

Regulation Breaks by Zone

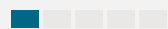
Read the student's *energy level* first, then run the sequence for that zone.
Energy tells you what the body needs; the zone tells you where to start.

ENERGY SCALE



Blue Zone

Low energy



Tired, slow, withdrawn,
sad, hard to get going.

CHOOSE THE OPENING BY WHAT YOU SEE

If upset or teary

1 • Calming



2 • Organizing

If tired or sluggish

1 • Movement



2 • Organizing

Green Zone

Just right — the goal



Calm, focused, available
for learning.

MAINTAIN — A BREAK HERE KEEPS ENERGY WHERE IT IS

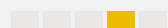
1 • Movement



2 • Organizing

Yellow Zone

High energy



Wiggly, silly, worried,
frustrated — still has
some control.

SETTLE FIRST, THEN SPEND THE ENERGY

1 • Calming or organizing



2 • Movement



3 • Organizing

Red Zone

Highest energy



Overwhelmed and out of
control — yelling,
hitting, running, elated.

DO NOT BRING AN ESCALATED STUDENT INTO THE SENSORY ROOM

1 • Space, safety, co-regulation



2 • Slow heavy work



3 • Organizing

Stay close and calm, few words, low voice. Get the student back to yellow first before entering sensory room — only add slow heavy work once they can follow a simple direction.

IF ESCALATING

Stop the sequence and go to a calming strategy at any point if the student is visibly escalating or dysregulating further. Every break ends with an organizing activity.

The three activity types

Each step in a sequence is one of these. Match the activity to the energy you are trying to change.

Movement

CHANGES ENERGY

*Heavy & rhythmic
to bring energy down*

Resistance through the muscles and joints — pushing, pulling, carrying, squeezing, hanging. Weighted balls, wall pushes, crash pads, therapy band, the squeeze machine, kickboxing, playdough or slime.

*Alerting
to bring energy up*

Whole-body activity that wakes the system up — jumping, swinging, bouncing, animal walks, scooter board, obstacle course.

Calming

LOWERS DISTRESS

Slow, quiet, predictable input. Deep breathing, slow rocking, deep pressure or a weighted blanket, the vibration plate, a book, dim light, less noise and less talking from adults.

Organizing

ALWAYS THE LAST
STEP

Focused work with a clear beginning and end. Blowing bubbles, sorting and stacking, puzzles, a seek-and-find book, playdough or slime, imaginative play, kickboxing follow-the-pattern, a task-focused obstacle course, catching and throwing a ball on the vibration plate — then a short routine that signals the break is finished.

Red Zone

SLOW HEAVY WORK,
NO EQUIPMENT

Stay in the hallway or go outside. Offer, don't direct — one-two short choices at a time, and accept a no. Visuals are helpful; the less words spoken the better.

- Wall pushes, or push hands together palm to palm
- A slow lap of the hallway or the field, walking beside the adult
- Carry something heavy — heavy books, a box, reams of paper
- Push a chair, a cart, or a garbage can down the hall
- Pull hard on a therapy band or a jump rope held by the adult

Slow and rhythmic, not fast or playful — fast movement pushes an escalated student further up. Once they are back in yellow, move to the sensory room to continue regulation.

Before you go back to class

These sequences are suggestions for organizing a dysregulated system by zone. Individual student needs vary — collaborate with OT to structure breaks that support each student's regulation.

Complete the check in / check out form after every break so OT can see what happened and help shape the next one.