

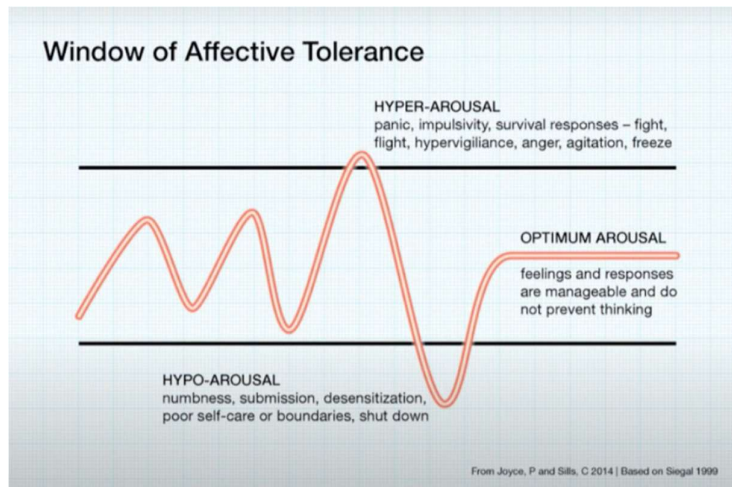
The Window of Tolerance

Definition.

The Window of Tolerance is a psychological term, first coined by **Dan Siegel** to describe the 'window' of arousal in which a person can stay calm and connected. In this optimal state, the person is able to regulate and integrate the information coming in via the senses, as well as thoughts and emotions of their inner world.

Outside of the window, a person becomes **dysregulated**, and the **fight/flight/freeze** response is activated.

Traditionally, the Window of Tolerance looks like this.



Which is a perfectly acceptable way to look, of course!

However, when I imagine the Window of Tolerance, it's in a way that is a little less *sciencey* and a lot more cute.

Would you like to meet Panda at [The River of Life?](#)

Each day Panda cruises down the [River of Life](#), just like all the other pandas he knows. *Although, it's almost never in a straight line!*

Depending on what's happening around him. Panda might [float up](#), or he might [float down](#). Sometimes he hears a noise that makes him [paddle fast](#), and sometimes the slow-moving clouds make him [slow right down](#).

Sometimes it's his own thoughts and feelings that steer him either way.

“Whoo hoo this is fun”

[At the top](#), the current is fast. Panda's heart beats quickly and he has loads of energy! It's fun for a while, but it is also quite exhausting. If he stays too long, Panda notices he starts to get **tired and grumpy**.

“Woah I’m sleepy”

[Down toward the bottom](#), the water flows slowly and gently. Sometimes it's nice to take a break from all that paddling, but Panda doesn't like to stay. He worries that he will **fall asleep!**

“I don’t feel good”

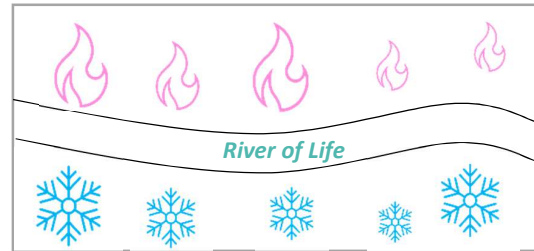
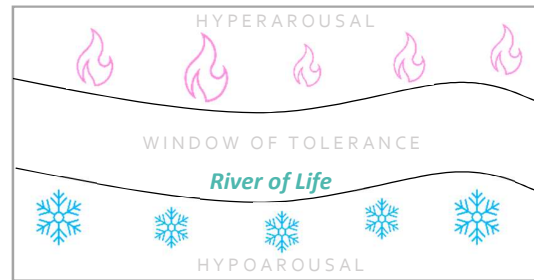
At the outer most edges of the River is where Panda first learns of The Tale of the Two Lands!

At the top is the land of **fire**
 At the bottom is the land of **ice**

Of course, when the **River** is wide, it's easy for Panda to paddle any way he wishes.

Sometimes Panda enjoys testing out his **skill in the rapid waters** and sometimes he prefers to **daydream for a while** in the swirling backwaters. The wide river gives him choice.

But in times of **stress**, the **River of Life** becomes much narrower, and it is not so easy for Panda to stay on course. In times like this, Panda is at risk of being pushed out of the **River** and onto the **Lands!**



In the **land of fire**, panda feels:

- Aggressive
- Rage
- Anxious
- Overwhelmed
- Out of control
- Frightened

In the **land of ice**, panda feels:

- Withdrawn
- Disconnected
- Empty
- Hard to reach
- Lost
- Inactive
- Terrified
- Frozen

To **escape** the **land of fire**, panda can take **deep belly breaths**

To **escape** the **land of ice**, panda can **move his body**

Trauma, adversity, and attachment disruptions also make the River narrow, and it can feel impossible to stay in the safety of the calm waters

When it's all too much, Panda knows where he can find his **Island of Regulation**. This special place has his favourite hammock and Panda likes to swing back and forth, back and forth. The rhythm and repetition feels so good! In no time at all, Panda is ready to jump back into the **River of Life** knowing he can return any time he needs.

