



**ART THERAPY JOURNEY:
A FREE SHORT GUIDE**

**A CREATIVE LOOK
AT YOUR WINDOW
OF TOLERANCE FOR
STRESS AND WORRY**



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01 WELCOME

Art Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses creative processes like drawing, painting, or mark-making to help people express and explore emotions. It's not about being good at art. It is about using creativity as a gentle tool for healing, reflection, and self-understanding.

In the UK, Art Therapy is delivered by professionally trained and HCPC-registered Art Psychotherapists. Many are also members of the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT), the professional body that sets standards for safe and ethical practice.



This short guide book will serve as a safe place to gently explore how your body and mind respond to stress and how you can find your way back to calm.

Inside, you'll learn about your Window of Tolerance, the space where you feel balanced, steady, and able to cope with life's ups and downs.

Sometimes, life pushes us outside this window into overwhelm or shutdown. It's not your fault, your nervous system is doing its best to protect you.

Use this guide book to:

- ✓ Understand your stress patterns
- ✓ Use art to reconnect with emotions
- ✓ Notice what helps you feel safe

Take your time. There's no right or wrong way to do this. You can pause, skip, or change anything to fit your needs.

If you ever feel too overwhelmed, pause and come back later or reach out to someone you trust. You are not broken. You are human, and you are welcome here.



02 UNDERSTANDING YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

What is the Window of Tolerance?

Your Window of Tolerance is the space where your body and mind feel steady enough to rest, think clearly and connect with others. When you're within this window, life feels more manageable. You can cope with daily ups and downs.

Inside your window, you feel calm enough to stay present. You might notice it's easier to:

- ✦ Think things through
- ✦ Speak up for yourself
- ✦ Ask for help



You feel more connected to your body, your feelings and the people around you. This balanced zone is where your nervous system feels safe enough to relax.

Sometimes stress, sudden change or reminders of past hurts can push you outside this window. This is not your fault. It is simply your body's way of trying to protect you when something feels too much.

Now, let's break down the 'Window of Tolerance' a little further.

🔥 **Hyperarousal** - Your body wants to fight or run away. Signs you are above your window:

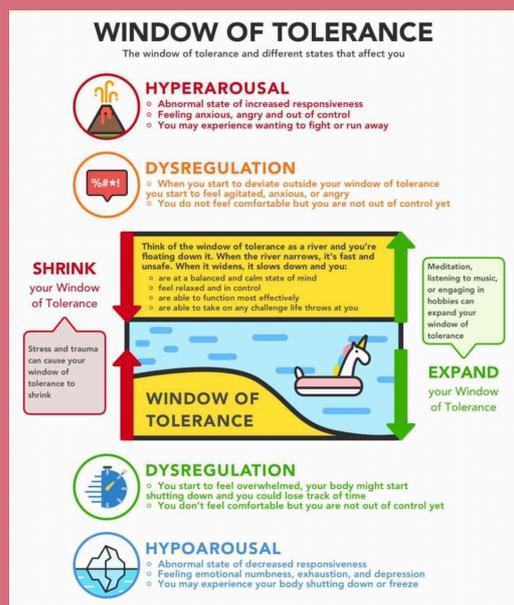
- Feeling anxious, panicky or on edge
- Racing thoughts
- Angry outbursts or irritability
- Restlessness and trouble sleeping

❄️ **Hypoarousal** - Your body wants to freeze to stay safe. Signs you are below your window:

- Feeling numb, empty or disconnected
- Tired, heavy or spaced out
- Hard to think, speak or act
- Wanting to hide or disappear

Gentle Reminder 🌱

Understanding your window helps you gently notice when you are drifting too high or too low. It reminds you that these states are not signs that you are bad or broken. Stress patterns can be protective. Over time, with rest, care and support, your window can grow wider so life feels safer and softer to handle. Overall, it is about increasing your tolerance to stress and worry.

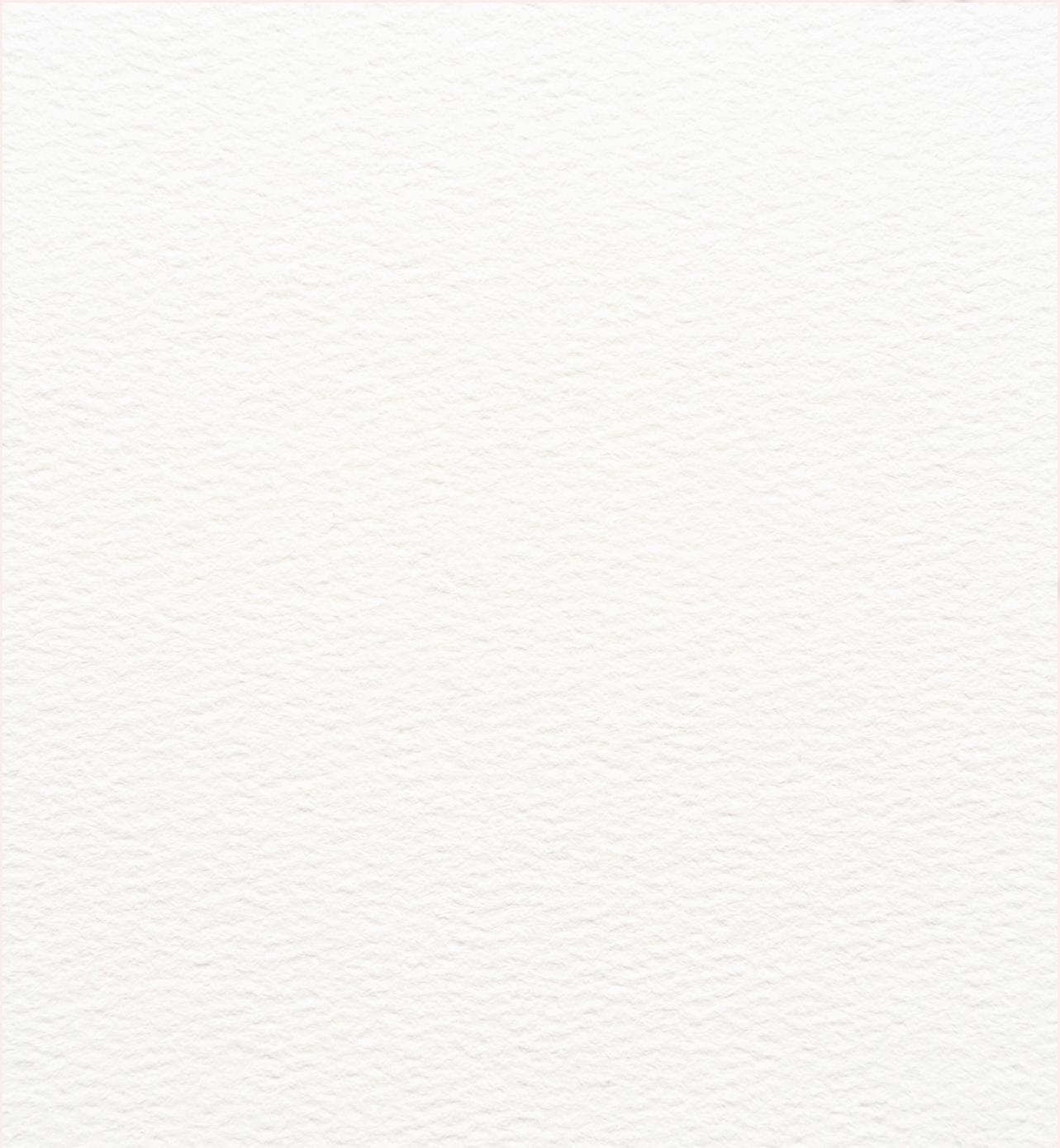


Reference: mindmypeelings.com (2020)

03 DRAW YOUR WINDOW

In the box, draw your Window of Tolerance; inside is what helps you stay stable and calm. Then add what happens when stress pushes you outside your window. Use any shapes, colours, pens, pencils, collage, or other materials you like. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Do what feels natural to you.

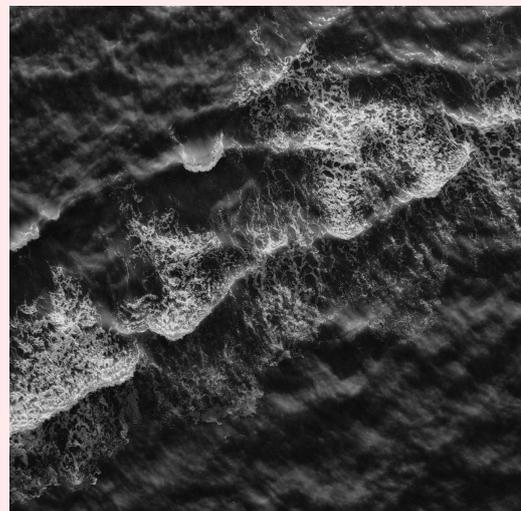
You can [print this booklet](#) to draw directly on the page or [use PDF annotation tools](#) to draw in the white box.



04 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

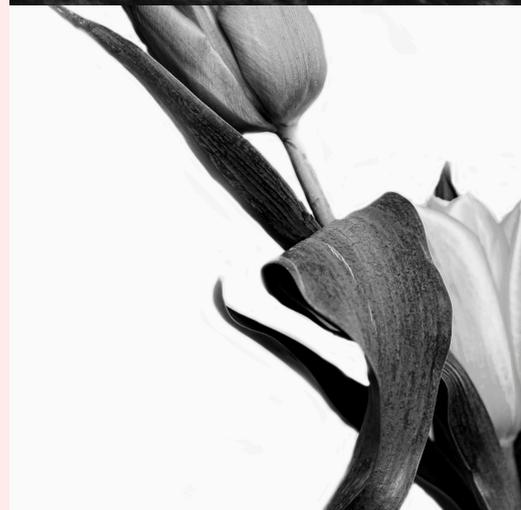
a.

DESCRIBE A TIME YOU EXPERIENCED HYPERAROUSAL, AND WHAT YOU DID TO BRING YOU BACK WITHIN YOUR WINDOW?



b.

DESCRIBE A TIME YOU EXPERIENCED HYPOAROUSAL, AND WHAT YOU DID TO BRING YOU BACK WITHIN YOUR WINDOW?



c.

HOW DO YOUR THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS CHANGE WHEN STRESS OR WORRY STARTS TO BUILD UP?



05 SELF-CARE ACTIONS

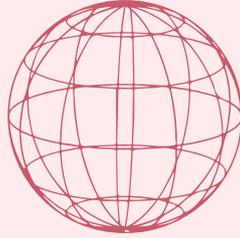
Circle and name the things that help you feel calm and balanced. Use this as a reminder of the simple actions and self-care tools you can turn to when stress or worry feels overwhelming.



If you have found this guide helpful but feel that your stress, or worry run deeper, then [booking a session](#) with us at Art Psychotherapy Pathway is a valuable next step.

This booklet is just a snapshot of what therapy can provide. [Art psychotherapy](#) offers a safe confidential and supportive space where you can [explore your thoughts and emotions more in-depth](#). Through creative expression and guided reflection we help you unpack complex feelings and gain deeper insights beyond what a brief guide can offer. With ongoing therapy, you can build resilience to widen your Window of Tolerance and develop healthier ways to manage stress and worry.

If you feel ready to explore your mental health difficulties, we are here to support you every step of the way. To book a session or ask questions please visit our website or get in touch via email or phone.



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