

The Window of Tolerance

The Window of Tolerance is a way for us to understand trauma symptoms in terms of arousal.

The “Window of Tolerance” (Ogden, et al. (2006); Siegel, 1999) is the optimal zone of arousal where we are able to manage and thrive in everyday life. This can be thought of as sailing within a river of wellbeing (Siegel & Bryson, 2012) where we are able to respond to all that comes our way without getting thrown off course.

This doesn't mean being happy or calm all the time, it means being able to respond without being thrown off course.

For example, if we are driving and someone cuts in front, we might notice some annoyance, but if we are within our ‘window of tolerance’ we will be able to settle ourselves and keep driving.

Sometimes in life things happen that send us out of our ‘window of tolerance.’ These might be big things like: a traumatic event, a family member becoming unwell, or they might be smaller things: like having an argument with a friend. When we are out of our ‘window of tolerance’ our body responds by going into survival mode: fight/ flight/freeze response.

We can go out of our ‘window of tolerance’ in two ways:

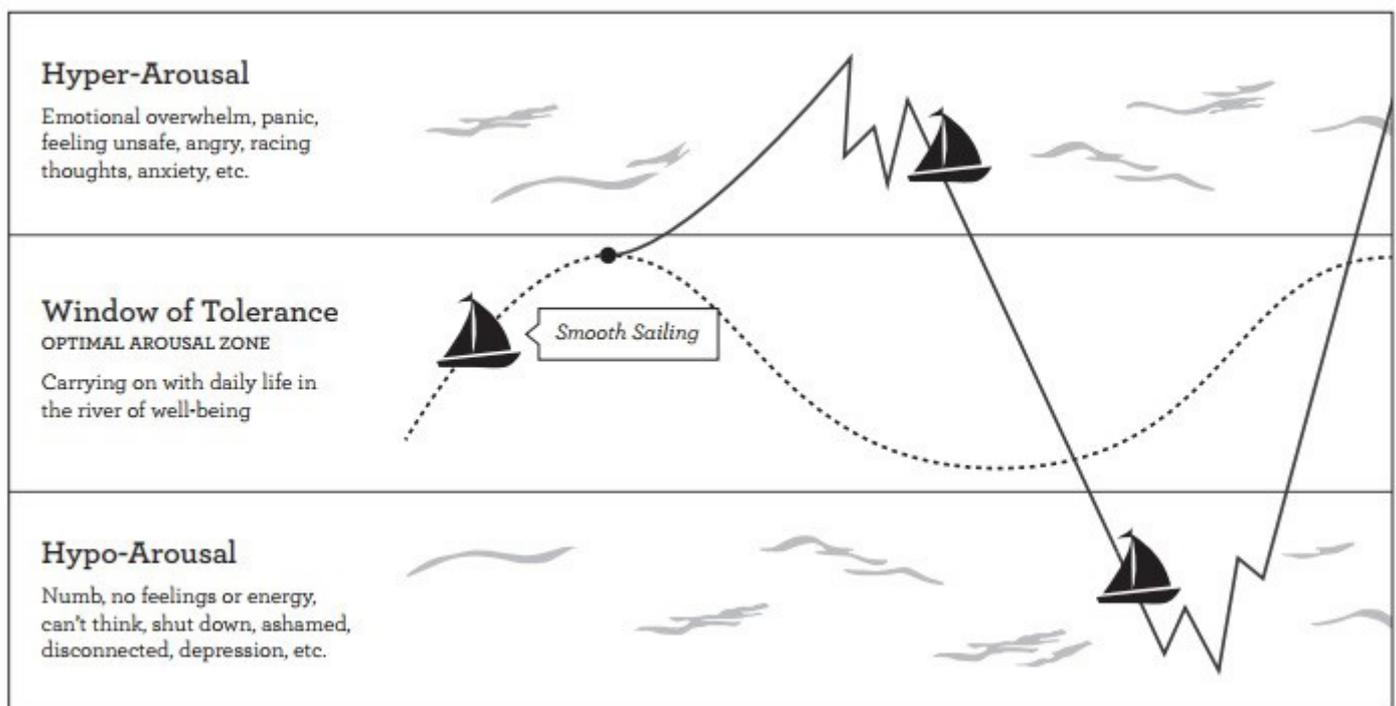
Hyper – Arousal

Emotional overwhelm, panic, feeling unsafe, angry, racing thoughts, anxiety, hypervigilance, panic attacks, racing heart rate etc.

Hypo – Arousal

Numb, no feelings or energy, can't think, shut down, freeze, ashamed, disconnected, depression, dissociation.

Our ‘window of tolerance’ can be narrow or wide, and is different in different contexts, with different people. If we have experienced trauma we are likely to have a narrow ‘window of tolerance.’

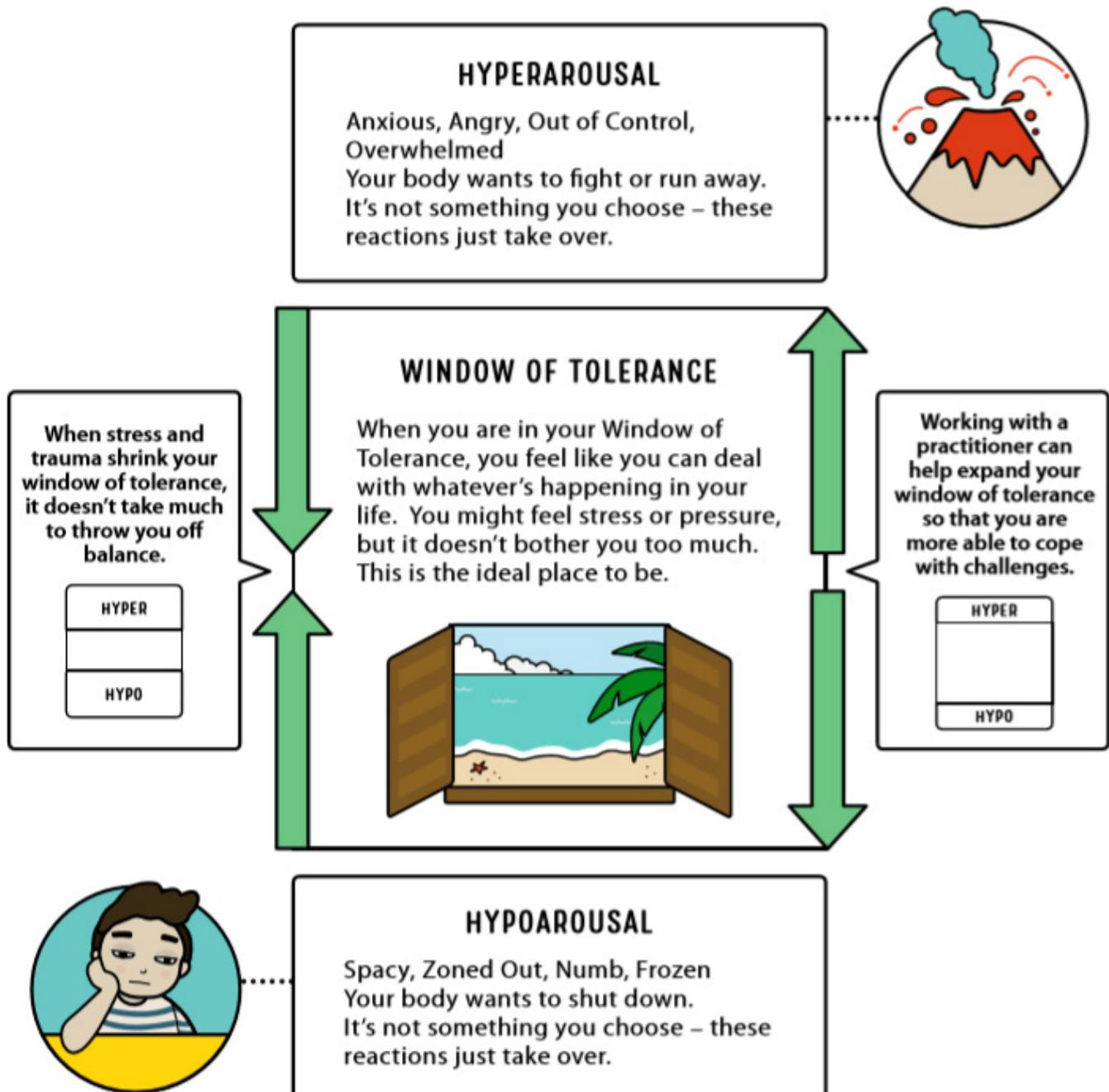


Mindfulness and The Window of Tolerance – St Michaels Hospital

Another helpful way to understand the video of tolerance is by viewing the [Window of Tolerance Reimagined](#) by Tracey Farrell.

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How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance



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