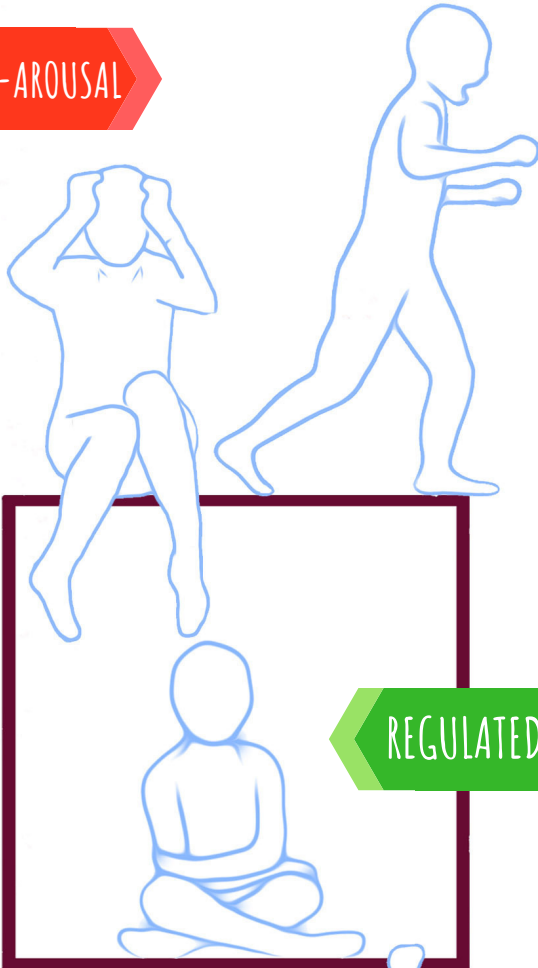


THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

HYPER-AROUSAL



REGULATED

HYPO-AROUSAL



Every individual has a unique window of tolerance. When they are **within their window of tolerance** they feel regulated, calm and able to learn, love and play to the best of their ability.

When something triggers them, making them feel worried or scared, they are pushed outside of their window of tolerance. A child can be pushed just outside of their window, or way outside out of their window, leading to either mild or extreme distress.

A child who has experienced trauma and loss has a narrower window of tolerance compared with children who have had a secure, stable and safe early childhood. In other words, small 'every day' triggers can be intolerable and unbearable for traumatised children.

Triggers are unique to each child. When triggered, a child may swing into **hyper-arousal** and therefore go into fight or flight mode. On the outside they may appear anxious, aggressive, agitated or controlling. On the inside they may feel unsafe, frightened and confused.

The child may also swing into **hypo-arousal** which means they go into freeze or collapse mode. On the outside they may appear withdrawn, quiet, hard to reach, emotionless, inactive, unproductive and unable to learn, relate or engage. On the inside they may feel flat, disconnected, dead, shut down or numb.

Traumatised children often swing between hyper and hypo arousal. To others, they can appear disorganised and unpredictable but children are adaptive. Their fight/flight/freeze behaviours are organized around reducing their feeling of fear.

Children will need to either be calmed or alerted back into their window of tolerance.

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REGULATING BACK INTO THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Here is a range of ideas that our OT's recommend which may help to calm or alert a child back into their window of tolerance. The key is that they are offered regularly and repetitively at home and at school:



Fight/Flight does the child become aggressive, hostile, non-compliant or do they avoid and run away from threatening things?



Freeze/Collapse does the child shut down, become withdrawn and disconnected or even paralysed with fear?

TRY REGULATING WITH ONE OR A COMBINATION OF THE BELOW

SLOW AND RHYTHMIC SEE SAW, SWING OR ROCKING CHAIR			LEANING OVER/SITTING ON A GYM BALL - GENTLE TO AND FRO MOVEMENTS		
PUSH UPS	WALL PUSH UPS		CHAIR PUSH UPS		WHEELBARROWS
LYCRA BODY SOCKS/LYCRA TUNNEL/TIGHT CLOTHING			DIGGING IN THE GARDEN		FIRM, PREDICTABLE TOUCH
PLAYING WITH PUTTY AND PRESSING IT INTO A SHAPE			WEARING WEIGHTED VESTS/ WEIGHTED LAP PAD/SHOULDER PAD/BEAR HUG JACKET		
DEEP HUGS	SOFT FABRICS		HANDS IN DRIED RICE		SQUEEZING A STRESS BALL
RUBBING WITH A WARM TOWEL AFTER A BATH			CUSHION SANDWICH- GENTLY SQUASH UNDER A CUSHION (NB HEAD NOT UNDER CUSHION)		
SLOW CLASSICAL OR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC		STEADY DRUMS	NATURE SOUNDS	WHITE NOISE	NEUTRAL COLOURS
DIMMED LIGHT	LOOKING AT FISH TANK/LAVA LAMP		BLAND TASTES	CHEWY BAGELS, DRIED FRUIT, TOFFEE	
FAVOURITE FOOD	SUCKING THICKENED LIQUIDS THROUGH A STRAW, E.G. SMOOTHIES OR DILUTED YOGHURTS				LAVENDER OR CAMOMILE OIL
VIBRATING TOYS (CAN BE CALMING OR ALERTING)			WEIGHT - BEARING THROUGH ARMS (CAN BE CALMING OR ALERTING)		

TRY REGULATING WITH ONE OR A COMBINATION OF THE BELOW

SPINNING- (TAKE CARE NOT TO OVER- ALERT)		FAST RUNNING/SKIPPING /GALLOPING	
ROUGH PLAY	SPACE HOPPER	JUMPING ON A TRAMPOLINE	DANCING TO FAST PACE MUSIC
CLIMBING	MONKEY BARS	LIGHT TOUCH/ BRUSHING	FIDGET TOYS WITH ROUGH/VARIED TEXTURES
VIBRATING TOYS (CAN BE CALMING OR ALERTING)		WEIGHT - BEARING THROUGH ARMS (CAN BE CALMING OR ALERTING)	
UNPREDICTABLE TOUCH (TAKE EXTRA CARE WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE A BACKGROUND OF TRAUMA)			MESSY PLAY
VARYING TEXTURES OF FABRIC	VARIED WARM/COLD TEMPERATURES	FINDING OBJECTS HIDDEN IN RICE OR PLAY PUTTY	
COOL SHOWER	LOUD QUICK TEMPO MUSIC	HIGHER PITCHED NOISES ELICIT ATTENTION SUCH AS FLUTES, CYMBALS, SINGING	
BRIGHT COLOURS	DAYLIGHT	BRIGHT MOVING LIGHTS	CRUNCHY FOODS SUCH AS PRETZELS
INTENSE TASTES SUCH AS SPICY, BITTER OR SALTY FOODS		SUCKING THROUGH A STRAW STIMULATES BREATHING	CITRUS OIL OR OTHER STRONG SMELLS
VIBRATING TOYS (CAN BE CALMING OR ALERTING)		WEIGHT - BEARING THROUGH ARMS (CAN BE CALMING OR ALERTING)	

HAS THE CHILD RETURNED TO THEIR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE?

YES

Brilliant! Make a note of what has worked this time. Remember that you may need to be ready to use an alternative tool, the same tool may not work every time.

NO

Try an alternative regulatory tool. Not every tool will work for every child and it will be trial and error in working out what they find regulating.

Relationship is the key to regulation, what is the quality of the adult and child relationship? Does it need developing before regulation can occur?

Does the adult need regulating too? If the adult is outside their own window of tolerance it will be much harder to regulate the child.

If the child can't regulate easily despite your strategies – it's okay. Staying with them, being there for them and letting them know you care is the most important strategy of all.

If the child consistently can't regulate easily despite your strategies, it may be that the child has some specific sensitivities and it may be appropriate to consult an OT for more specific sensory advice.