

The Window Of Tolerance



How Trauma can Affect your

Window of Tolerance



HYPERAROUSAL

Anxious, Angry, Out of Control Overwhelmed
Your body wants to fight or run away. It's not something you choose - these reactions just take over.

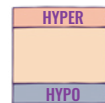
When stress and trauma shrink in your window of tolerance, it doesn't take much to throw you off balance.



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

When you are in your Window of Tolerance, you feel like you can deal with whatever's happening in your life. You might feel stress or pressure but it doesn't bother you too much. This is the ideal place to be.

Working with a practitioner can help expand your window of tolerance so that you are more able to cope with challenges.



HYPOAROUSAL

Spacy, Zoned Out, Numb, Frozen.
Your body wants to shut down. It's not something you choose - these reactions just take over.

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The “window of tolerance” is a concept used in psychology and trauma-informed care to describe an individual’s optimal range of arousal or activation in response to stressors. It refers to the zone in which a person can effectively cope with and adapt to stressors without becoming overwhelmed or dissociated.

The term “window of tolerance” was popularized by Dr. Daniel Siegel, a renowned psychiatrist and researcher in the field of interpersonal neurobiology. While Dr. Siegel contributed to its popularization, it’s important to note that the concept builds upon earlier work in the field of trauma and stress response.

The window of tolerance is useful for understanding how an individual’s nervous system functions in response to stress and trauma. It helps to explain how people can shift between different states of arousal, such as hyperarousal (overactivation) or hypoarousal (underactivation), when faced with stressors.

Within the window of tolerance, individuals can engage in effective problem-solving, communication, and emotional regulation. They are more likely to be open to new experiences, exhibit flexibility, and maintain healthy relationships. When individuals exceed the upper limit of their window, they may experience states of hyperarousal, such as anxiety, anger, or panic. Conversely, if they drop below the lower limit, they may enter states of hypoarousal, leading to feelings of numbness, dissociation, or depression. Understanding one’s window of tolerance can provide valuable insights into their stress response patterns and help identify when they might be approaching their limits or struggling to stay within their optimal range. It can guide individuals and professionals in developing strategies to regulate emotions, manage stress, and promote overall well-being.

It’s important to note that the window of tolerance is a dynamic concept that can vary among individuals and can be influenced by factors such as past trauma, resilience, and overall mental health. Additionally, the concept is often used in the context of trauma-informed care and interventions, where understanding and respecting an individual’s window of tolerance is crucial for providing appropriate support and avoiding retraumatization.

