

Identifying the Edges of Your Window of Tolerance

The Window of Tolerance is the zone of arousal in which you can function effectively—where you can think clearly, feel your emotions without being overwhelmed, and respond flexibly to life's demands. When stress, triggers, or trauma responses push you outside this window, you may find yourself in hyperarousal (above the window) or hypoarousal (below the window).

Learning to recognize your personal early warning signs—the signals that you're approaching the edges of your window—is the first step toward developing effective regulation strategies.

Part 1: Recognizing the Signs

Check (☑) any signs you commonly experience as you approach each edge of your window:

 HYPERAROUSAL (Fight/Flight)	 HYPOAROUSAL (Freeze/Collapse)
☐ Racing thoughts	☐ Feeling numb or empty
☐ Rapid heartbeat	☐ Brain fog/difficulty thinking
☐ Shallow or rapid breathing	☐ Feeling disconnected from body
☐ Feeling on edge or keyed up	☐ Low energy/fatigue
☐ Muscle tension/clenched jaw	☐ Feeling flat or emotionless
☐ Irritability or anger	☐ Slow to respond
☐ Difficulty sitting still	☐ Zoning out/spacing out
☐ Feeling overwhelmed	☐ Feeling hopeless
☐ Startle easily	☐ Withdrawal from others
☐ Intrusive thoughts/images	☐ Loss of interest
☐ Sleep difficulties	☐ Heaviness in body
☐ Panic sensations	☐ Difficulty speaking or moving

Part 2: Your Personal Early Warning Signs

Your body and mind give you signals before you fully leave your window. These early warning signs are your opportunity to intervene. Think about recent times when you've moved toward hyperarousal or hypoarousal. What did you notice first?

My first signs of approaching HYPERAROUSAL:

<i>In my body:</i>	<i>In my thoughts/emotions:</i>

My first signs of approaching HYPOAROUSAL:

<i>In my body:</i>	<i>In my thoughts/emotions:</i>

Part 3: Known Triggers

What situations, interactions, sensory experiences, or internal states tend to push you toward each edge?

Triggers that push me toward HYPERAROUSAL:

Triggers that push me toward HYPOAROUSAL:

Part 4: Regulation Strategies

What helps you return to your window? Different strategies work for different edges. Consider what has helped in the past or what you'd like to try.

<div>When approaching HYPERAROUSAL</div> <div></div> <div>(strategies that calm/ground)</div>	<div>When approaching HYPOAROUSAL</div> <div></div> <div>(strategies that energize/activate)</div>

Part 5: Integration

Which edge do you tend to move toward more often?

What's one early warning sign you want to pay more attention to this week?

What's one regulation strategy you want to practice when you notice that sign?
