Window of TOLERANCE

Everyone has feelings. At times they may feel overwhelming, at other times switched off, and sometimes balanced and manageable. Our body and mind respond differently to each of these states. This range is called the Window of Tolerance.
When we are inside our window, we can cope with challenges, connect with others, and think clearly. When we move outside it, we may feel either over-stimulated (hyperarousal) or under-stimulated (hypoarousal). Noticing these shifts helps us understand ourselves and use strategies to return to balance.

HYPERAROUSAL

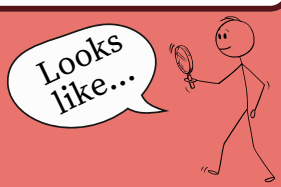
This is when your body and mind feel over-stimulated and on high alert, as if you are stuck in fight-or-flight mode.

A racing mind, fast heartbeat, tense muscles, trouble sleeping, feeling restless or panicky, and finding it hard to calm down or think clearly.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

This is the balanced state where you feel steady, present, and able to manage daily life, relationships, and emotions.

Feeling steady and calm, able to focus and learn, cope with daily challenges, connect with others, and respond to situations in a balanced way.



HYPOAROUSAL

This is when your body and mind shut down or switch off, leaving you feeling flat, numb, or disconnected.

Feeling numb or flat, lacking energy or motivation, finding it hard to join in or concentrate, feeling distant from yourself or others, and moving or speaking more slowly.

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About this Resource

TThis free printable Window of Tolerance for Adults resource explains the three emotional regulation states: hyperarousal (over-stimulation), window of tolerance (balanced state), and hypoarousal (shutdown or disconnection). It uses clear descriptions and everyday examples to help adults recognise what each state feels like in the body and mind.

Understanding the window of tolerance is an important tool in mental health, trauma recovery, emotional regulation, and stress management. When we are within our window, we can cope with challenges, think clearly, and connect with others. When outside of it, we may feel anxious, overwhelmed, or restless (hyperarousal) – or flat, numb, and disconnected (hypoarousal).

This PDF resource can be used in counselling, social work, therapy, mental health support, or personal self-care. It helps adults notice their emotional state, build self-awareness, and practise self-regulation strategies to return to balance.

How This Resource Can Be Used

- In therapy sessions to explain trauma responses and regulation strategies
- In social work and counselling to support adults with emotional awareness
- In workplace wellbeing programmes to manage stress and improve resilience
- For personal growth and self-care, to better understand and regulate emotions

Why This Resource Helps

- Supports emotional literacy and self-awareness
- Explains trauma responses in clear, accessible language
- Provides a simple, visual guide to the window of tolerance for adults
- Helps adults learn practical ways to manage stress and regulate emotions