

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

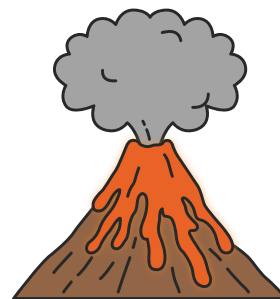
The Window of Tolerance is a concept that describes the optimal range of emotional and physiological arousal in which a person can function effectively and feel balanced. Within this window, individuals can manage stress, think rationally, engage well socially, and process emotions and experiences.

When outside the Window of Tolerance, individuals may experience hyper-arousal (e.g., anxiety, anger, panic) or hypo-arousal (e.g., numbness, disconnection, lethargy). When in those arousal states, someone has less capacity to respond to situations as they normally would and these other reactions can take over. The size of someone's window varies from person to person and is influenced by factors like chronic stress, trauma, low social support, substance abuse, environmental stressors, etc.

HYPER-AROUSAL (FIGHT-FLIGHT)

Too much arousal. Symptoms can include:

- Anxiety or panic
- Emotional outbursts
- Hypervigilance
- Physical or Emotional aggression
- Feeling out of control



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE (OPTIONAL ZONE)

You are high functioning. You experience:

- Emotional stability
- Clear, focused thinking
- Presented and engaged in your environment
- Comfortable body and energy levels

HYPO-AROUSAL (FREEZE)

Too little arousal. Symptoms can include:

- Numb
- Disconnected
- Shut down
- Low energy
- Difficulty thinking or moving



EXPANDING YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Counseling helps expand your Window of Tolerance by teaching you tools to manage stress and regulate your emotions more effectively. Through techniques like mindfulness, grounding, and changing thinking patterns, individuals learn to handle challenges without becoming overwhelmed or shutting down. Therapy also provides a safe space to process past traumas and unresolved emotions that may be narrowing your tolerance. Over time, with consistent practice and support, you build resilience, develop healthier coping strategies, and increase your capacity to stay balanced in a wider range of situations.

TOOLS TO USE WHEN IN HYPER-AROUSAL

- *Deep Breathing:* Practice slow, diaphragmatic breathing to calm your nervous system.
- *Limit Stimulation:* Reduce noise, lights, or other distractions by creating a calm, quiet environment.
- *Journal:* Writing out your thoughts can help release emotional intensity and organize overwhelming feelings.
- *Movement:* Do light activities like walking, stretching, or yoga to release pent-up energy and slow the body down.
- *Self Soothe:* Listen to relaxing music, pet an animal, hold something comforting, or take a shower.
- *Challenge your Thoughts:* Think of alternative, more realistic perspectives or repeat a helpful phrase like "These emotions are uncomfortable and they'll pass."

TOOLS TO USE WHEN IN HYPO-AROUSAL

- *Engage Your Senses:* Use stimulating sensory input, like holding something cold, smelling a strong scent, or listening to upbeat music.
- *Movement:* Do engaging exercises (e.g. jumping jacks) or take a brisk walk to increase your energy levels.
- *Brighten Your Environment:* Open curtains, turn on lights, or get outside in the sunshine to increase alertness.
- *Energizing Activities:* Participate in a hobby or do something enjoyable, like playing a game, engaging with a pet or child, or dancing.
- *Connect with Others:* Spend time in conversation with someone you trust or attend a social event.

