

Window of Tolerance & Polyvagal Reset

Hyper-arousal (fight/flight: fast, tense, panicky)

Window (best thinking, flexible coping)

Hypo-arousal (freeze/shut-down: numb, foggy)

Why it helps

We think and cope best inside our 'window'. Stress can push us above it (hyperarousal: panic, racing thoughts) or below it (hypoarousal: numb, shut down). Naming where you are and using small resets helps you come back into the window.

Check in

Ask: "Too high? Too low? Or within my window?" Notice breath, muscle tension, speed of thoughts, and urge to withdraw or react.

Resets (pick one for 60–120 seconds)

• Long exhale: inhale 4, exhale 6–8 • Humming or gentle song • Grounding touch (hand to chest) • Orient: name 3 things you see • Temperature reset: cool wrists/neck

Plan ahead

My top two resets: _____

Safe person/service I can contact: _____

Note: These tools support — not replace — professional care. If you feel unable to keep yourself safe, call 999 (UK) or your local emergency number.