

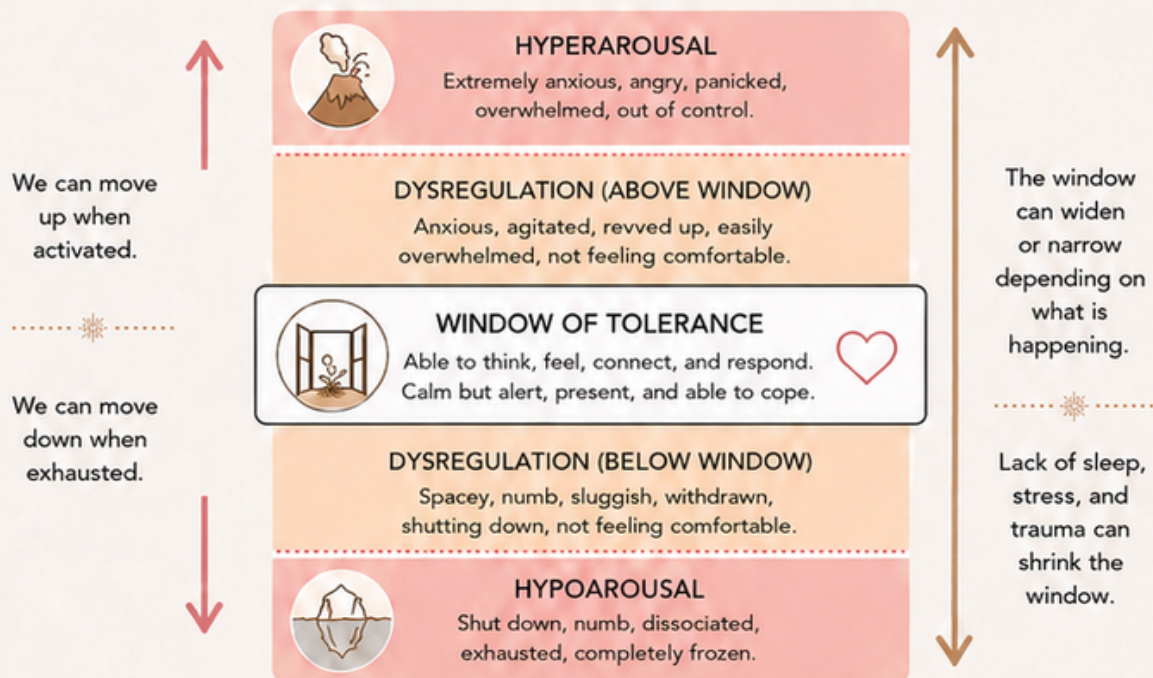


The Window of Tolerance

The window of tolerance is the zone where a person is usually able to think, feel, connect, and respond in ways that feel manageable.

This window is not fixed. It can change from day to day, and even at different times of the same day. It may be wider when a person is rested, nourished, supported, and feeling safe. It may become narrower when a person is tired, hungry, stressed, overwhelmed, unwell, or reminded of difficult experiences.

This is normal. Everyone moves in and out of their window of tolerance.



There are two kinds of nervous system care:



Expanding the Window of Tolerance

Eating regularly, sleeping well, moving the body, reducing stress, connecting with safe people, attending therapy, and building routines.



Using first aid tools in the moment

These are tools that can be used when someone is already outside their window of tolerance.



Just like a first aid kit has different items for different needs, the nervous system may need different tools depending on whether a person is feeling highly activated or shut down.

A bandage may help with a small cut, but it will not be the right support for a burn. In the same way, one regulation tool may help in one situation but not in another. The same tool may also work well for one person and not work for someone else.

That is okay. This worksheet is not about finding the 'perfect' tool. It is about noticing what happens in your nervous system and identifying what works for you.



When I Am Outside My Window



When a person is outside their window of tolerance, the nervous system at any given time moves in one of two directions.



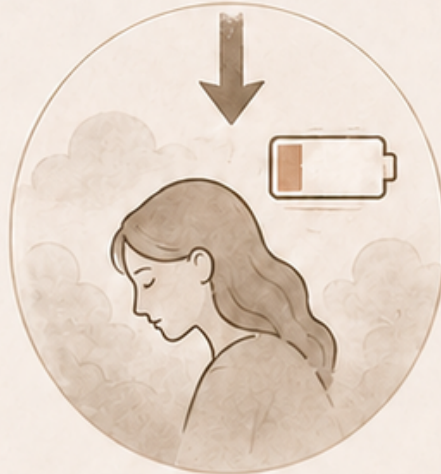
Hyperarousal

Hyperarousal is when the nervous system becomes **highly activated**.

This may feel like being **overwhelmed, anxious, panicky, angry, restless, agitated, or unable to settle**.

A person may feel the urge to fight, run, fix, argue, explain, control, escape, or seek reassurance.

Hyperarousal is not "overreacting". It is the nervous system trying to respond to something it experiences as too much, too fast, or unsafe.



Hypoarousal

Hypoarousal is when the nervous system becomes **under-activated or shut down**.

This may feel like being **numb, frozen, foggy, disconnected, flat, heavy, collapsed, or unable to respond**.

A person may withdraw, stop communicating, avoid support, or say "I'm fine" even when they are struggling.

Hypoarousal is not laziness, rudeness, or not caring. It is the nervous system trying to protect itself by slowing down, disconnecting, or conserving energy.



What Do I Notice First?



People notice nervous system changes in different ways.

Some people notice changes in their body first.

Some notice changes in their thoughts.

Some notice emotions, sensory changes, or changes in how they relate to other people.

There is no right or wrong place to start. The aim is to notice the signs that show up most clearly for you.

When I Am Hyperaroused, I May Notice:



Body

- ☐ I find it difficult to relax
- ☐ My heartbeat feels fast or racing
- ☐ My breathing feels fast, shallow, or excessive
- ☐ My muscles feel stiff or tense
- ☐ I notice tingling or twitching
- ☐ I can be easily startled
- ☐ I notice hot flushes or sweating
- ☐ My hands or feet feel cold
- ☐ I have trouble sleeping
- ☐ Other: _____



Thoughts

- ☐ My thoughts feel fast or racing
- ☐ My thoughts feel repetitive
- ☐ My thoughts feel worrying
- ☐ My thoughts feel intrusive
- ☐ My thinking feels scattered
- ☐ My memory feels poor or unreliable
- ☐ I find it difficult to make decisions
- ☐ I feel a need to fix things immediately
- ☐ Other: _____



Feelings

- ☐ I feel anxious
- ☐ I feel panicky
- ☐ I feel angry
- ☐ I feel irritable
- ☐ I feel fearful
- ☐ I feel overwhelmed
- ☐ I notice emotional highs and lows
- ☐ I experience flashbacks or nightmares
- ☐ Other: _____



Senses

- ☐ I notice sounds more than usual, such as humming, ticking, clicking, or background noise
- ☐ Lights feel too bright, or I notice visual clutter more than usual
- ☐ Touch feels uncomfortable, including physical touch, clothing, or textures
- ☐ Smells feel stronger than usual and may cause headaches or nausea
- ☐ Taste feels different, such as bitter, metallic, or flat
- ☐ I notice too many things at once
- ☐ I feel crowded, trapped, or overstimulated
- ☐ Other: _____



Social Capacity

- ☐ I notice reduced empathy or patience for others
- ☐ My threshold for annoyance feels lower than usual
- ☐ I want to argue, defend, explain, or prove myself
- ☐ I over-please or over-explain to neutralise conflict
- ☐ I find it hard to listen
- ☐ I interrupt more than usual
- ☐ I want to leave or escape
- ☐ I have no energy for small talk
- ☐ Other: _____



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When I Am Hypoaroused, I May Notice:



Body

- ☐ My body feels heavy
- ☐ My energy feels low
- ☐ I look or feel pale, drained, or tired
- ☐ I have a fixed stare or glassy eyes
- ☐ My movements feel slow
- ☐ My posture feels collapsed or floppy
- ☐ I feel frozen
- ☐ I find it difficult to start tasks
- ☐ Other: _____



Thoughts

- ☐ My mind feels blank
- ☐ I cannot think
- ☐ My responses feel slow
- ☐ My speech feels slower than usual
- ☐ My thinking feels spacey or foggy
- ☐ I find it difficult to make decisions
- ☐ I lose track of what is happening
- ☐ I feel like there is no point
- ☐ Other: _____



Feelings

- ☐ I feel disconnected
- ☐ I feel flat
- ☐ I feel numb
- ☐ I feel apathetic
- ☐ I feel no motivation
- ☐ I feel a lack of meaning
- ☐ I feel hopeless
- ☐ I feel far away from myself or others
- ☐ Other: _____



Senses

- ☐ Things around me feel flat or unreal
- ☐ Distance feels distorted
- ☐ The room feels foggy or far away
- ☐ My body feels distant from me
- ☐ My body feels numb
- ☐ I do not easily notice hunger, thirst, tiredness, or pain
- ☐ It takes longer than usual for me to respond or react
- ☐ Other: _____



Social Capacity

- ☐ I avoid people
- ☐ I do not seek support
- ☐ I have low or no eye contact
- ☐ I say "I'm fine" even when I am not
- ☐ I stop replying or communicating
- ☐ I find it hard to speak
- ☐ Connection feels too tiring
- ☐ Other: _____



Tools I Could Try for Hyperarousal



- ☐ Box breathing or a couple of physiological sighs
- ☐ Stepping away from noise, people, or demands
- ☐ Lowering lights or reducing visual clutter
- ☐ Taking time to describe five things I can see, connect with four textures I can feel, describe three things I can hear, two things I can smell, and one thing I can taste
- ☐ Slowing down my body movements on purpose, such as taking slower steps when walking
- ☐ Gently stretching, shaking out tension, or dropping my shoulders and jaw
- ☐ Listening to calming music
- ☐ Using a weighted blanket, cushion, or plushie
- ☐ Using a fidget, such as playdough, Blu Tack, putty, a stress ball, or a spinner
- ☐ Lowering pressure to perform or needing to check things off the list right away
- ☐ Asking for space
- ☐ Speaking to a safe person
- ☐ Separating facts from fears
- ☐ Other: _____



When I Am Hyperaroused

Use this space to identify the tools that may work best for you.

When I notice:	I could:



Tools I Could Try for Hypoarousal



- ☐ Micro movements, such as moving my eyes, fingers, toes, or hands
- ☐ Sitting upright, standing up, or stretching my neck and shoulders
- ☐ Humming
- ☐ Focusing on one small next step
- ☐ Washing my face with water that is cooler than usual
- ☐ Drinking water that is cooler than usual
- ☐ Sitting near sunlight or opening the blinds
- ☐ Using a strong but safe taste, such as mint, a drop of lime, or a tiny pinch of salt
- ☐ Listening to music that brings me back, music with rhythm or a little more energy
- ☐ Doing a simple task with my hands
- ☐ Other: _____



When I Am Hypoaroused

Use this space to identify the tools that may work best for you.

When I notice:	I could: