

# Notice What Your Nervous System is Telling You

A traumatized nervous system develops patterns that reflect how individuals survived and adapted to a dangerous world. To respond to threat, the nervous system goes into high arousal states, making us tense, reactive, impulsive and on guard. Or it develops a habit of low arousal states, making us numb, passive, disconnected, and without energy.

**Ask yourself:** what do I do when I get hyper-activated? Do I get angry? Impulsive? Want to hurt myself? Do I need to talk to someone? Or do I want to retreat and isolate?

**Write or diagram what happens:** Eg, "First, I feel really scared, then I get a lot of racing thoughts, then I want to do something to make the feelings go away."

The nervous system does not develop much tolerance for emotion or stress.

**Window of Tolerance**  
I can tolerate my feelings  
I can think and feel at the same time

Am I hypo-activated? Do I feel numb, tired, passive, no feelings, no energy, can't think, disconnected, shut down, "not there," ashamed?

**Write or diagram what happens when you are in hypoarousal:** E.g., "I just want to sleep--I feel numb in the bed—now I don't care about anything anymore."