

WELL-BEING NEWSLETTER

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

WHAT IS A WINDOW OF TOLERANCE?

CREATED BY DR. DAN SIEGEL IN 1999, THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE CAN BE USED AS A PARENTING GUIDE TO REGULATE CHILDREN AND ALLOW THEM TO BEST THRIVE IN THEIR REGULATED ZONE.

THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE VISUAL MODEL I'VE USED HAS PINK, BLUE AND GREY ZONES TO DEMONSTRATE A CHILD'S FEELINGS WHEN THEY ARE IN THESE DIFFERENT STAGES OF REACTION.

BASICALLY, A CHILD CAN BEST FUNCTION WHEN IN THEIR OWN PERSONAL BLUE ZONE. THESE ZONES ARE UNIQUE TO EACH CHILD, SO THIS WINDOW REFERS TO WHEN A CHILD FEELS THEY ARE AT THEIR MOST SAFE AND COMFORTABLE SPACE.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS IN THEIR BLUE ZONE, THEIR EMOTIONS ARE REGULATED, THEY FEEL SAFE, AND THEY CAN COMPLETE WHATEVER CHALLENGE THEY'RE FACING. THIS IS THE TIME THEY CAN BEST LEARN, PLAY WITH OTHERS, COMPLETE A TASK THAT IS ASKED OF THEM, AND SO ON. THIS BLUE ZONE IS YOUR CHILD'S OPTIMAL ZONE OR PERSONAL "WINDOW OF TOLERANCE."

SOME CHILDREN HAVE BROAD BLUE ZONES, WHICH MEANS IT TAKES MORE TO GET THEM IN THEIR PINK OR GREY ZONE, BUT OTHERS HAVE MORE NARROW WINDOWS. THIS CAN BE DUE TO TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES, TRAUMATIC MEMORIES, STRESS, OR ANY NUMBER OF OTHER FACTORS.

WHILE A CHILD'S FEELINGS FLUCTUATE THROUGHOUT THE DAY, THESE FEELINGS CAN FLUCTUATE WITHIN THEIR BLUE ZONE. HOWEVER, AT TIMES, SOMETHING WILL OCCUR THAT MAY CAUSE YOUR CHILD TO FEEL EXTREME STRESS, SADNESS, OR OTHER UNPLEASANT EMOTIONS. WHEN A CHILD EXITS THEIR "WINDOW OF TOLERANCE," THEY MOVE INTO THE PINK ZONE OR THE GREY ZONE (DEPENDING ON THEIR FEELINGS AND ACTIONS).

THE PINK ZONE

WHEN OVERSTIMULATED, ANGERED, OR TRIGGERED, A CHILD ENTERS THEIR PINK ZONE. THIS IS WHAT WE AS PARENTS DO OUR BEST TO AVOID AND TRY TO DE-ESCALATE ONCE OUR CHILDREN ARE HERE. EVERY CHILD HAS A ZONE OF REACTION OR PINK ZONE, BUT SOME GET THERE QUICKER THAN OTHERS. THIS PINK ZONE IS REFERRED TO AS HYPER-AROUSAL.

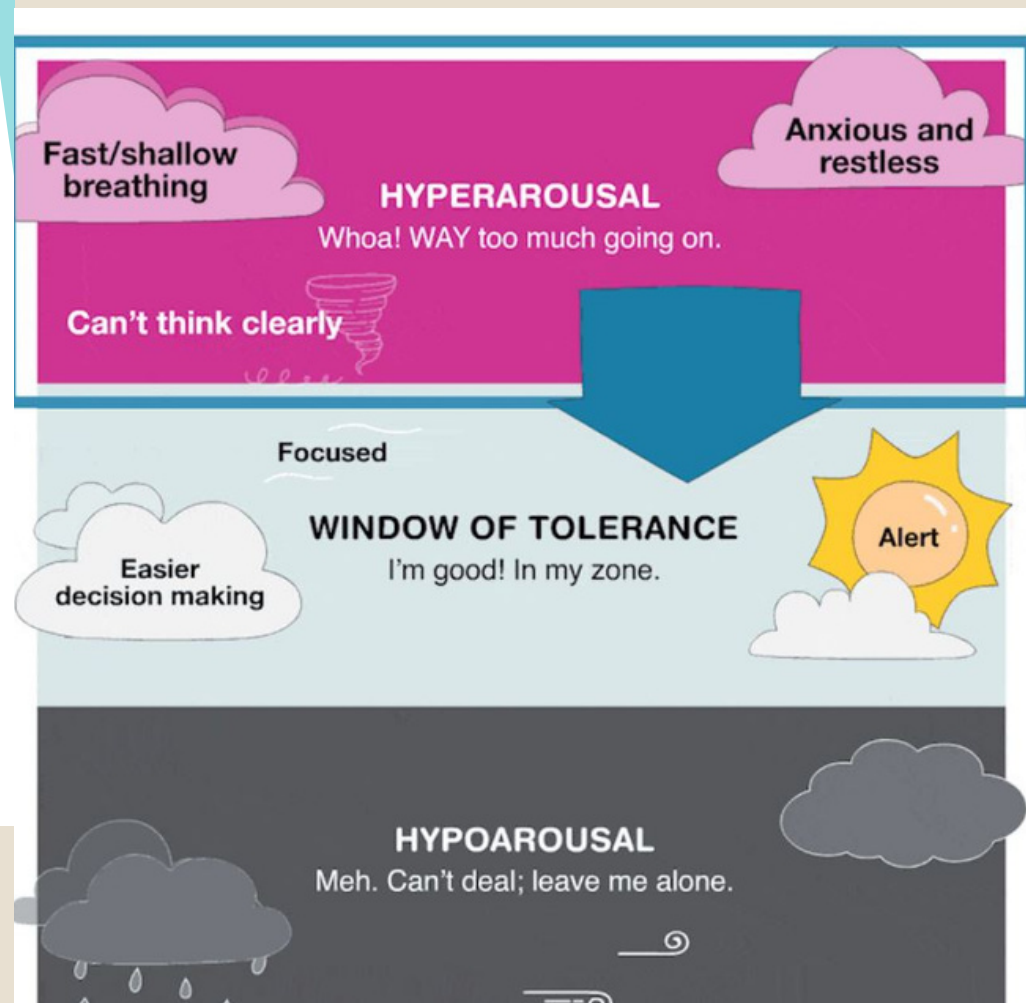
SIGNS OF ENTERING THE PINK ZONE INCLUDE DYSREGULATION, SUCH AS PHYSICAL AGGRESSION, VERBAL AGGRESSION, ANGER, OR AGITATION. THIS BEHAVIOUR IS OFTEN SUMMARIZED AS ACTING OUT. IT IS DIFFICULT IN THAT MOMENT TO CALM THEM DOWN IMMEDIATELY.

THE GREY ZONE

ON THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM, A CHILD REACHES THEIR GREY AREA WHEN THEY ARE FEELING SAD, SHAMEFUL, OR LET DOWN. THIS IS REFERRED TO AS HYPO-AROUSAL. THIS CAUSES THEM TO WITHDRAW, WHICH CAN BE JUST AS FRUSTRATING FOR PARENTS.

WE WANT TO SOOTHE EVERY PAIN AND WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR. WHEN OUR CHILDREN BECOME WITHDRAWN, THEY SOMETIMES CAN FEEL HOPELESS. IT MAY HELP TO THINK ABOUT IT AS THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE: THE PINK ZONE IS THEIR FIGHT ZONE, AND THE GREY ZONE IS THEIR FLIGHT.

SIGNS OF A CHILD ENTERING THE GREY ZONE INCLUDE DYSREGULATED BEHAVIOURS, SUCH AS ACTING DEPRESSED, ACTING QUIETER THAN USUAL, DISSOCIATION, OR SEEMING NUMB OR WITHDRAWN. FLIGHT RESPONSES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH TENSED MUSCLES, DILATED PUPILS, RAPID HEART RATES, AND THE INTENSE DESIRE TO RUN FROM THE SITUATION AT HAND.



Window of Tolerance (Safe)

You feel calm and safe. You are able to concentrate.

You feel like you can deal with issues or challenges that might happen.

Stress and trauma can make your window smaller. This means that it might be harder to stay calm, safe and focused.



You can make your window bigger by practising mindfulness and learning about your feelings and how to regulate them.