to support students’ self-regulation to be successful. It is vital that the research that applies to the topic is reviewed. This includes, the development of self-regulation and neurological components such as sensory processing, emotional regulation, and executive functioning. The role of the teacher that provides students with success in the classroom. As well as, providing understanding of how the home environment has an effect on student’s success. Finally, the integration of home and school and how they can work together to benefit the student.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation can be identified in many ways, such as, self-management, self-control, anger control, and impulse control (Kuypers, 2011). These are all terms that define people’s capacity to regulate their level of awareness (Kuypers, 2011). As well as, how they exhibit their emotions through behaviors to achieve their goals (Kuypers, 2011). Self-regulation looks differently for each individual. In other words, self-regulation is the body’s way of being safe and getting what needs to be done for the specific situation (Montroy, Bowles, Skibbe, McClelland, & Morrison, 2016). This consists of, regulating one’s emotions, impulses, and sensory needs to meet the needs of the environment, behave appropriately on a social basis and reach goals set for oneself (Montroy et al., 2016). We all have the ability to self-regulate. It may take more practice and self-awareness for some than others. Some people develop self-regulation naturally through observation and growing up. Individuals use the world around them to understand and apply behaviors that to them, naturally make sense. Others struggle to understand how to navigate the world around them and their body’s natural response. This can come from past trauma, developmental delays or have an unknown cause (Montroy et al., 2016).
Self-Regulation starts as early as infancy and one’s ability to regulate grows with them (Montroy et al., 2016). The environment an individual is in, plays a huge role in their ability to self-regulate (Kuypers, 2011). This means, the school and home environment both play tremendous roles in a student’s ability to self-regulate. When looking at a child’s ability to self-regulate, academics is not what limits a child from the classroom, more often, it was their disruptive behavior and their inability to self-regulate (Kuypers, 2011). Even though children can be taught self-regulation skills in the school setting, home settings differ and contribute greatly to the ability to use and develop individual self-regulation skills. When a child is struggling to self-regulate in the classroom and school setting, often times, they are also struggling to self-regulate at home. The home setting affects the school setting, and vice versa, that is why a team-approach is most effective in helping the child develop self-regulation skills. A team-approach involves a group of individuals working together toward a common goal. In this setting, an educational team includes, parents/guardians, teachers, school counselor, resource teachers and administration. Together, the team works with the child to create tools to help in the process of self-regulation. To understand how to teach and develop self-regulation, it is imperative that there is a firm understanding of the components of self-regulation.

**Sensory Processing**

In order for an individual to self-regulate successfully, there are three critical neurological components that need to be incorporated: sensory processing, executive functioning, and emotional regulation (Montroy et al., 2016). Sensory processing is the first neurological component (Kuypers, 2011). This component designates to make sense of the material perceived by your sensory receptors (Kuypers, 2011). Each person uses sensory processing in different ways. If an individual stopped and thought about all the sensory inputs that are happening around them,
they might notice the chair they are sitting on, a ring or other jewelry they are wearing, the tags in their clothing, noise happening in the background, etc. These are all sensory inputs they most likely do not recognize due to their ability to process the sensory inputs faced daily. However, when a person or student struggles with sensory processing, they may feel all of those things more intensely, even to the point that they cannot process anything else. They are not able to process all that is happening and weed out and ignore what others may not even notice. This component gives individuals the ability to organize information in order to respond to the situation in a meaningful manner (Kuypers, 2011). For example, when a fire engine siren is heard, although it is loud and may be startling, one may become alert but can go on with one’s business (Kuypers, 2011).

When discussing sensory processing it is important to understand what sensory input is. Sensory input includes, visual, auditory, tactile, smell, taste, body awareness, and body relationship to gravity (Kuypers, 2011). This component is extremely important. It gives you the ability to control how much sensory input you receive so you do not become overwhelmed by too much stimuli (Kuypers, 2011). An individual who has a sensory processing disorder may struggle to receive sensory information, process it, or respond to it (Kuypers, 2011). One’s ability to self-regulate depends upon their brains ability to organize the information their sensory system provides (Kuypers, 2011). The goal of our sensory system is to integrate the information to meet the purpose of a task (Kuypers, 2011).

**Executive functioning**

Executive functioning is the next component that plays an important role in one’s ability to self-regulate (Hofmann, Schmeichel, & Baddeley, 2012). It is the component that defines the cognitive developments that is involved in one’s ability to control thoughts and actions (Kuypers, 2011). This function is often referred to as the command center, which oversees actions within the
brain (Kuypers, 2011). Tasks that fall into the executive functioning would be working memory, the ability to multitask, self-talk, flexible thinking, impulse control, and the ability to organize and plan (Hofmann, et al., 2012). When an individual’s cognitive processing is functioning successfully, they are armed with tools that will help problem solve to overcome situations they may encounter (Kuypers, 2011). A variety of strategies can be taught to individuals to prepare them with skills that will guide their actions, which in turn will lead to development in control and problem-solving abilities (Hofmann et al., 2012). There are strategies that can be taught to help individuals develop skills to address areas they may be lacking (Kuypers, 2011). This may take different forms, and may look different at home and school. At home a parent may find that their child uses too much shampoo when washing their hair because their executive functioning doesn’t tell them when to stop. At school, this same student might be struggling to get work completed even though the student is using all their work time. The student may struggle to understand what work to do when. Which leads to the work getting muddled up with the result of nothing truly getting completed. Their executive functioning is not assisting them in organizing their workload and even though they are trying it isn’t getting completed. Executive functioning struggles can be difficult to pinpoint due to the many ways it may take form. Again, this proves the importance of school and home working together to address the same goals.

**Emotional Regulation**

Emotional regulation is the third component in one’s ability to self-regulate. This component is in charge of controlling emotional reaction (Kuypers, 2011). This entails one’s ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify their emotional response, regarding the time and intensity (Kuypers, 2011). Providing individuals guidance to help establish the size of their problem is a skill that is used to regulate emotions (Kuypers, 2011). Understanding other individuals’
perspectives is another area that will help to increase one’s ability to regulate their emotions (Kuypers, 2011). Individuals who struggle with these tasks struggle to regulate their emotions (Kuypers, 2011). Something that may seem inconsequential in your day may completely throw a student who struggles with emotional regulation off for the entire day. For example, an individual who is able to self-regulate is getting ready for the day. They grab their morning coffee and spill it all over their shirt. It is an irritation, but they go change into a new shirt and can go about their day. A child who struggles with emotional processing, have laid out their clothes the night before and get ready in the morning. They sit down to have their morning juice and spill it all over their shirt. They might respond with intense anger, throwing things, yelling or it comes out as extreme sadness, tears, the inability to go change their shirt. This all occurs before the child gets on the bus to go to school. Once the child is at school, they may still be upset about their shirt and unable to go about their day.

Sensory processing, executive functioning, and emotional regulation depend on one another in order for an individual to self-regulate. If one of these neurological components are off, it is difficult for the individual to self-regulate. It is important to understand the three areas and recognize the lacking skills. When the deficit is identified, skills can be taught, and gains can be made. It is also important to have those conversations between home and school when recognizing a lack in one of the components in self-regulation. Areas can mimic each other and only true teamwork can help define the problem areas and how best to address them.

In the Classroom

There are many contributions that play a role in the outcome of success in the classroom for students who struggle to self-regulate. Research has shown the benefits of supportive relationships between teachers and students (Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson &
Brock, 2009). Positive relationships in the classroom provide students with the sense of emotional security and confidence (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Educators around the world hope for students to demonstrate self-control in the classroom (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). However, establishing a positive relationship with a teacher provides the student with the support they need to transition into school and cope with social and academic situations (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). When a student is able to understand, check-in and evaluate their own goals, strengths and areas of improvement, most often they are a child who has a positive relationship with one or more teachers (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). Teachers are yearning for guidance in engaging students in the areas of attending, following directions, completing assignments, organization, and participating (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). Oftentimes, these difficulties are associated with students with disabilities (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). The demand of school often limits these students the skills to self-regulate due to the intensity of the environment and stimuli (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). The lack of ability to self-regulate is often displayed by impulsivity, hyperactivity and distractibility (Korinek & DeFur, 2016).

The ability for a child to self-regulate is multifaceted and a continuing goal (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). Which leads to a curriculum that is explicit and repetitive (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger & Davidson, 2015). The more a child is able to practice and see strategies modeled the more likely it is for the child to start displaying skills in the area (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Research has shown the importance of self-regulation curriculum used within the classroom, it is important to educate teachers with strategies to support students with social emotional needs (Flook et al., 2015). Classrooms that support growth of student self-regulation are led by teachers who are willing to cultivate change for the needs of their students (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). This includes continuing assessing, implementing and evaluating their classroom and the students they are
serving (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). Multiple strategies can be used throughout various classroom
tasks that can grow student’s self-regulation in the areas of performance and planning (Korinek &
DeFur, 2016). To begin, teachers can start with the layout of their classroom, using visual prompts,
organization binders, timers, and modeling the desired expectations and behavior of the students
(Korinek & DeFur, 2016). Students have the ability to be successful but only after they have
demonstrated the abilities under adult direction (Korinek & DeFur, 2016). It takes time and
repetition for a child to be successful (Korinek & DeFur, 2016).

When working with children that struggle to self-regulate, it is of the utmost importance
the educator is assessing the appropriate target and how students are implementing self-regulation
strategies (Boakaerts & Corno, 2005). The child is working to implement the strategy as needed,
as well as the use of flexibility in order to reach their goal (Boakaerts & Corno, 2005). This would
all be in response to the environment in which the child is in. The environment a child is in can
alter the state at which the child is able to self-regulate (Boakaerts & Corno, 2005). More often
than not, children who struggle to self-regulate get thrown off by environmental cues that trigger
emotions (Boakaerts & Corno, 2005).

There are two curriculums that will be highlighted that can be beneficial in the general
education classroom as well as the special education classroom. Using a consistent method
provides consistency for students to be successful. The two curriculums that will be discussed are
the Zones of Regulation and Fundamentals of Structured TEACCHING (TEACCH).

The first curriculum that will be discussed is the Zones of Regulation. The Zones of
Regulation is a framework that teaches students to self-regulate. This curriculum was created to
help students categorize their feelings to improve their ability to communicate and recognize how
they are feeling (Kuypers, 2011). The curriculum breaks up a student’s emotion into zones, blue,
green, yellow, and red (Kuypers, 2011). The blue zone explains the low state of alertness (Kuypers, 2011). This is where an individual may feel tired, sick, bored, or lonely (Kuypers, 2011). Often in the blue zone one would describe themselves as sluggish or low energy (Kuypers, 2011). The green zone is the state at which an individual is regulated or ready to learn (Kuypers, 2011). An individual in this zone may report being focused, happy, or calm (Kuypers, 2011). A person is in control of their body if they are presenting in the green zone (Kuypers, 2011). The yellow zone explains when an individual feels they are losing some control (Kuypers, 2011). A person may feel stressed, silly, frustrated, nervous, or excited when reporting in the yellow zone (Kuypers, 2011). The person is losing control of their body in the yellow zone (Kuypers, 2011). They may experience sensory seeking behavior (Kuypers, 2011). Last, is the red zone, this explains when an individual experiences intense feeling (Kuypers, 2011). In the red zone, a person may report being angry, panic, terror, and may demonstrate explosive behavior (Kuypers, 2011). An individual has lost complete control of their body in the red zone (Kuypers, 2011).

A study found in the American Psychology Association Journal (2020), highlights problem solving techniques to narrow in on socialization in schools. The overarching goal of the study was to measure the ability to self-regulate when peers and teachers are put into the equation with the child (Valiente, Swanson, DeLay, Fraser & Parker, 2020). The target group is preschool to elementary age students (Valiente et al., 2020). The study used teachers, peers, and classroom environments to understand the way a child could problem solve to regulate their emotions (Valiente et al., 2020). It was found that the way a child responded through attitude was a key component (Valiente et al., 2020). They also used the heuristic model and visual chart, which is students’ characteristics that promote the ability to problem solve in a short period of time using different variables such as, socializing agent, emotional-related interactions, and student outcomes.
The study illiterates the importance of peers, teachers and the environment the child is in and how it plays an important role in the child’s ability to socialize and regulate their emotions (Valiente et al., 2020).

The second curriculum is Fundamentals of Structured Teaching (TEACCH) method is designed for individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum disorder (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). It was developed by the University of North Carolina in the 1970s, this method encourages an environment that is structured with visual learning for children with a variety of disabilities at its focus (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). TEACCH is an evidenced based program that can be completed effectively at home and school to best meet the needs of the child (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). Research has shown, individuals who respond well to TEACCH excel with visual cues, are distractible, tend to have communication barriers, struggle with time, are attached to routine and usually have very intense interests (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). The overarching theme of the TEACCH method is structure, there are four kinds of structure associated with TEACCH (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). Physical structure is the first type, this demonstrates to the child what is going to happen next (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). This can be demonstrated using visual cues or the placement of furniture (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). The second type of structure is organization and communication (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). This is often demonstrated by the use of a schedule which promotes a positive transition (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). It is important to understand the distractibility of the child so that you can place the child in the most effective area for learning to occur (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). The third type of structure is organization of individual tasks (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). This includes the length of the task, what the child is supposed to do, how the child knows there is progress being made and the indication an activity is finished (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). The final type of structure is the work system, which is breaking an
activity into individual tasks to promote an increase in time the child is involved in productive
activities (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). The TEACCH method of structured teaching is used all over
the world. When utilized correctly success is imminent (Mesibov & Shea, 2009).

A study (Mesibov & Shea, 2009) was completed on 5 children ages 4 to 8 years with
Autism. Throughout the study children were rotated from a structured environment to an
unstructured environment (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). In the structured environment the adult chose
the activity for the child, how much time was spent and the order in which tasks were completed
(Mesibov & Shea, 2009). In the unstructured setting, the child made the decision on the task, time
spent on the task and the order in which they were done (Mesibov & Shea, 2009). This study
indicated that the structured group had more success with tasks accomplished in a timely manner
(Mesibov & Shea, 2009). It did not have a control group. The study provided evidence that the
TEACCH approach is a successful method with children with autism.

The curriculums discussed work well together. The focus on the importance of forming a
relationship with the child. Research has proven the power of relationships (Cadima, Doumen,
Vaerschueren & Buyse, 2015). The relationship between the teacher and child contribute to the
child’s ability to be successful (Cadima et al., 2015). When a classroom is well organized and
manages, a child’s capacity to have self-control and behavioral engagement is higher (Cadima et
al., 2015). A well-managed classroom leads to more engaged teachers, which will promote less off
task behavior of the students (Cadima et al., 2015).

A study (Deed, 2010), provided information on students’ ability to self-regulate and be
successful in the classroom. This particular study (Deed, 2010) demonstrated that teachers can
support the growth of self-regulatory behavior. This can occur through classroom interaction as
well as providing appropriate academic material for the child to be successful (Deed, 2010). It
was evident through this study that self-regulation is a complex task for students and teachers play a large role in the child being successful in the classroom (Deed, 2010).

**Impact of Home**

The home a child is raised in lays the foundation to their success. Parents are their child’s mentor and function as a resource for their child (Stright, Neitzel, Sears & Hoke-Sinex, 2001). A parents’ capacity to deliver instruction in a manner appropriate for their child’s cognitive level may determine whether their child comprehends, internalizes and can make use of the material provided (Stright et al., 2001). When parents provide a supportive emotional environment, their child is more likely to assume the attitude and goals the parent demonstrates (Stright et al., 2001). Children’s ability to self-regulate relies heavily on the parent’s ability to support their child emotionally (Stright et al., 2001). This is the overarching factor in a student’s success. Research has proven, children who bear more hardship often fall behind their peers in the ability to self-regulate (Zhang, Gatzke-Koop, Fosco & Bierman, 2020). When parents encourage children to talk about their emotions, it provides validation they are hearing what is being said (Zhang et al., 2020). It also provides opportunities for the child to develop more adaptive perceptions of their emotions and environment in which surrounds them (Zhang et al., 2020). Which encourages a more positive experience with emotional regulation (Zhang et al., 2020).

A study (Fosco, Frank, Stormshak & Dishion, 2013) that aligns well with the power of family engagement is the Family Check-Up intervention. The Family Check-Up (FCU) intervention was implemented to look at a student's ability to focus on how they can control their own behavior (Fosco et al., 2013). The participants of this study were a group of 593 middle school aged students and their families (Fosco et al., 2013). The methods used were interviews and the data collected was qualitative providing feedback to its participants (Fosco et al., 2013). Interviews
were completed throughout the study (Fosco et al., 2013). This study was sectioned into 3 sessions with assessments and feedback. The first session involved parents only to determine goals, motivation and concern of the child (Fosco et al., 2013). The second session participants completed a questionnaire, both the child and parents (Fosco et al., 2013). The third session consisted of feedback and recommendations for the families to implement at home (Fosco et al., 2013). The results of the study indicated the importance of parental involvement in a child’s academic career and life, long before middle school (Fosco et al., 2013).

**Integration of home and school**

For numerous years, research has shown the importance of family engagement on the child’s success in the classroom (DeSpain, Conderman & Gerzel, 2018). The process of engagement is shared between home and school and is a collaborative tool that fosters a team approach (DeSpain et al., 2018). The relationship formed will be carried with the child and family throughout their school experience (DeSpain et al., 2018). Family engagement demonstrates the family’s awareness of the child’s strengths, weaknesses, and emotional and academic needs (DeSpain et al., 2018). Families are a vital role in a child’s educational team, their efforts to be involved heighten the child’s academic performance along with motivation in the classroom (DeSpain et al., 2018). The relationship formed between home and school is proven to increase the child’s drive to take control of their emotional, social, and academic needs (DeSpain et al., 2018).

A study (Bartle-Haring, Youkin & Day, 2012) conducted using the process of family distance, meaning more than one perspective was considered. Information was collected from both sides of the continuum, students and parents (Bartle-Haring et al., 2012). When there was an increase of engagement from home in school there was a reduction of high school dropout as an
outcome (Bartle-Haring et al., 2012). Gaining information and knowledge throughout this study was completed through observations, interviews and surveys (Bartle-Haring et al., 2012). A total of 372 families were offered the opportunity to participate, however, only 262 agreed (Bartle-Haring et al., 2012). There were many areas addressed throughout the study such as, family and school engagement, routine, and connectedness (Bartle-Haring et al., 2012). The results of this study (Bartle-Haring et al., 2012) indicated an increase in positive parent involvement in their child’s academic and social emotional wellbeing.

It is important to recognize when working with children who struggle to self-regulate, they often learn through relationships rather than on their own (Durlark, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Creating small intervention groups at school can ensure growth in a desired area of need (Wasik, 2008). Small groups allow for individual instruction and relationships to be formed along with self-confidence, and the ability to learn from others (Wasik, 2008). When small groups are offered it allows for the child to reach an appropriate and attainable goal that is created for them (Wasik, 2008). A child’s ability to control their emotions can hinder their learning (Durlark, et. al, 2011). Due to the fact that self-regulation and relationships can affect how and what a child learns, it is of the utmost importance that school and home work together to ensure the best growth of the child (Durlark, et. al, 2011).

Conclusion

Through my review of the literature, I had the pleasure of finding an abundance of information on my topic of research. I have established a deeper understanding of the various components of self-regulation and the influence it has on the child’s success. The literature review started by exploring the components of self-regulation, the effects of the school, how home can impact the child’s ability to self-regulate, and how home and school can work together to create
an environment for the child to be successful. There is a tremendous amount of information out there that is effective for children to be successful in the classroom. The elements that need to be at the forefront are the power of family engagement, willingness of teacher education, and the child’s ability to self-regulate.
Group Overview

Type of Group

The following group is created for children in kindergarten to provide them with tools to manage their emotions in different everyday situations. This group will create awareness in the child’s capacity to regulate their level of awareness. It will also shine light on the way they exhibit their emotions through behaviors to achieve their goals (Kuypers, 2011). The group will focus on regulating one’s emotions, impulses, and sensory needs to meet the needs of the environment, behave appropriately on a social basis and reach goals set for oneself (Kuypers, 2011).

Purpose of Group

The purpose of this group is to help children self-regulate. Self-regulation looks differently for each child, it is the bodies way of being safe and getting what needs to be done for a specific situation (Kuypers, 2011). We all have the ability to self-regulate. It may take more practice and self-awareness for some than others. This can come from past trauma, developmental delays or it can be something that doesn’t have a specific reason. When looking at a child’s ability to self-regulate, it was not often academics that limited a child from the classroom (Kuypers, 2011). More often than not, it was their disruptive behavior and their inability to self-regulate (Kuypers, 2011). Even though children can be taught the exact same self-regulation skills in the school setting, home settings differ and contribute greatly to the ability to use and develop individual self-regulation skills. The hopes of this group is that early intervention will provide the ability for children to self-regulate to be successful in the general education classroom.
Screening

Students who will be considered for this group will be determined by referrals. Students may be referred by teachers and other school staff. The school counselor may also identify appropriate students for the group through interactions with students, such as, small groups, one-on-ones, guidance lessons, or other counseling duties. The group will begin one month after the start of the school year to allow for identification and referrals to be made. Referral submission will be required two weeks prior to the group beginning. All referrals will be considered, screenings will take place soon after referrals are reviewed. Each student that is referred will meet with the school counselor individually to determine their ability to identify emotions, as well as identify students with the highest needs for the group. One week prior to the I Own My Zone group, students who are identified for the group will be given a note to be sent home to parents informing them they will be participating in the group. Prior to starting the school year, parents have signed an inform consent giving permission for their child to participate in counseling activities. By sending the note home it allows for any questions parents may have to be answered prior to starting the group.

Length and Frequency of Group

The length of this group is nine-weeks. The group will meet once a week for 30 minutes at a time. The sessions will be completed in a consecutive manner, the same day of the week, at the same time, and in the same place. If the group leader is unable to conduct a session, the children in the group will be notified right away. The session will be completed on the next scheduled session date. If a child is absent and miss significant information, the school counselor may determine if an individual session with the student is necessary. This would avoid any gaps in knowledge that would be vital in the growth of self-regulation.
Size of the Group

The group will be available to five to eight members at a time. When working intensely with young children it is of the utmost importance the groups remain small (Wasik, 2008). This allows for individualized instruction and to focus desired attention on individual student (Wasik, 2008). Small groups allow for members to form relationships with one another as well as with the group leader.

Closed Group

This group will be closed to ensure confidentiality, cohesion, and participation among group members. Group members will begin group together and end group together. It is important to keep the group consistent for relationships to be formed and growth within the group. Closed groups are more likely to have increased participation in activities and discussions. By keeping the group consistent, it will ensure the goals and norms to stay the same throughout each session. It also increases the chance the goals of the group will be attained.

Group Leader Qualifications

The group leader will be a certified school counselor who has obtained their master’s degree from an accredited program. A co leader may also be valuable to use due to the multifaceted nature of the children. The co leader should have an education background. The group leaders should also have experience in working with children and be familiar with children’s mental health. The group leaders should have knowledge about children’s developmental stages, patience, and high energy when facilitating a group of this nature.
**Group Norms and Goals**

Group goals will be created in a collaborative form within the first session by the group members and school counselor. When creating group goals, it is vital the school counselor be mindful of what is developmentally appropriate and achievable within the 9-week duration for the group.

The group norms and expectations will be created in a collaborative form during the first session. They will be created by the group members and school counselor. All norms and expectations will be age appropriate for the group to ensure understanding and participation from all group members. Examples of age-appropriate norms for this group would be:

- We listen to each other
- What happens in group stays in group (confidentiality)
- We take turns
  - One person talks at a time (Ex: whoever is holding the special stuffy)
- We keep our hands and feet to ourselves
- I can pass

**Evaluation Measure**

To determine if the I Own My Zone group is effective, group members will be provided a pretest at the start of the group and a posttest will be complete during the last session. The pre/posttest will include statements where students will respond by circling a ☺ or a ☹. Examples of statements are, I am able to identify and label my emotions and I am able to appropriately share my feelings with others. The information gathered by the pre/posttest will be used to improve the I Own My Zone group for future use.
I Own My ZONE

A small Group on Self-Regulation
Unit Outline & ASCA Alignment

This 9-week small group uses a narrative approach to help students tell the story of their emotions. As a part of narrative counseling, it is important to remember the child is not the problem, and externalizing their emotions helps to understand how to overcome them. This curriculum could be used in a one-on-one setting as well.

Unit Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with the concepts of Zones.
- Students will increase their emotion vocabulary.
- Students will increase their ability to recognize facial expressions.
- Students will increase awareness of how they feel and look in each zone.
- Students will improve their ability to identify which zone they are in.
- Students will understand that different events change the way they feel.
- Students will practice the power of controlled breathing.
- Students will be able to describe the changes in their body as they practice controlled breathing.
- Students will practice using “I” statements.
- Students will practice ways to ease and release tension.
- Students will practice and create positive self-talk statements.
- Students will practice creative calming strategies.
- Students will identify tools that are helpful for them when they are experiencing big emotions.

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors:

- M.2. Self-Confidence in ability to succeed
- B-SS 3. Create relationships with adults that support success
- B-SS 9. Demonstrate social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment
- B-SMS 7. Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem
- Belief in the development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional, and physical well-being behavior

Materials for Group:

- Check session outline

ASCA ethical code A.7.b states that school counselors should “inform parent/guardian(s) of student participation in a small group.” For this purpose, a parent letter is included.

(Kuypers, 2011)
Dear Parent or Guardian,

______________________________ is invited to join a small group at school with the School Counselor, ___________________________. This group will meet for 9 weeks for about 30 minutes.

This group is called “I Own my Zone” and teaches students that everyone deals with emotions in different ways. We can use strategies to control how we react to situations to contribute to school success.

In the group, we will learn and practice the following skills:

1. Identifying and sharing feelings
2. Controlled breathing strategies
3. Body calming strategies
4. Tension exertion strategies
5. Positive self-talk
6. and MANY MORE!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me! Thank you for partnering in our school counseling program.

----------------------------------------

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4. Tension exertion strategies
5. Positive self-talk
6. and MANY MORE!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me! Thank you for partnering in our school counseling program.
# KINDERGARTEN: I Own my ZONE Referral

Student: __________________________ Date: __________________
Rater: __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Hardly any of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student is able to identify and label their own emotions.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is able to appropriately share their feelings with others.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is able to appropriately and independently calm their body when experiencing escalated feelings.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student uses appropriate methods of exerted energy when experiencing escaladed feelings.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student uses positive self-talk when facing difficult situations or tasks.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is able to effectively and positively cope with feelings.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student's experience of challenge or escalated feelings <strong>does not</strong> limit their ability to appropriately participate in the classroom.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments or observations:**
I Own My Zone

Pre/Post Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read each statement and circle the correct face.</th>
<th>☺</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am able to identify and label my emotions.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to appropriately share my feelings with others.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to appropriately and independently calm my body when experiencing escalated feelings.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use appropriate tools when I am experiencing escalated feelings.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use positive self-talk when facing difficult situations or tasks.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to effectively and positively cope with feelings.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience of challenge or escalated feelings does not limit my ability to appropriately participate in the classroom.</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session 1: Introduction

Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with the concepts of Zones.
- Students will increase their emotion vocabulary.
- Students will increase their ability to recognize facial expressions.

Outline:

- Welcome everyone to the group! Explain that through the next 9-weeks we are going to work together to learn how we can deal with our big feelings.
- “First, we are going to get to know each other so we can feel comfortable working together.”
  - Students will introduce themselves to the group: “my name is ________, and something that helps me feel better when I have big feelings is ________.”
    - Group leader will model first for the students. After each student shares, thank them for sharing with the group.
- Rules: “As a group we need to come up with rules so we are able to trust one another.” Invite students to suggest rules for the group. As rules are suggested, ask students if they can agree upon the rule. If they can, write it on one Group Rules page.
- Pre-Test: The group leader will read the pre-test aloud. The students will circle an ☺ if it is a true statement or ☹ if it is a false statement.
- Activity: Model for the students using play doh big feelings (ex: When I am happy, I choose to draw. When I am sad, I listen to music. When I am angry, I go for a run.) Give students their own tub of play doh and My Feelings & Strategies sheet (I would laminate this before using). Then ask them to complete their big feelings.
  - Share out students’ creations
- Wrap-up: What are some big feelings you have often? What’s one thing you want the group to know before we go?
My Feelings & Strategies
**Session 2: Introduction to Zone**

Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with the concepts of Zones.
- Students will increase their emotion vocabulary.
- Students will increase their ability to recognize facial expressions.

Outline:

- Welcome everyone back and have them share who their teacher is.
- Begin by displaying visuals for students to use as reminders. For example, laminate blue, green, yellow, and red construction paper. This will eventually turn into an interactive activity used throughout the group sessions.
- Explain: “When we think of the color BLUE, we think of the BLUE ZONE. In this zone, we may be feeling lonely, sad, tired, overwhelmed, nervous, etc. When we think of the color GREEN, we think of the GREEN ZONE. In the zone, we may be feeling calm, ready to learn, happy, focused, etc. When we think of the color YELLOW, we think of the YELLOW ZONE. In this zone, we may feel wiggly, frustrated, silly, overwhelmed, excited, etc. When we think of the color RED, we think of the RED ZONE. In this zone, we may feel out of control. We are going to work together to identify which zones we are in with our emotions.”
- Activity: As the group leader reads the book The Way I Feel, by Janan Cain aloud, the students will identify what zone the character is in throughout the book.
  - Example: “Friends, can you tell me what zone the character is in if she is scared?”
- Activity: After completing the read aloud, we will look through images and decide what zone each individual is in. We will then create posters using the colored construction paper.
  - Example of the finished product
- Wrap-Up: To leave group, the students will identify the correct zone of the emotion visual (Appendix)

(Kuypers, 2011)
Attach to Construction paper of appropriate zone color

BLUE ZONE

GREEN ZONE

YELLOW ZONE

RED ZONE
Session 3: Me in My Zone

Objectives:

- Students will gain increase awareness of how they feel and look in each zone
- Students will improve their ability to identify which zone they are in
- Students will understand that different events change the way they feel

Outline:

- Welcome everyone back and have them share what zone they are currently in.
- Explain: Today we are going to create personal Zone charts. “What does the work personal mean?” Allow for think time. Call on a student.
  - “Personal means, it is yours and it will be about YOU!”
  - “This chart will go with you back to your classroom.”
- Activity: The group leader will take pictures on each child in each zone.
  - While the leader is completing this task one-on-one, the other children will complete stations. You can rotate however it best fit the group dynamics.
    - Station one: Play Doh activity for session 1
    - Station two: Matching emotions to zones from session 2
    - Station three: The student will choose a zone and illustrate a time they were in that particular zone (teacher will have an example).
- Once everyone’s pictures are complete, assembling will take place. The charts will be laminated and delivered to the student by the end of the day.
- Wrap-up: “How are we going to use our charts in class?” Wait for response. “We are going to use them to help us become aware of the zone we are in. It will help us recognize if we are becoming less regulated and needing a break.”

(Kuypers, 2011)
Session 4: How do I Feel?

Objectives:

- Students will gain awareness of how they feel and look in each Zone.
- Students will improve their ability to identify which zone they are in.
- Students will understand that different events change the way they feel.

Outline:

- Welcome everyone back! Ask the students, “how have you used your personal chart you created last session?” Ask each student to share one by one.
- The leader will go over the Zones anchor charts the group has created in previous sessions.
- Activity: The leader will read the book *On Monday When it Rains*. As the leader reads the book, he/she will ask students questions. Such as, “what zone is he in? How do you know he is in that zone? etc.”
  - This will help the students recognize that different events can change the way we feel.
- To end the session, ask the group to reflect on a situation from the book they can relate to.
  - Example, I might illustrate myself riding bike to my friends, which makes me happy. I am in the green zone.
- Students will share out their illustrations before the group session ends.

(Kuypers, 2011)
Session 5: Purposeful Breathing

Objectives:

- Students will participate in controlled breathing activities
- Students will be able to describe the physiological changes in their bodies as a result of controlled breathing

Outline:

- Welcome everyone back! Ask students to share a feeling they have felt this week.
- Explain: “Last week we talked about different feelings we have felt. Today, we are going to practice some breathing strategies that can help calm our bodies when we notice those body clues we have talked about.”
- Instructions: “Sometimes when we have big feelings, how does our body tell us we are feeling those feelings?”
  - EX: Heart beats fast, sweaty palms, breathing faster, etc.
- “When we notice our bodies giving us those cues, we can take slow and controlled breaths to gain control of our bodies.”
  - Have the students move to a comfortable spot and close their eyes
    - Say: “Breath in deep through your mouth, exhale out through your nose”
  - “Today, we are going to get our hearts pumping fast and then breath together to help us calm down”
- Activity: You can have students do many things to get their heart rate up. A few examples are running in place for 2 minutes, completing a just dance video, etc. At the end of the time/exercise, ask students to place a hand on their heart and share out how their bodies are feeling. Then, have the students return to their comfortable spots and guide them through a controlled breathing activity.
  - Triangle Breathing: Start at the bottom left of the triangle. Breathe in for three counts as you trace the first side of the triangle. Hold your breath for three counts as you trace the second side of the triangle. Breathe out for three counts as you trace the final side of the triangle. You have just completed one deep breath.
Session 5: Continued

- Square Breathing: Start at the bottom right of the square. Breathe in for four counts as you trace the first side of the square. Hold your breath for four counts as you trace the second side of the square. Breathe out for four counts as you trace the third side of the square. Hold your breath for four counts as you trace the final side of the square.
- Star Breathing: Start at the “Breathe in” side on the star. Trace your finger over the “breathe in” side of the point. Hold your breath when your finger gets to the tip of the point. Breathe out as you trace your finger over the other side of the point. Keep going until you reach where you started.
- Lazy 8 Breathing: Start with the eight on its side and start in the middle. Go up to the left and trace the left part if the 8 with your finger while you breath in. When you get to the middle of the eight again, breath out while you trace the eight part of the 8 with your finger.

- If there is time, have students jog in place for 2 minutes and choose a breathing strategy to use when complete.
  - Once complete, have students reflect on how their body responded to the breathing strategy they chose.

- Wrap-up: “Sometimes, we have big feelings that can cause our hearts to race, which can cause our breathing to get faster. This can be scary and make it hard to think. But lucky, we now have breathing strategies to use to slow down our fast breathing and racing heart.” Challenge your students to try breathing strategies throughout the week.

SUGGESTION: Create this board for Kindergarten classroom →
SUGGESTION: Laminate before use
SUGGESTION: Laminate before use
SUGGESTION: Laminate before use
SUGGESTION: Laminate before use
Session 6: Positive Self-talk

Objective:

- Students will practice and create positive self-talk statements

Outline:

- Welcome the students back! Ask the students, “How did this week go? Did you use any breathing techniques to help you calm down?”
- Explain: “This week we are going to talk about positive self-talk. What is positive self-talk? Allow response.
  o “It is things we can say to ourselves when we have big feelings to remind us that we are awesome people, that we have great things in our lives, and that we can handle our big feelings.”
- Activity 2: The group leader will say, “I want you to think of three thoughts about yourself. For example, I am smart. I am going to give you 1 minute to think of something.”
  o As students respond, the group leader will make a list on the board.
    ▪ Examples:
      - I am brave
      - I am smart
      - I am kind
      - I am a good helper
      - I am loved
      - I can take 5 deep breaths
      - I am a good friend
- Activity 2: Each student will get a Ziploc bag. In the bag will be a string, 6 beads, and a key (for students to bring home to their parents). As a group, we are going to make self-talk bracelets. Each student will get to wear their bracelet from group as a reminder to use positive self-talk toward ourself and others.
- Wrap-up: The group leader will ask each group member to share what one bead represents as they exit.
Positive Self-talk Bracelet

- I am brave
- I am loved
- I can take 5 deep breaths
- I am smart
- I am kind to myself
- STUDENT CHOICE
• STUDENT CHOICE

Session 7: Release the Tension

Objective:

• Students will participate in tension releasing activities.

Outline:

• Welcome students back! Ask students, “What positive self-talk have you used throughout the week?” Allow for response.
• Explain: “Today we are going to talk about things that make us worry. What makes you worry? Allow for response. What does your body feel like (cues your body gives)?
• Instruction: Read Ruby Finds a Worry or Wilma Jean the Worry Machine. “Sometimes our feelings feel really big, so big that we feel like we are not in control anymore. But remember, we are in control of our bodies and we can use our strengths to help calm ourselves.”
• Share: Ask each student to finish the sentence, “My body feels tense and tight when __________.”
• Activity: Students will sit in a comfortable space on the floor. Ask students to hug their knees to chest and wrap their arms around their legs. Students will hold this position for 60 seconds. At the end of the 60 seconds, ask students to describe how their bodies feel. Ask them to name their emotion, such as, scared, angry, worried, etc.
  o Make a list on the board of other activities that releases tension
    ▪ squats
    ▪ push on the wall
    ▪ jumping jacks
    ▪ hop in place
    ▪ dance
    ▪ run
  o Activity: Assign each activity to a number on a dice, example, number 1 is jumping jacks, do 40 of them (Roll and release activity).
• Wrap-up: Ask students, what pose was their favorite and which pose made them feel powerful and strong?
Lastly, ask the students, “when could you use these movements to help you feel calm in the future?”
Roll & Release Activity

Do 30 **jumping jacks**

Do 15 **Wall Pushups**

**Hop in place** for 60 seconds

Do 20 **squats**

**Run in place** for 60 seconds

**Dance** for 2 minutes
Session 8: Creative Interests

Objectives:

- Students will practice creative calming strategies

Outline:

- Welcome students back! Ask student, “what breathing strategy did you try and how did it go?”
- Explain: “The last few weeks we have been practicing different strategies to help calm us down. Such as breathing strategies, positive self-talk, and yoga relaxation. How do you feel when you use those tools?”
  - EX: “How do you feel when you look at your bracelet and remember to say positive things to yourself?” Allow for response
- Explain: “Today, we are going to practice more strategies you can use when you have big feelings. Sometimes, we do not have time or space to get up and move around with our movement strategies, but we still want to get our feelings out in a safe way. When this occurs, we can use our creativity to express our feelings. We could draw a picture of a calming place, write in our journal, fold paper into something, read a book, etc. Today, we are going to give these a try and see what works best for you.”
- Activity: Students will get about 5 minutes to try each suggestion from above.
  - Activity 1: Draw a picture
  - Activity 2: Write in a journal (provide a notebook or have students make one)
  - Activity 3: Fold paper into something (you could provide student with step-by-step instructions)
  - Activity 4: Read silently
- Reflect:
  - Which of these strategies did you think helped to calm you?
  - When do you think these strategies would be helpful?
- Wrap-Up: We are out of time friends! This week, I challenge you to try out these strategies. When we meet next week, we will discuss about what worked and what did not work?
Session 9: Creating our Toolbox & Group Termination

Objectives

- Students will try calming tools and identify tools that may be helpful for them when experiencing big emotions
- Students will review calming strategies

Outline:

- Welcome students back! “We are going to get started right away. It is our last session together. What is one strategy you have learned so far that works for you?” Allow responses.
- Explain: “Last week we talk about how we can use creativity to help with our big emotions. We practiced drawing, journaling, folding paper, and silent reading. This week we are going to try out some of my calming tools that can help us feel calm when we are experiencing big feelings.”
  - “Everyone will have a chance to try all the tools.”
- The leader will demonstrate how to use each tool appropriately. As the group leader is demonstrating each tool, make sure to give examples of feels that may work with the tool. “For example, when I feel sad, I like to use the glitter jar because its soothes me watching the glitter float from one end to the other.”
- Activity: Set each tool out around the room, give each student 1-2 minute with each tool (set a timer). After each student has had a chance to use the calming tools collect them.
- Reflect: How did your body feel while we did this activity? Which calming tool helped you feel most calm? When do you think you would use these in the future?
- Activity: Allow student time to cut out the cards (with the tools) that worked for them and Velcro them into their tool box (Velcro is used so tools can be switched out encase they do not work for the student down the road).
- Wrap up: “We all have big feelings. I hope you have learned that those are all okay. We have learned lots of strategies we can use when we have those big feelings. What are some strategies we have learned? Allow responses. Thank the students for participating and remind them you are always there when they need. Give students their completion certification.”
I Own My Zone
OFFICAL EXPERT

Awarded to

___________________________

By

_____________________________________________________________________

School Counselor
__________’s Toolbox
**Calming Tools:** Laminate before student use
Critical Analysis

Strengths

Strengths of this manual include that it utilizes evidence-based models and addresses a population in need. This manual also provides early intervention which allows for greater growth and facilitation of self-regulation. It is important that this manual utilizes multiple resources and mediums of delivery to help drive group members engagement as well as creativity. The activities are all inclusive for each member in that they are solely based off of the group member and their experience with self-regulation. This allows for the group facilitator to modify activities should they be needed. One last strength of this manual is the developmentally appropriate language. It is specific for the population this manual serves. Therefore, it is essential for developmentally appropriate language to be used for members to effectively gain the knowledge and skill to successfully self-regulate.

Areas of Improvement

There are two areas of improvement for this manual, they are, family involvement and a co-facilitator. First, family involvement is an essential component in a child’s ability to self-regulate. This manual provides topics covered within the group as well as a consent for the child to participate. However, the author felt that this manual could grow to include parent meetings and/or a communication logs to explain the knowledge and skills their child would be learning throughout the group. This may help to ensure the importance of the group and the child’s participation.

The other area of improvement for this manual maybe adding an additional group facilitator to assist in the group management. This would create more one-on-one and smaller
group opportunity. The author’s hope is to train paras and teachers to help facilitate and guide the use of strategies learned within the group for the child to be successful in the classroom.
References


School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405–432.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x


doi:10.1016/j.tics.2012.01.006

doi:10.1177/0040059915626134


Images:

- Educlips—Emotions, Face Clip Art Bundle, Teachers Pay Teachers
- Kelly Benefield—Borders: Doodle Borders Set 1, Teachers Pay Teachers
- Sarah Pecorino Illustration—Dot Dudes Clip Art Bundle 1, Teachers Pay Teachers
- Ruby Finds a Worry: https://clubs.scholastic.com/ruby-finds-a-worry/9781338638288-rc0-us.html
• The Way I Feel: https://www.amazon.com/Way-I-Feel-Janan-Cain/dp/1884734723
• Breathing Activities: https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids