



## Family Activity

# Zen Zone

## What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Learning isn't limited to science, math, reading, and writing. Social and emotional learning—which helps children understand their emotions, manage their behavior, and learn how to interact with others—is crucial too! There are five focus areas in social and emotional learning: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Skills. Each area focuses on skills that can help children do well in school, form healthy relationships, and develop into successful adults.

## How does this activity relate to Social and Emotional Learning?

Children need constant opportunities to strengthen their social and emotional skills, before, during, and after school. That's why this activity is specially designed to help you bring social and emotional learning into your home in a fun way that will benefit everyone who lives there! As you work together to follow the directions below, each family member will strengthen their Self-Management and Responsible Decision-Making skills:

- **Self-Management** focuses on our ability to control our behaviors and regulate our emotions in different situations. It also focuses on our ability to set goals and work toward them. Another way to look at Self-Management is: *Life's full of surprises that make me feel different ways. If I can control myself, I'll have much better days.*
- **Responsible Decision-Making** focuses on our ability to make positive decisions and take responsibility for the outcomes of our choices. Another way to look at Responsible Decision-Making is: *I understand the choices I make should be what's best for me to do, and what happens is on me and not any of you.*

## Family Activity Guide

### Discuss

Talk with your family about what they do when they feel angry, upset, sad, frustrated, or other strong emotions. Do they ever take a few minutes to calm down *before* they decide what to do next? Why might this be a good idea? Bring up the advantages of taking some time to cool down: You have a chance to take a deep breath, clear your head, and really think about what happened and how you feel before you decide how you should act!



## Create

Work with your family to create a Zen Zone, a special chill-out or cool-down area in your home where anyone can go when they need a few minutes to take a break!

- 1. Select a Spot:** Choose an area in your home that's a little out of the way and not the center of attention. A quiet section of the couch, a corner, or a chair that's tucked away could all work well!
- 2. Make it "Zen":** Think about what you can add or take away from this area to make it as calming as possible. Remember: You want to be able to sit here, relax, and recharge. Some ideas that could help make this space cozy and relaxing include:
  - Blankets
  - Pillows
  - Stuffed animals
  - A stress ball, putty, or fidget toy
  - Coloring book and coloring supplies
  - Lights
  - Music
  - Books
  - Favorite pictures or pieces of art (either made by your family members or someone else!)

Once you have brainstormed and discussed how to transform your space, work together to make it happen. Try to stick with materials that you can already find in your home!

- 3. Think About It:** Writing or drawing can be a great way to calm down, think, and reflect. Read through the *Think About It* idea starters as a family and explain that these can be used as a starting point if someone wants to write or draw while they're in the Zen Zone. Then find a blank notebook or attach several pieces of paper together to make your own notepad. Tape or glue the *Think About It* idea starters onto the front cover or copy a different idea starter onto each page. Then place it somewhere in your new space!
- 4. Get Cool:** While writing and drawing may be helpful for some people, there are other ways to cool down too! Read through the *Get Cool* activity ideas together and then come up with more ideas that would work especially well for your own family members. After all, everyone is unique! Once your family has added a few ideas of your own, cut out each idea, and place them in a jar, basket, or other container. Label the container "Get Cool" and place it in or near the Zen Zone.
- 5. Name Your Space:** Now that your space has everything it needs to help you relax and reflect, it's time to come up with a name for this new part of your home. (The *Zen Zone* name was just created to help you get started!) Brainstorm ideas together, then narrow them down to one and write your family's favorite on the *Name Your Space* banner. Don't forget to hang it up!

## Use it!

Now that your family's own Zen Zone is all set up, it's time to put it to good use! Encourage all family members to use this area as a safe place to take a break whenever they need to calm down, reflect, and/or think about their choices. Ask family members to promise to respect each other's time when they are here. Someone who is in this area should be allowed to think without interruption.

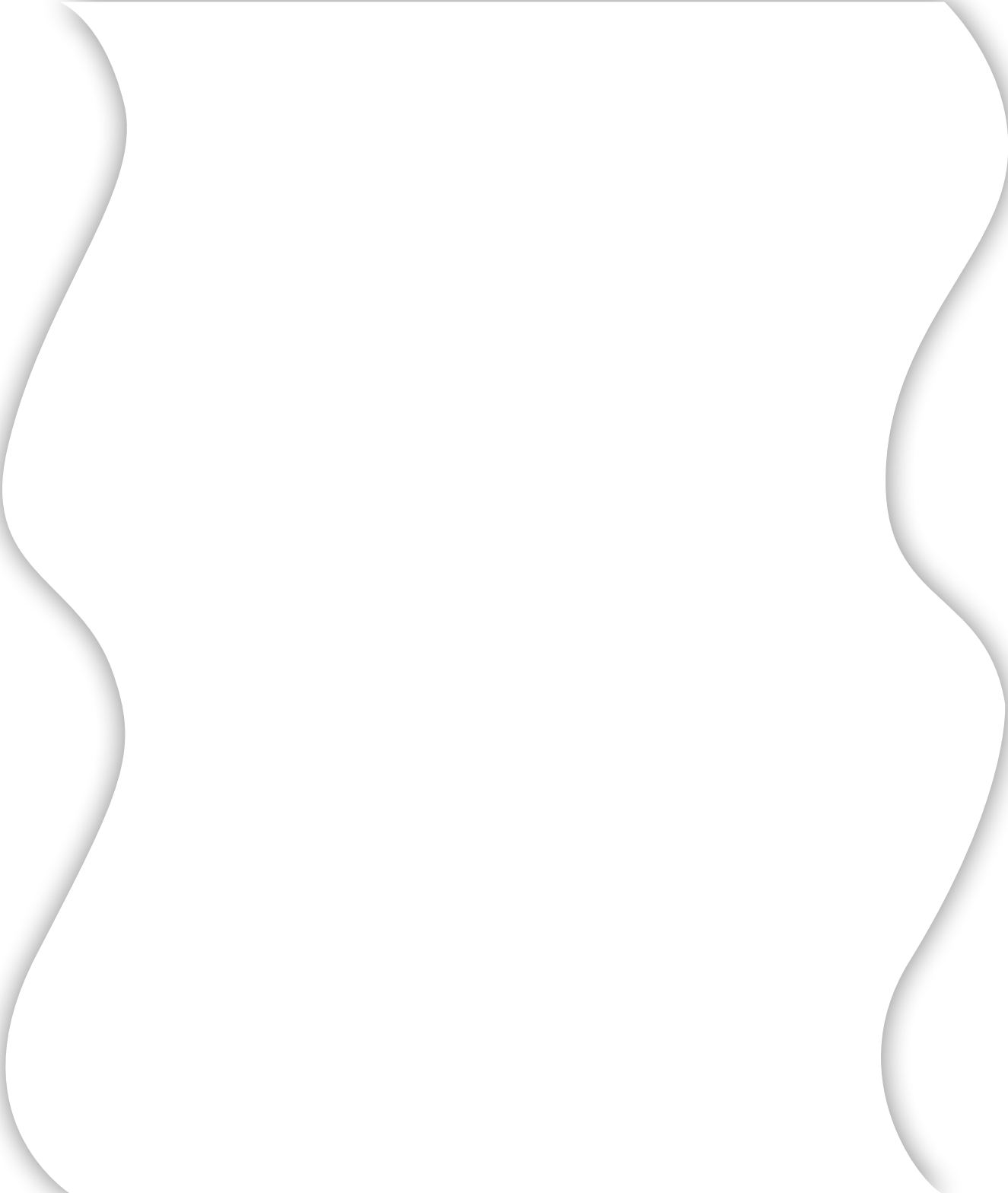
- I'm proud that I...
- I wish that I...
- I wonder...
- I feel...
- I think...
- I'm confused because...
- I was surprised when...
- Next time...
- I keep thinking about...
- I learned...
- I will try to...
- I don't understand...
- I felt frustrated when...
- I can do better by...
- A positive choice for me is...
- I should...
- I shouldn't...
- If...

- Close your eyes and picture your favorite place.
- Close your eyes and focus on breathing in and out.
- Jump up and down.
- Count to 100...by 1s, 2s, or 5s.
- Count backward from 100.
- Draw a picture.
- Read a book.
- Listen to music.
- Dance!
- Ask an adult if you can play outside or go for a walk.
- Push against a wall. As you do, count to 10. Then do it again 3 more times!
- Write! Either write whatever comes to mind or use a *Think About It* Idea Starter.

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# Name Your Space!

Once your family has agreed on a name, write it on the banner below and decorate the blank space. Then cut it out and hang it up!



## Wings Words to Live By

I soar with wings.  
Let me tell you why. I learn lots of  
skills that help me reach the sky.

I love and accept who I am on the  
inside and know my emotions are  
nothing to hide.

Life's full of surprises that make  
me feel different ways.  
If I can control myself,  
I'll have much better days.

I understand the choices I make  
should be what's best for me to do,  
and what happens is on me  
and not any of you.

I understand that others are unique.  
I want to learn more about everyone  
I meet. I want to step into their shoes  
and see what they are going through.

I am a friend. I support and trust.  
Working together is a must.  
Kind and caring I will be.  
I listen to you. You listen to me.

I soar with wings.  
I just told you why.  
All of these things are why I fly high.

