

Window of Tolerance Overview

Overwhelm (Hyperarousal)

This is when you feel extremely anxious, panicky, angry, or even out of control. Unfamiliar and threatening feelings can overwhelm you. You just want to stop feeling like this and you might want to fight or run away. It's not something you chose – these reactions just take over.

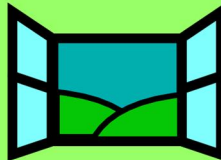


Alarm (Dysregulation)

This is when you begin to feel so agitated, revved up, or angry that you lose your focus. You tend to make hasty decisions or act on instinct. You don't feel out of control but you are getting bothered by how you are feeling.

Window of Tolerance

This is where you feel you have the resources to deal with what's happening right now in your life. Even if you don't feel completely comfortable, it doesn't bother you too much. There is often a feeling of focus and alertness: you are in your working range.



Stress & trauma can shrink your Window of Tolerance.

This means it may be harder to stay focused and alert. You may also be more easily thrown out of balance.

You can enlarge your Window of Tolerance by working at its edge, ideally in supportive company.

You can stay alert and focused in situations that were too much before.

Disconnect (Dysregulation)

This is when you begin to feel like you are shutting down. You can feel a little spacey, lose track of time, or start to feel sluggish. You don't feel out of control but it can be hard to think through anything difficult and do anything that's important for you.

Shut Down (Hypoarousal)

This is when you feel extremely zoned out or numb; emotionally, mentally, and physically. Time can go missing. You can feel like you're completely frozen while feeling that there is something is very wrong or there is deep-down dread. It's not something you chose – these reactions just take over.

