Your Window of Tolerance

Recognize when your nervous system is within a workable range - and what helps you return.

Inside the window

Regulated and connected	You can think, feel, communicate, and make choices without becoming overwhelmed or shut down.
Hyperarousal - above the window	You may notice panic, anger, racing thoughts, tension, urgency, restlessness, or feeling out of control.
Hypoarousal - below the window	You may notice numbness, disconnection, exhaustion, fogginess, freezing, or difficulty speaking and acting.

Ways to return

- For hyperarousal: lengthen the exhale, orient to the room, reduce stimulation, use steady movement, or contact a safe person.
- For hypoarousal: sit upright, use temperature or texture, move rhythmically, name objects aloud, or take one small purposeful action.
- For either state: reduce demands, use a practiced grounding skill, and postpone major decisions until you feel more settled.

Build the window over time

- Consistent sleep, food, hydration, movement, supportive relationships, predictable routines, and gradual practice with manageable stress can increase capacity.
- The goal is not to stay calm all the time. The goal is to notice shifts earlier and respond with more choice.

Practice worksheet

My early signs of hyperarousal:

My early signs of hypoarousal:

People, places, and activities that help me regulate:

A short plan I can use when I leave my window:

This handout is educational and is not a substitute for individualized assessment or treatment. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 for crisis support.

Attribution: The window of tolerance was introduced by Daniel J. Siegel. See Siegel, D. J. (1999), *The Developing Mind*; and Ogden, P., Minton, K., & Pain, C. (2006), *Trauma and the Body*. ThisLife wording and worksheet © 2026.