

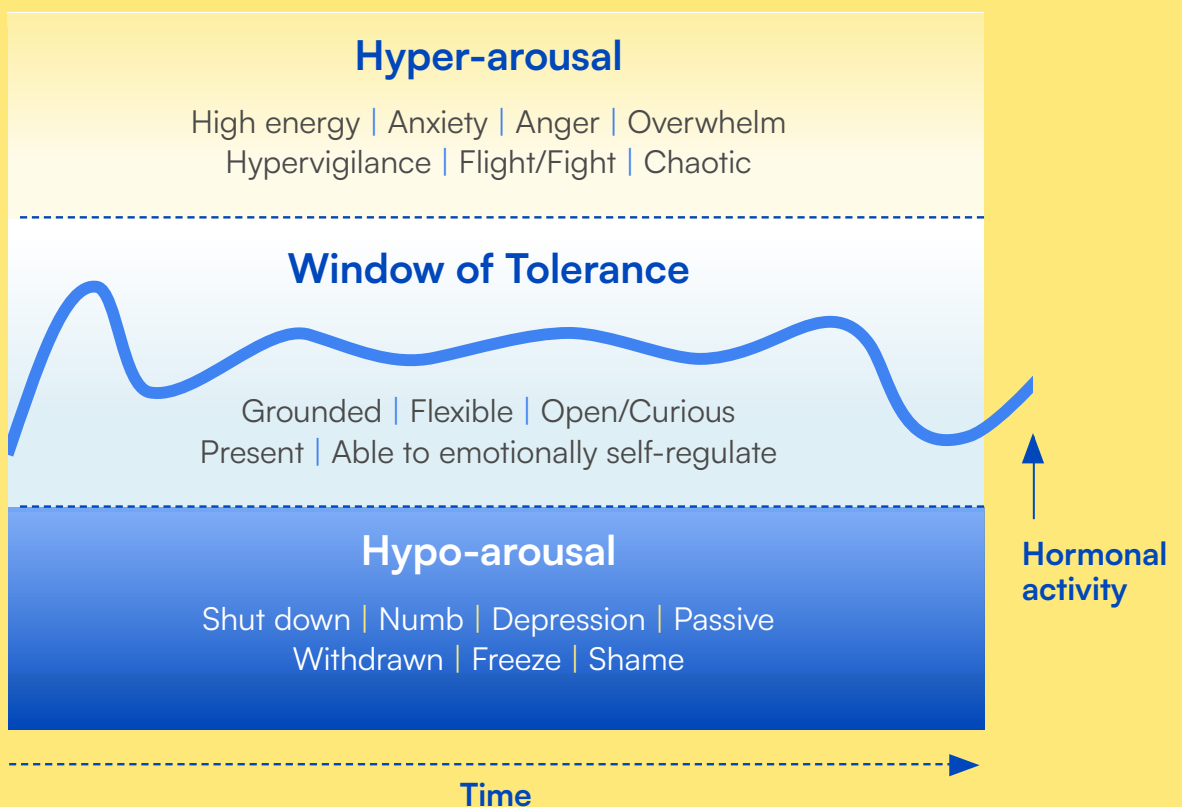
Window of Tolerance



The Window of Tolerance is a concept developed by Dr. Dan Siegel to describe the optimal zone for a person to function in everyday life.

When we are within our Window of Tolerance we are emotionally regulated and have the capacity to cope with everyday life. We can think clearly, stay focused, manage our emotions and make good choices. But when we are pushed outside of our window, we lose these skills, which can lead us to act or speak in ways that aren't helpful for us or our relationships. Internal and external challenges — such as those experienced in education settings — can push us out of our window, but knowing about this idea can help you better understand yourself and colleagues, reflect on your triggers and how best to support yourself and each other when it happens.

How the Window of Tolerance works:



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Leaders, try this exercise with your team:

Part one:

Ask for 1 or 2 descriptive words from each person in the group on how they are doing today i.e. tired, nervous, inspired, scattered. To break the ice, it can help if you begin by sharing two descriptive words about your own experience in that moment. Then proceed around the group (if in-person) or ask them to write a descriptive word or two in the chat box (if meeting virtually).

Part two:

Display the Window of Tolerance graphic and briefly explain the concept. Acknowledge that some may be familiar with it, while others might be hearing it for the first time. Highlight that, just like today, we all experience different levels on the Window of Tolerance based on our daily, weekly and life experiences. Stressors, big or small, can push us out of our window, leading to hyperarousal or hypoarousal.

Part three:

Ask the group to discuss the Window of Tolerance in pairs. You can give them these questions below as prompts. After a few minutes ask one person from each pair to share their insights.

- Why might acknowledging your own experiences in this way be useful during times of stress or overwhelm?
- Can using this tool help build compassion among colleagues?
- How might it help create more resilience in your education setting?



Sources:

Learn more about the Window of Tolerance:

[Window of Tolerance, what is it, Education Scotland](#)

[Window of Tolerance, Professor Dan Siegel, UCLA School of Medicine, 1999](#)