



A note on using this guide: This worksheet is for personal use and self-reflection. It is not a clinical assessment and does not constitute professional advice. Many people find that mapping their own emotional experience helps them arrive at conversations with therapists and counselors with greater clarity — but how you use it, and whether it is helpful for you, is entirely your call.

The window of tolerance describes an optimal zone of nervous system activation where you can think, feel, and engage at the same time. When something pushes you above or below that zone, it becomes harder to function well. This guide helps you begin to recognize your own signals.

Questions to consider exploring with your therapist

These questions are starting points for conversation — not a checklist.

1. Do I spend more time above or below my window — or does it depend on the situation?
2. Are there patterns in what tends to move me out of my window?
3. Have there been times in my life when my window felt wider -or- narrower?
4. What might it look like to build more capacity to stay in, or return to, my window?

↑ *more activated*

Above my window

fight / flight / overwhelm

- Panic, dread, or rage
- Racing or scattered thoughts
- Heart pounding, tight chest
- Muscles tense, jaw clenched
- Hypervigilant — scanning for danger
- Reactive, flooded, hard to think
- Can't sit still or settle

— The window —

My window

calm alert / engaged / present

- Can think and feel at the same time
- Breathing feels natural
- Sense of being grounded
- Able to connect with others
- Feelings feel manageable
- Open to new information
- A sense of choice about what to do

— The window —

Below my window

freeze / shutdown / collapse

- Numbness or emptiness
- Heaviness or fatigue
- Hard to speak or move
- Feeling disconnected or "gone"
- Flat, hopeless, or foggy
- Shut down, checked out
- Everything feels pointless or far away

↓ *less activated*

1. When I'm above my window, I notice...

Think about a recent time you felt overwhelmed or reactive.

In my body:

My thoughts or behaviors:

2. When I'm in my window, I notice...

Think about a moment when you felt present and like yourself.

In my body:

How I know I'm there:

3. When I'm below my window, I notice...

Think about a time you felt shut down, flat, or checked out.

In my body:

My thoughts or behaviors:
