WORKSHEET 91 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

My window of tolerance

Noticing when I am over-activated, under-activated or in my zone

AIM

Present the window of tolerance model (the zone in which one can feel and think at the same time, with hyperarousal above and hypoarousal below) and help the person spot their signs and what helps them return to their zone.

WHO IT IS FOR

Trauma, overwhelming emotions or feeling “shut down”, preparation for EMDR.

DURATION

20 min in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Draw the window: in the centre, the zone in which you can feel and think; above, hyperarousal (panic, anger, agitation); below, hypoarousal (emptiness, numbness, disconnection).
2. Help the person identify their own signs for each zone.
3. List what helps them come down (from above) and wake up again (from below).
4. Explain that therapy aims to widen this window gradually.

POINTS TO WATCH

> This model is a useful clinical metaphor, not a measure. If the person often drops into hypoarousal (dissociation), adapt the pace (worksheet 94).

REFERENCES

Siegel, D. J. (1999). The Developing Mind: Toward a Neurobiology of Interpersonal Experience. Guilford.

Ogden, P., Minton, K. & Pain, C. (2006). Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy. Norton.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 91 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

My window of tolerance

Everyone has a “window” in which they can feel emotions and keep thinking. Above it, we speed up; below it, we shut down. Knowing your window helps you know what to do to get back into it.

1. Above my window (over-activated): my signs (racing heart, anger, panic).
2. Inside my window: how I feel when I am in my zone.
3. Below (shut down): my signs (emptiness, numbness, far away from everything).
4. What helps me get back into my zone, from above and from below.

Zone	My signs	What helps me get back

In which situations do I most often leave my window?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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