

Neuroception and the Window of Tolerance

SIGNALS OF AUTONOMIC AROUSAL

Purpose: To identify the internal signals that tell you when your arousal is a little high and when it escalates to hyperarousal, when it is a little low and when it drops to hypoarousal, and when it is within the window of tolerance.

Directions: Follow the prompts below.

1. Circle any internal signals of high or hyperarousal that you have experienced. Add any signals that are not on the list in the empty box.

Urge to run, leave, fight, verbally attack	Restless, easily startled, jumpy, fidgety, tense, shaky	Angry, afraid, enraged, panicked, anxious, nervous, irritated
Racing mind, obsessive or repetitive thoughts	Easily distracted, difficulty focusing or concentrating	Sense of danger, uneasiness, discomfort, lack of safety
Easily overwhelmed or distressed	Wound up, hard to relax or go to sleep	

2. Using one of the signals you circled, describe the difference when your arousal is a little high and when it escalates to hyperarousal. (e.g., *When I am angry and experience high arousal, my jaw tightens and my voice tone changes, but I can still think and carry on a conversation. When I am angry and hyperaroused, my heart starts pounding, I get a ringing in my ears, and tingling in my fingers; I can't think clearly, I blow up and start yelling.*)

3. Circle the internal signals of your arousal being within your window of tolerance that you have experienced. Add any signals that are not on the list in the empty boxes.

In charge, capable, able to make decisions	Curious, engaged, interested	Centered, able to respond instead of react
Alert, open mind, able to think clearly	Safe and secure	A sense of trust in yourself and your abilities
Composed, calm, relaxed, or at peace	Competent, able to handle challenges	Ability to focus, concentrate and ignore distractions

4. What sensations and movements tell you your arousal is in the optimal arousal zone?

5. Circle any internal signals of low or hypoarousal you have experienced. Add any signals that are not on the list in the empty box.

Motionless, weak, still, powerless, unable to move	Collapsed feeling, passive, can't move quickly, unassertive	Bored, spaced out, apathetic, lethargic, disconnected
Emotionally flat, dull, numb, empty, dead	Compliant, "don't care," disinterested, indifferent	Depressed, despairing, unmotivated, bummed out, hopeless, discouraged
Sluggish, inability to think clearly	Heavy, low energy, go to sleep easily during the day	

6. Using one of the signals you circled, describe the difference when your arousal is a little low and when it drops to hypoarousal. (e.g., *When I have low arousal, I feel spacey, become less verbal, and my body feels heavy and a bit numb. When I am hypoaroused, sounds are muffled, objects seem to be far away, I am so far removed from everything that I take a long time to respond or I don't respond at all.*)

Discuss with your therapist any ways you might increase your tolerance of high and low arousal and regulate hyper- or hypoarousal.