

Living Within The Window of Tolerance: The Different Zones of Arousal

HYPERAROUSAL ZONE

Sympathetic "Fight or Flight Response"
(Too much arousal)



- SIGNS YOU ARE HERE:
- Tension, shaking
 - Emotional reactivity
 - Defensiveness
 - Racing thoughts
 - Intrusive imagery
 - Emotional overwhelm
 - Feeling unsafe
 - Obsessive/cyclical thoughts
 - Hyper-vigilance
 - Impulsivity
 - Anger/Rage

OPTIMAL AROUSAL ZONE

Ventral Vagal "Window of Tolerance"



- SIGNS YOU ARE HERE:
- Feel and think simultaneously
 - Experience empathy
 - Feelings are tolerable
 - Present moment awareness - "Right here, right now"
 - Feel open and curious (versus judgmental and defensive)
 - Awareness of boundaries (yours & others)
 - Reactions adapt to fit the situation
 - Feel safe

HYPOAROUSAL ZONE

Parasympathetic "Immobilization Response"
(Too little arousal)



- SIGNS YOU ARE HERE:
- Relative absence of sensation
 - No energy
 - Reduced physical movement
 - "Not there"
 - Can't defend oneself
 - Disabled cognitive processing/"can't think"
 - Numbing of emotions
 - Disconnected
 - No feelings
 - Ashamed
 - Flat affect
 - Feeling 'dead'
 - Shut down
 - Passive
 - Can't say no