

A dark, textured circular shape, resembling a watercolor blot or a dark planet, is centered on a solid blue background. The circle has irregular, feathered edges and a mottled dark grey/black interior texture.

welcome to
EXPAND

I am Lindsey Lockett.

Fave music:

- > Dave Matthews & Tim Reynolds
- > 90s pop & indie (Brittney, Alanis, etc.)
- > 90s girl country (Dixie Chicks, Shania, etc.)
- > chill spiritual shit
- > Norse heathenry
- > Scottish, Gaelic, & Celtic folk music



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Basically, don't steal my shit. ;)

**EXPAND is the fourth workshop in the
Feel Without Fear series.**

The group coaching call for this workshop
is next week:

Wednesday, October 16 @ 1pm CST

RESILIENT: SELF-RESPONSIBILITY, AGENCY, & BOUNDARIES

Thursday, 10/10 @ 5pm CST

**Group coaching call on Thursday, 10/24 @ 10am
CST**

This workshop is about building resiliency to navigate a stressful world by taking radical responsibility for yourself, using your agency, and setting boundaries with Self and others.

**WHAT IS THE
"WINDOW OF TOLERANCE"?**

The Window of Tolerance is a concept developed by Dr. Dan Siegel. It describes the "optimal zone" of arousal for a person to function in everyday life. A person is more able to manage their emotions when they are within their Window of Tolerance.

**The state of your nervous system
determines what you're able to tolerate
— what's INSIDE and what's OUTSIDE
your Window of Tolerance.**

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

TRIGGERS

NOT OK

SAFE
FAMILIAR
OK
COMFORT
ZONE

UNSAFE

UNFAMILIAR

UNCOMFORTABLE

When you are **INSIDE** your WOT, you feel...

- > grounded
- > open
- > flexible
- > present/mindful
- > curious
- > emotionally regulated
- > calm arousal, alert but not anxious
- > calm, not tired



When you are **INSIDE** your WOT, you can...

- > take full breaths
- > think clearly
- > make sound decisions
- > make eye contact
- > hold multiple realities/
perspectives/nuance
- > access intuition & self-trust
- > use your agency & self-responsibility
- > communicate calmly & clearly



It is perfectly normal for your Window of Tolerance to change — to expand and contract — based on the state of your nervous system at that time.

For example, your WOT may be smaller when...

- >> you're sick
- >> you didn't sleep well the night before
- >> you're going through a bout of insomnia
- >> your primary intimate relationship is experiencing some conflict, confusion, or disconnection
- >> you spend too much time scrolling or consuming the news
- >> you're hungry/hangry

Your Window of Tolerance can...

- >> change slightly from day to day, even from morning to evening
- >> fluctuate depending on who you're with & the safety of that relationship
- >> change depending on where you're at in your menstrual cycle

The information in this workshop is NOT going to tell you how to make your Window of Tolerance bigger and keep it that way.

If your WOT gets smaller, it is your body's wisdom. Your body is SO smart, but your body doesn't operate in nuance the way your mind can. Your body doesn't see grey; it is only LIFE or DEATH.

Whatever you can or can't tolerate is just information.
It is neutral data from your body.

If you judge what you can or can't tolerate, that's another matter entirely.

If you compare what you can or can't tolerate to what other people can or can't tolerate, that's another matter entirely.

If you also compare yourself to a past version of you who once had a wider WOT, that's another matter entirely.

Widening your Window of Tolerance is an on-going process of EXPANSION and CONTRACTION.

Newton's Third Law states, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction."

For every EXPANSION, there is a CONTRACTION.

Many folks want the expansion without the contraction. This is not only unrealistic, it's physically and energetically impossible.

Many folks do an expansive thing only to find out that it's not within their Window of Tolerance. When they have a big reaction because they were way outside their WOT, they often judge themselves or whatever they did:

- > "I tried it. It didn't work. It's not for me."
- > "If I had done that thing 'right', I wouldn't feel this way."
- > "Anytime I try something new, this (contraction) always happens."

Just because you do an expansive thing and then feel the resulting contraction does not mean the expansive thing was "bad" or "wrong" or "not for you" or you did it wrong.

Often, the contraction brings up feelings and trauma we still carry: self-doubt, inauthenticity, self-judgment, shame, fear.

How else would we be aware of these lingering feelings and potentially unprocessed traumas unless we had the contraction to show us?

Contraction is so necessary and such a gift. Simply by doing expansive things — which may very well be outside your WOT for NOW — we initiate ourselves into our own deep parts and get to heal on an even deeper level.

The real flex is moving through the contraction — and all its accompanying self-doubt, fear, second-guessing, and/or shame — without staying stuck in it.

We aren't meant to stay in expansion either.

So, as you're widening and expanding your Window of Tolerance and you feel the resulting contraction, just notice.

Notice the voice in your head that says you did the wrong thing or you weren't following your intuition. That's part of the contraction, too.

Contraction isn't punishment and it doesn't mean you aren't healing or that you've regressed.

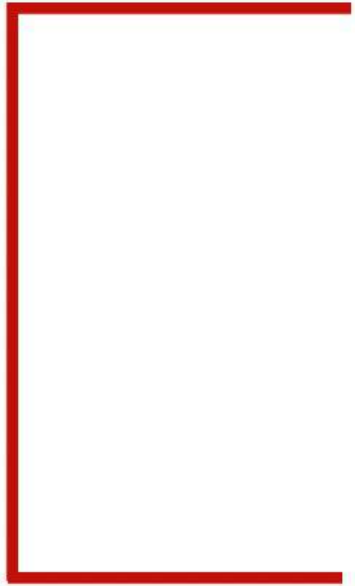
Contraction is part of expansion. Expansion is part of contraction.

Widening your Window of Tolerance is a dance between these 2 equal and opposite reactions.

Be aware of the contraction. Notice the stories the voice in your head tells about the contraction. FEEL THE CONTRACTION and you will move through it into expansion again.

YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE & YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

POLYVAGAL LADDER



Social Engagement System

play

sympathetic fight

sympathetic flight

freeze

shutdown

**When you are OUTSIDE your WOT, it is
because you are either...**

HYPERAROUSSED

or

HYPOAROUSSED

**What's the difference between
nervous system dysregulation and
hyper/hypoarousal?**



HYPERAROUSAL

DYSREGULATION

**INSIDE
WOT**



HYPOAROUSAL



HYPERAROUSAL FEELS LIKE...

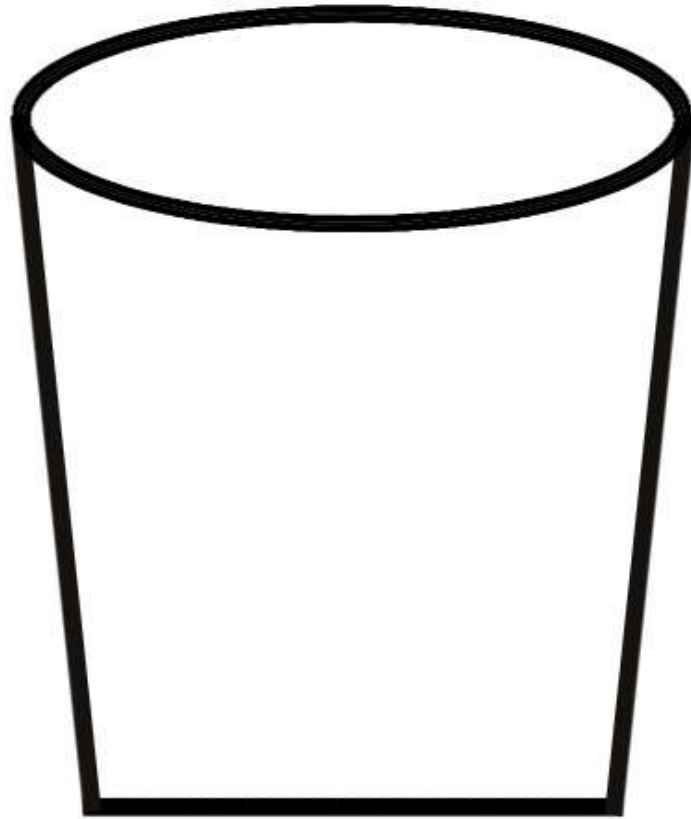
- > anger/rage
- > out of control
- > hostility
- > anxiety & panic
- > hypervigilance
- > sleeplessness
- > exaggerated startle response
- > emotional flooding
- > can't wind down
- > overstimulation
- > digestive issues such as under-digested food and/or chronic diarrhea and/or needing to empty bowels immediately after eating

HYPOAROUSAL FEELS LIKE...

- > shutting down
- > dissociation
- > exhaustion
- > chronic fatigue
- > emotional deadness
- > flat affect
- > want to sleep all the time

- > disorientation
- > completely frozen
- > numb
- > zoned out/spaced out
- > low or no appetite
- > constipation

**Your nervous system is like a bucket.
It has to hold everything in your life.**





When the bucket is getting close to reaching its capacity, before it has over-flowed, that's when we're DYSREGULATED.



When the bucket is getting close to reaching its capacity, before it has over-flowed, that's when we're **DYSREGULATED**.



When the bucket is filled with no more capacity & it spills over, that's when we're **HYPER- or HYPOAROUSSED**.

NERVOUS SYSTEM STATES, EMOTIONS, & YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

POLYVAGAL LADDER



social engagement
system

SAFETY

play

JOY

sympathetic fight

ANGER

sympathetic flight

PERSEVERANCE

freeze

JUDGMENT

shutdown

SHAME

POLYVAGAL LADDER



social engagement
system

play

sympathetic fight

sympathetic flight

freeze

shutdown

ANGER

PERSEVERANCE

JUDGMENT

SHAME

Before we go further...

All emotion is energy in motion.
(E-motion = energy in motion)

Emotions and energy are neutral. They are not "bad" or "good". We judge certain feelings and emotions as "good" and "bad" or "positive" and "negative".

However, on their own, emotions are literally neutral energy that moves.

Sensation and feeling tells us if we are safe, dysregulated, and/or hyper/hypoaroused.

The line between dysregulation and hyper/hypoarousal is a blurry one and different from person to person. It can even change based on what's happening in your life at that time, how much sleep you've had, the level of intimacy in a relationship (often more intimacy = more threat and more hypervigilance), the time of year/weather, and many other factors.

To simplify things for the purpose of this workshop,
we're going to study each nervous system state.

Dysregulation is normal. The goal is NOT "I'm trying
to heal my nervous system so I never get
dysregulated."

Dysregulation is your body's protective mechanism.
It's necessary.

But chronic dysregulation is an indicator that that emotion is NOT INTEGRATED.

And, when we have UNINTEGRATED emotions, those emotions are often outside our windows of tolerance and throw us in to HYPERAROUSAL or HYPOAROUSAL.

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FIGHT

energy/emotion: ANGER

DYSREGULATED FIGHT: irritability, frustration, controlling, bullying, condescending

UNINTEGRATED FIGHT (hyperarousal): chaotic emotional responses, aggression, rage, violence, abuse, out of control, demanding, threatening

INTEGRATED FIGHT/ANGER: assertiveness, boundaries, motivation, courage, drive, leadership

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FIGHT

energy/emotion: ANGER

In relationships, the energy of anger serves to let us know when our boundaries have been crossed and when we might need to step in to protect and defend another or ourselves.

When not integrated and not met with awareness, the energy of anger is outside one's WOT. If anger is outside your WOT, you may be unable to hold the energy of anger without hurting Self or others. The anger becomes like a hot potato; if you can't hold it, you'll throw it at someone else.

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FIGHT

energy/emotion: ANGER

When we have unintegrated anger AND judgment about anger, we also can't hold the charge of anger, so we collapse.

We collapse because we repress (silence, stop) our own anger.

If anger cannot be discharged in service of bringing us back to safety — via self-defense, defense of others, setting boundaries — we will collapse into immobilization.

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FIGHT

energy/emotion: ANGER

When you are able to hold the charge and channel the energy of ANGER...

- > you can assert yourself calmly & firmly
- > you set & hold boundaries without being rigid; you know when it's necessary to be more rigid with boundaries
 - > the energy gives you courage & motivation
- > you can be in grounded, regulated leadership

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FLIGHT

energy/emotion: PERSEVERANCE

DYSREGULATED FLIGHT: stuck "on", worry wart, hypervigilant,
constant busyness, multitasking, perfectionism

UNINTEGRATED FLIGHT (hyperarousal): chaotic emotional outbursts,
anxiety, overwhelm, OCD, rigid, rushing, panicking, chronic insomnia

INTEGRATED FLIGHT/PERSEVERANCE: calm determination, know
when to retreat or disengage from conflict, grounded productivity,
industriousness, get stuff done

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FLIGHT

energy/emotion: PERSEVERANCE

In relationships, the energy of perseverance gives us the energy we need to stick it out through hard times and conflict and to invest the time and energy needed to repair ruptures.

When not integrated and not met with awareness, the energy of perseverance is outside one's WOT. If perseverance is outside your WOT, you may be unable to hold its energy without going into flighty states of busyness and ungrounded productivity or to turn "off" when you need to.

When you can't hold and integrate flight/perseverance energy, you can hurt others with obsessive-compulsiveness, being too rigid, or throwing your hot potato of anxiety on to them.

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FLIGHT

energy/emotion: PERSEVERANCE

When we have unintegrated perseverance AND judgment about productivity, we collapse.

We collapse because we repress our agency to choose slowness and calm determination.

If flight energy and unintegrated perseverance cannot be discharged in service of bringing us back to safety — via healthy retreat from danger or using our calm determination to stick with something — we will collapse into immobilization.

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FLIGHT

energy/emotion: PERSEVERANCE

When you are able to hold the charge and channel the energy of
PERSEVERANCE...

- > you know when to disengage from conflict that's dangerous or going nowhere/from circular conversations
 - > you have a spirit of industriousness
 - > there is a calm confidence in your ability to get things done
- > there is a sense of groundedness in your productivity (instead of human doing)
- > you are able to notice & tend to details without becoming overwhelmed

The energy of perseverance serves to give us the energy we need to get through challenges and see them to completion.

When not met with awareness, a dysregulated or hyperaroused flight state and the energy of perseverance is outside one's Window of Tolerance. Because one can't hold the charge of perseverance without hypervigilance, controlling, and micromanaging, it devolves into anxiety.

SYMPATHETIC + DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FREEZE

energy/emotion: JUDGMENT

DYSREGULATED FREEZE: guilt, anxiety, procrastination, gas + brakes, "shoulding", want to do something but unable to move or don't know what to do

UNINTEGRATED FREEZE: panic attacks, extreme anxiety, agoraphobia, co-dependency, suicidality, overwhelm, stuck

INTEGRATED FREEZE/JUDGMENT: pause to weigh all options, take as much time as needed to make a grounded decision, discernment, judicious, intuitive resistance, poised readiness, acute awareness

SYMPATHETIC + DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FREEZE

energy/emotion: JUDGMENT

In relationships, the energy of judgment serves to give us discernment and judiciousness. We must slow down to carefully weigh our options and feel into what is right for us/for the relationship.

When not integrated and not met with awareness, the energy of judgment is outside one's WOT. If judgment is outside your WOT, you may be unable to hold the energy of judgment without getting overwhelmed and stuck. There is an anxiousness in the waiting that you can't tolerate.

SYMPATHETIC + DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FREEZE

energy/emotion: JUDGMENT

When we have unintegrated judgment, we are stuck between options. What "should" I choose? I "should" do this or that. WHAT IS THE RIGHT DECISION HERE?!

We stay in a state of exhausted anxiety, tired but wired, which quickly depletes our energy resources and leads to overwhelm.

If judgment cannot be mobilized so a decision or move can be made, we are likely to stay in this frozen state chronically before eventually collapsing into shame and a feeling of "I can't".

SYMPATHETIC + DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: FREEZE

energy/emotion: JUDGMENT

When you're able to hold the charge and channel the energy of
JUDGMENT...

- > you can pause to weigh all the options
- > there is space to lean in to resistance & determine if it is intuitive or fear-based
- > there is a sense of poised readiness — I don't have to be in action all the time, but I'm ready to spring into action when required.
- > there is a sense of grounded judiciousness & discernment & a willingness to slow down to come to the right decision

DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: COLLAPSE

energy/emotion: SHAME

DYSREGULATED COLLAPSE: isolation, frequent short spells of dissociation, boredom, blankness, apathy, zoning out, mindless scrolling, helplessness

UNINTEGRATED COLLAPSE: severe depression, chronic fatigue, chronic dissociation, suicidality, "I can't"

INTEGRATED COLLAPSE/SHAME: stillness, peace, presence, mindfulness, shame serves to bring you back into integrity rather than keeping you stuck

DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: COLLAPSE

energy/emotion: SHAME

In relationships, the energy of shame serves to let us know when we are outside our integrity — when we have said or done something that isn't congruent with our character. This type of shame isn't unfairly put on us; no one is "shaming" us. The shame is a natural feeling that arises when you need to course-correct, take accountability, change behavior, and come back into integrity.

When not integrated and not met with awareness, the energy of shame is outside one's WOT. If shame is outside your WOT, you may be unable to hold the energy of shame without staying completely immobilized/wanting to hide or disappear.

DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

nervous system state: COLLAPSE

energy/emotion: SHAME

When we have unintegrated shame, we live in a state of chronic shame. It ends up permeating every aspect of our lives and relationships. Unintegrated shame leads to unconscious reactions like self-isolation, believing you can't do anything, and believing you're a victim.

The body produces analgesic chemicals to conserve energy, and chronically, leads to being bed-ridden or a "couch potato" — further increasing the shame.

If shame cannot be integrated to allow for deep rest OR mobilized with safety to bring peace, we stay in this stuck state and our WOT stays small.

**WHAT DOES "HEALING YOUR NERVOUS
SYSTEM" ACTUALLY MEAN?**

When you say you want to "heal your nervous system", what you're actually saying is that you've recognized that your nervous system lacks CAPACITY, RESILIENCY, & FLEXIBILITY.

You're also saying that your Window of Tolerance is small.

CAPACITY

CAPACITY is the space that your nervous system has to hold stress.

Low capacity = even small stressors are overwhelming (outside your WOT).

The more capacity you have, the more spacious you feel, and the wider your WOT is.

RESILIENCY

RESILIENCY is the ability to bounce back after stress.

Low resiliency = bouncing back from stress takes a long time or is very difficult. Even small things can feel impossible to bounce back from. And sometimes, collapse is the necessary response for a body which refuses to keep going because it needs deep rest.

FLEXIBILITY

FLEXIBILITY is the nervous system's ability to move easily between safety, mobilization, and immobilization without becoming chronically stuck in one state (ie. depression = chronic immobilization or OCD = chronic flight mobilization).

When you take action steps to build your nervous system's capacity, resiliency, and flexibility, your Window of Tolerance will naturally EXPAND.

**Healing doesn't happen if you're
always OUTSIDE your Window of
Tolerance.**

**Healing doesn't happen if you're
always INSIDE your Window of
Tolerance.**

The SWEET SPOT is when you're riding the edge of your Window of Tolerance.

Maybe you've seen my Cold Plunge Training or noticed me using the phrase "I am comfortable being uncomfortable"...

It's great to be "comfortable being uncomfortable"...

BUT, if you're constantly uncomfortable, your body will remain in a constant state of alarm.

If the alarm is never shut off, the nervous system remains chronically activated or chronically immobilized.

Being way outside your window of tolerance for an extended time leads to the development of chronic, mysterious health symptoms.

These symptoms are your body's way of crying out for safety and comfort. Sometimes, when severe, psych meds might be the only option to turn down the volume of the body's cries.

"Turn down the volume" is the key phrase there. Not "get rid of", not "allow me to ignore", not "keep living my life without changing anything".

Balance is key.

Your comfort zone is a lovely place, but no growth happens there.

And, never being in your comfort zone is stressful to your body and lowers your nervous system's resiliency, flexibility, and capacity.

The process of "widening" your window is a back and forth between stress and coming back to safety.

A dark, textured circular shape, resembling a watercolor blot or a dark ink smudge, is centered on a solid blue background. The shape has irregular, feathered edges and a mottled internal texture. Overlaid on this dark shape is the text "quick break" in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

quick break

NERVOUS SYSTEM TOOLS: THE DELICATE DANCE OF EXPANSION & CONTRACTION

As you might imagine, I work with a lot of people who are in chronic states of dysregulation and/or hyper/hypoarousal.

People with wide Windows of Tolerance don't work with a practitioner like me.

And since nervous system info, lingo, and tools are trendy right now, people often come into my world wanting nervous system-regulating tools.

They naturally want to know, "What tools do I need to regulate myself and feel better?"

But, this workshop is part of a series called FEEL WITHOUT FEAR. If you aren't feeling it, you aren't healing it — and what we feel or are afraid of feeling is what is OUTSIDE our Windows of Tolerance.

Nervous system-regulating tools are the LEAST useful to you when you use them to bypass or avoid the body's sensations, feelings, and symptoms.

Nervous system work is ALL about being IN our bodies, present with whatever is happening. It's meant to reconnect us to sensation, emotion, and feelings that we've avoided for years because they were scary and uncomfortable or because our culture has pathologized them and labeled them "bad".

Self-soothing is an important skill. Everyone needs to know how to self-soothe. But...

Too often, our work stops once we've found the thing that "works" — the thing that makes us feel other than how we presently feel, especially if what's actually happening is uncomfortable and a feeling we'd rather avoid.

If you always reach for a nervous system-regulating tool when you feel discomfort, you may be "getting through" that moment of dysregulation, but you are NOT expanding your Window of Tolerance.

The work of healing trauma, healing our nervous systems, and widening our Windows of Tolerance REQUIRES being able to feel uncomfortable things: physical and emotional pain, anxiety, fear, abandonment, shame, anger, rage, etc.

This work definitely does not require us to be in utter misery and discomfort all the time, as pleasure and play are also necessary parts of healing.

However, if we use our nervous system tools as a means of avoiding discomfort, our expansion will come to a halt.

**I'm not telling you to stop using your
nervous system tools.**

**But, I would like to invite you to add a
step in your process...**

BEFORE REACHING FOR A NERVOUS
SYSTEM-REGULATING TOOL...

BEFORE REACHING FOR A NERVOUS
SYSTEM-REGULATING TOOL...

PAUSE and FEEL FIRST.

**If you find it difficult or impossible
to be present with your feelings
and you need nervous system tools
frequently to get through the day,
your WOT is small.**

**You will actually benefit MORE
from widening your WOT than you
will from using nervous system
tools to stay in a small window.**

Remember when I said this...

"The line between dysregulation and hyper/hypoarousal is a blurry one and different from person to person."

I can't give you a prescriptive "Here's when you're dysregulated and here's when you're hyper/hypoaroused. Here's when you use a tool and here's when you don't."

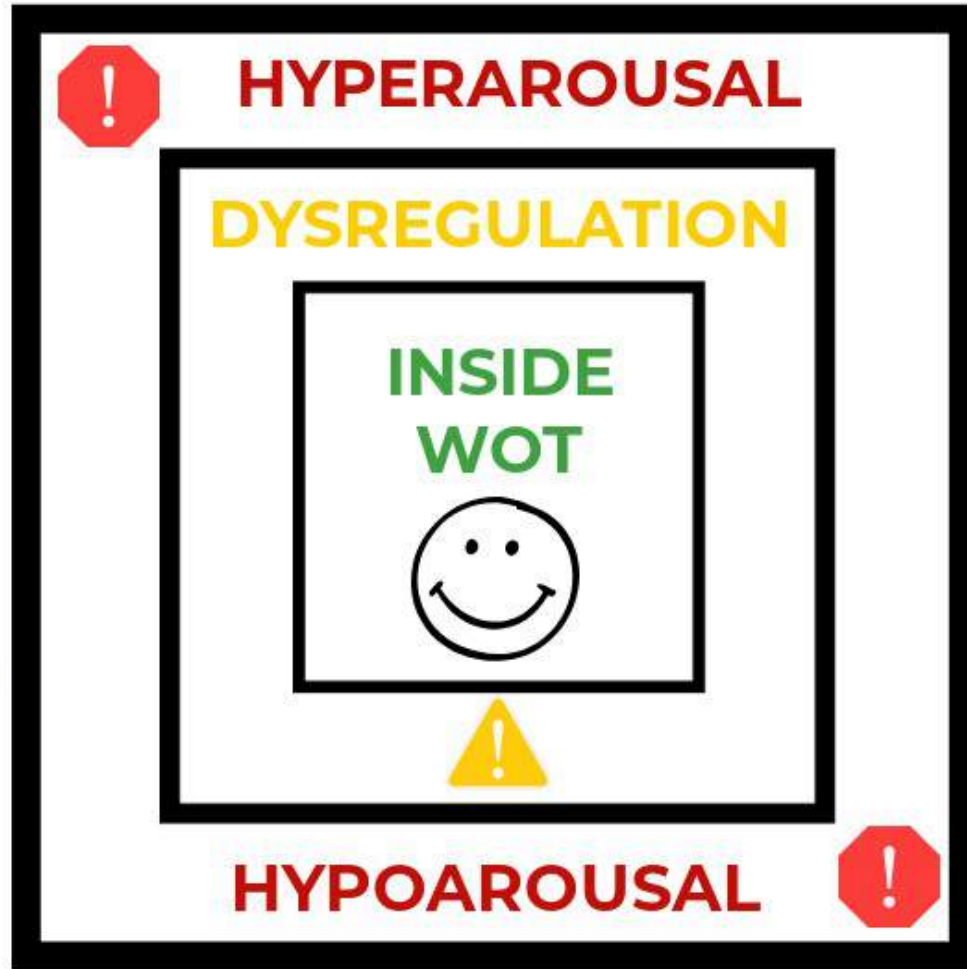
You're going to have to commit to the process of feeling. Only you can know what you can handle and when you need a tool.

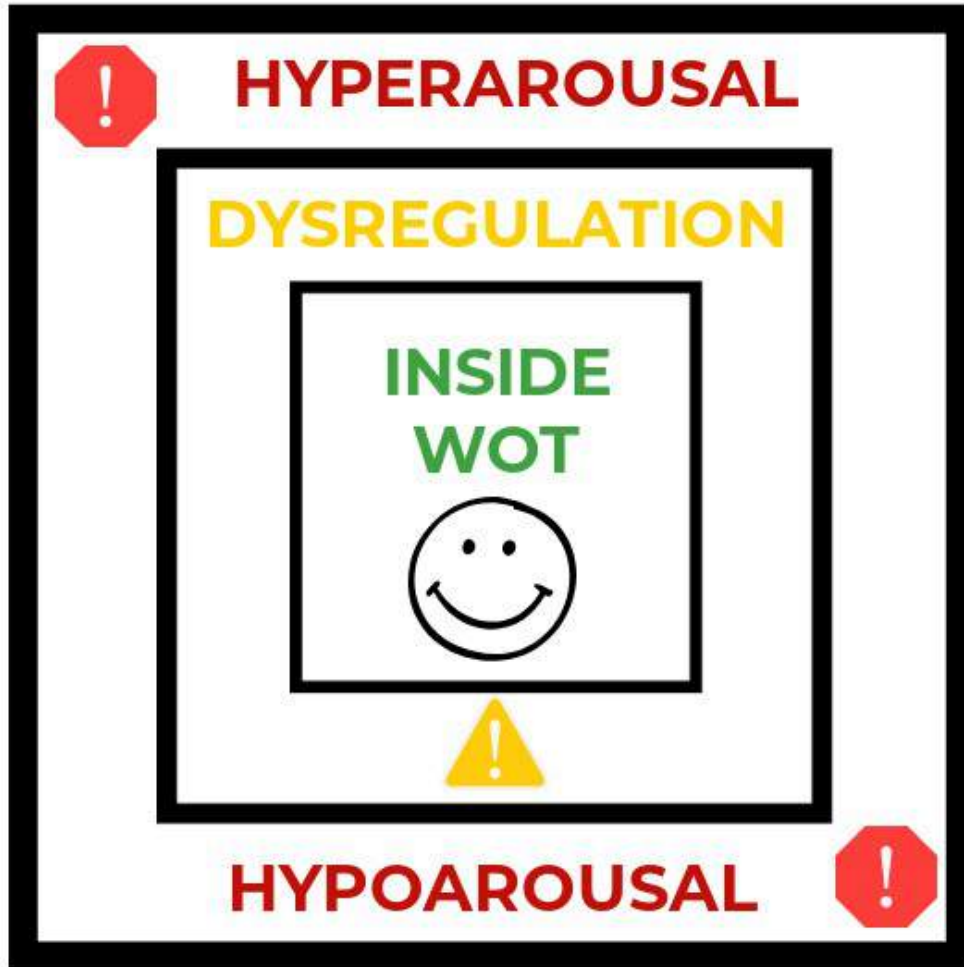
**However, I can recommend when it might be
necessary to use a tool and when you can
s-t-r-e-t-c-h yourself to expand and be with
discomfort...**

➔

If you are
HYPER OR
HYPOAROUSSED,
you definitely
need a tool.

I'd recommend
a Nervous
System CPR tool.





If you are
dysregulated,
**PAUSE. SIT
WITH IT. FEEL.**

You may not
need a tool at
all; it may
resolve on its
own.

Remember Newton's 3rd Law?

"For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction."

For every expansion, there is a contraction, and vice versa. So, if you blow out your window of tolerance, the equal and opposite reaction is that it may shrink down even smaller after. (Contraction to the expansion.)

It is totally unnecessary to blow out your window of tolerance because you want to face + heal triggers.

Small, slow, gentle titration and intentional exposure to stress over time gently widens that window. Gentleness and consistent practice also makes any contraction less severe, while still allowing you to expand in slow, sustainable ways.

It is also necessary to have tools that can bring you back to safety and regulation quickly when you are blown out of your window of tolerance.

However...

We don't need or want to regulate away every moment of dysregulation. If we do, we aren't widening our windows of tolerance.

With time, practice, and consistency, you will eventually be able to tolerate stressors that were once intolerable to you. And, you will know how to return to the safety of your comfort zone when you need to.

My Window of Tolerance in early 2019...

traveling

driving

inconsistent
routine

cooking/cleaning

community
activities

routine
psych meds
husband & kids
best friend
my bed
pelvic floor PT
TV/Netflix
taking a sauna
taking a bath
receiving reiki

social media

working

physical
activity

socializing

staying up
too late

I tried to make a graphic illustrating all the things that are now within my WOT, and the font was so tiny, you could barely read it. I can tolerate SO MUCH MORE now than I could before!



Do I ever get outside my WOT now?

Yes, but rarely. It's pretty uncommon for me to get triggered, but I do.

I have cultivated such an intimate relationship with my body and have so much confidence in my ability to return to the safety I've created in my body that I can usually notice when I'm getting close to blowing out my WOT and take steps to bring myself back to the edge or back to my comfort zone.

The goal is not NEVER GET DYSREGULATED.

The goal is appropriate dysregulation.
Dysregulation itself isn't "bad" or "wrong". It isn't a
sign of your personal failure or weakness as a
human being.

Dysregulation is normal and healthy... *to an
appropriate threat.*

MORE REALISTIC GOALS THAN "NEVER GET DYSREGULATED"

- > more flexibility in your nervous system — you get activated to an appropriate threat and once the threat is resolved, your nervous system naturally comes back to safety
- > more capacity in your nervous system — you can hold more stress without added dysregulation, you can also hold more expansion (joy, risks, pleasure)

MORE REALISTIC GOALS THAN "NEVER GET DYSREGULATED"

- > more resiliency — you bounce back more quickly after stressful events
- > more awareness of your body's sensations so you can discern when dysregulation is becoming hypo/hyperarousal
- > more awareness of the voice in your head and ego stories of meaning about feelings

BIG REACTIONS

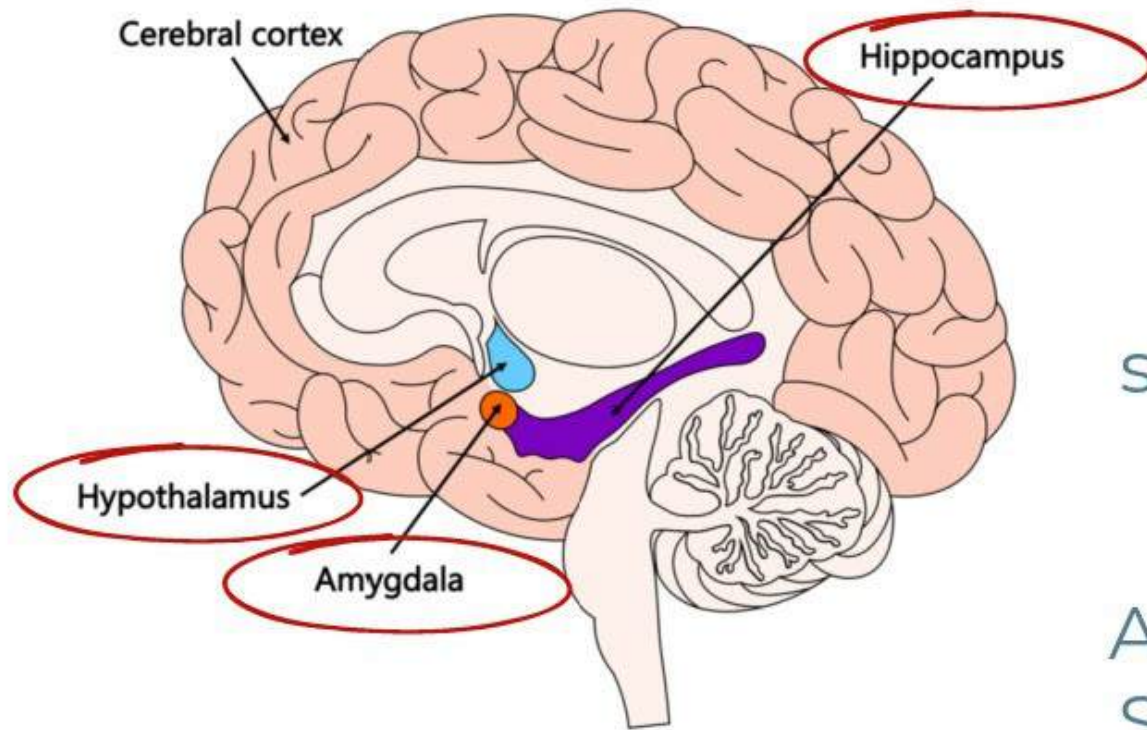
When we're outside our WOT, we know because our reaction is often BIG.

BIG anger. BIG urge to run away. BIG anxiety. BIG freeze. BIG shutdown.



For those of you who have been in FEEL
WITHOUT FEAR from the beginning, think
back to the second workshop:
UN-TRIGGERED

Let's review...



The AMYGDALAE and HIPPOCAMPUS work together to declare a threat. The HYPOTHALAMUS sends a message down the brain stem to activate the AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM to fight, flee, or immobilize.

The AMYGDALA —> HIPPOCAMPUS —>
HYPOTHALAMUS —> AUTONOMIC NERVOUS
SYSTEM

response to stress and stimuli happens in real
time with any sort of trauma.

THE EXACT SAME SERIES OF EVENTS
HAPPENS WHEN WE'RE
HYPOAROUSSED OR HYPERAROUSSED.

EXACTLY THE SAME.

Our brains do not know the difference
between a trauma that is happening in
real time and a big trigger.

When hypo/hyperaroused, the limbic brain (amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus) has sensed a threat level that can plunge us into undesirable behaviors like lashing out in anger, self-medicating with substances, and withdrawing from life.

Using words, like affirmations and mantras, don't work on the limbic brain. The limbic brain doesn't speak English, French, Chinese, or Spanish. The limbic brain also doesn't keep linear time.

When a threat — real, perceived, past or present — is detected, it takes **just 75 milliseconds** for the amygdala and limbic brain to send survival signals throughout the body. This is about 4x faster than the blink of an eye.

However, the PREFRONTAL CORTEX — the part of the brain that allows us to reason, analyze, and make grounded, thought-out decisions — takes **at least 350 milliseconds** to perceive and evaluate the threat (if the limbic brain hasn't totally taken over).

— Dr. Kate Truitt, Trauma Counseling Center of Los Angeles

Our BIG REACTIONS are the result of a decision being made for us by our survival brains.

BIG hypo/hyperarousal reactions are always
UNCONSCIOUS.

They always happen faster than we can think about them. This is the wisdom of our bodies trying to protect us.

And also, we often hurt Self and others when we are in this BIG REACTIVE place.

So...

Do we just react and then apologize
later?

If we don't have conscious control over
our reactions, what are we supposed to
do?

There are always going to be situations where big reactions are unavoidable.

And, you don't want to avoid an unconscious survival response if it's what is actually going to save your life, right?

Those aren't the times I'm talking about.

I AM talking about being so in tune and connected to your body that you are able to notice when you're dysregulated and BEFORE you drift into hypo/hyperarousal.

Think back to a time when you had a big anger reaction. Maybe you screamed at or hit someone.

Maybe you don't even remember because the reaction was so big that you weren't fully present.

Study yourself. Was there a point when you could feel the anger shift more into aggression and rage? What did that feel like? A sudden rush of heat to your face? Your hands balled up in fists? An uncontrollable urge to belittle someone?

Think back to a time when you had a big collapse reaction.

Study yourself. Was there a point when you felt a little bit of shame but it got bigger and out of control? What did that feel like? Was your body so heavy you couldn't move? Couldn't speak?

No matter what happened when you were outside your Window of Tolerance, you can probably remember some cues that your body was in major distress.

If you don't, that's ok. You're not doing it wrong. It's completely normal to be unable to recall the specifics of a traumatic or triggering event.

The main way to stay aware of what's going on in your body so you know what your line between dysregulation and hypo/hyperarousal is for you is EMBODIMENT.

When you are so embodied — IN YOUR BODY — that you are aware of the little shifts and feelings and sensations, you can learn and then recognize in real time what your signs of distress are that tell you you're getting close to the edge of your WOT.

Staying in your body during a conflict, emergency, uncomfortable situation or feeling takes practice.

One thing I recommend to my clients as a first step toward embodiment during discomfort is to create some sort of "touch point" with their body".

EMBODIMENT "TOUCH POINTS"

- > place a hand on your thigh during a conflict and stay conscious of it
- > do a body scan and notice where there is tension (jaw, pelvic floor, sucking in stomach) and release
- > notice your breath when the other person is communicating; if shallow and irregular, slow down and deepen

POTENTIAL SIGNS OF DISTRESS:

- >> hands in fists
- >> "frozen" eyes
- >> getting fidgety
- >> loss of focus
- >> rush of heat/flushing
- >> suddenly very angry
- >> anxiety
- >> panic attack
- >> blaming others
- >> sudden headache or other symptom

What does it feel like when you're triggered? And, do you feel differently depending on the trigger?

It is YOUR responsibility to know
when you are outside your
window of tolerance.

How can anyone else know this
for you?

What are your signs of distress?

WIDENING YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The way we build capacity, resiliency, and flexibility in our nervous systems is the same way we build muscle strength.

We stress out the muscle by lifting something slightly heavier than we're used to. If 20 pounds is easy for 8 reps, maybe you add stress by doing 20 pounds for 12 reps. Or we add 10 pounds and do 5 reps.

Then, we rest the muscle and allow it to recover.

You don't walk into the gym and deadlift 350 pounds if you haven't already trained for that. You would seriously hurt yourself and it would probably be impossible anyway.

Your nervous system may not be able to face your biggest triggers right now. Those triggers are like 350 pounds that you can't lift without hurting (re-traumatizing) yourself.

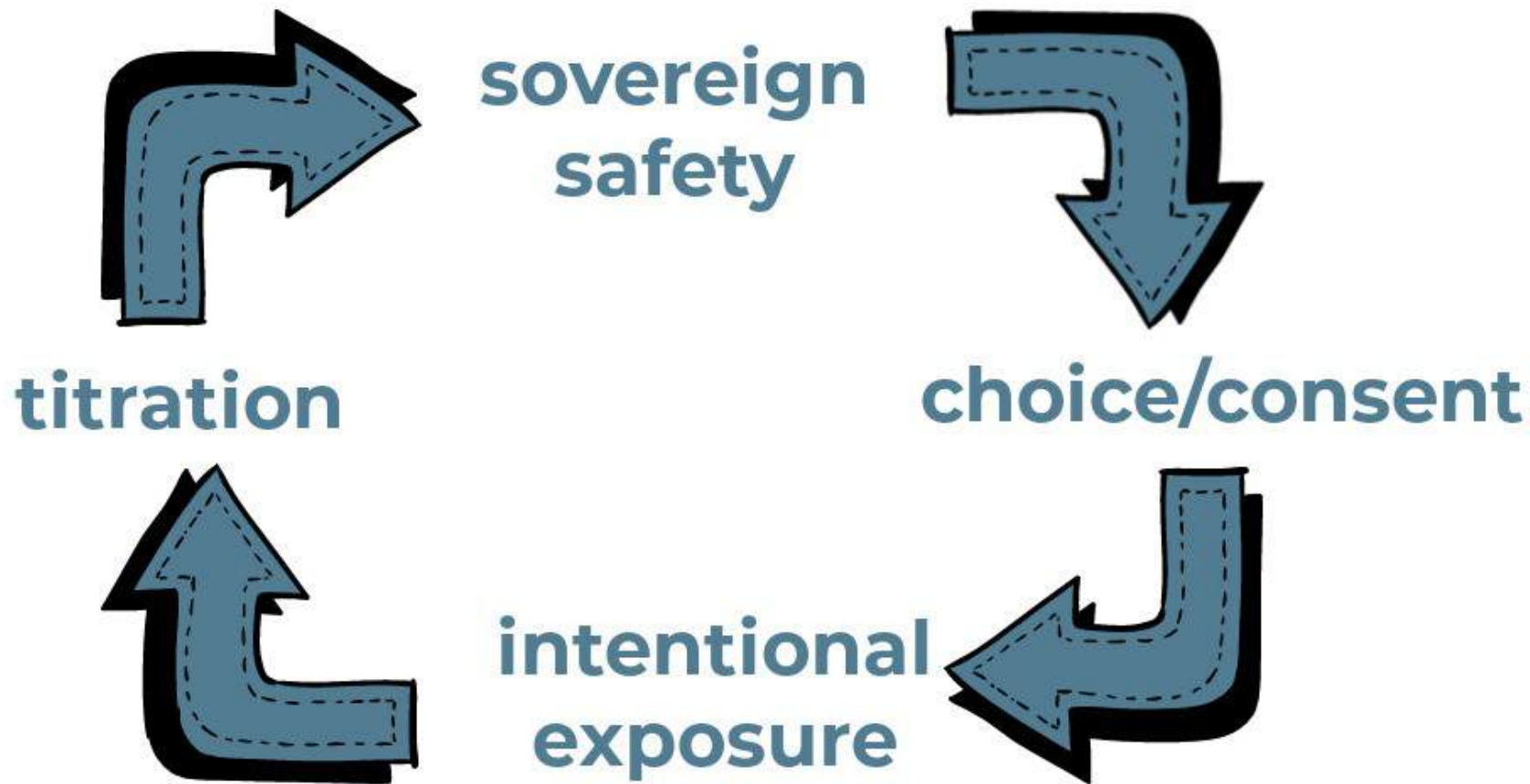
This is why finding our EDGE of our Window of Tolerance is so important.

We stress the nervous system out intentionally to that edge and come back to safety.

Consistently repeating this stress >> safety cycle builds resiliency, flexibility, and capacity in our nervous systems.

**Creating more resiliency, flexibility,
and capacity in your nervous
system does NOT happen if you're
always in safety, just like muscle is
not built by lifting nothing.**

WIDENING YOUR WINDOW OF TOLERANCE TO TRIGGERS



SOVEREIGN SAFETY means...

- > I am my own authority.
- > I trust myself.
- > I decide what is best for me.
- > I am allowed to take as much time as I need.
- > I commit to the process.
- > I establish safety in my body by practicing.
- > I choose this.

CHOICE/CONSENT means...

- > I know what I am choosing and why.
- > I understand the potential risks and benefits of this choice.
- > I have made an informed decision to expose myself to this intentional stressor for the purposes of increasing my stress tolerance and widening my WOT.
- > I take full responsibility for myself.
- > I consent to this intentional stressor.

INTENTIONAL EXPOSURE means...

- > I am doing this for the purpose of increasing my stress tolerance and widening my window of tolerance.
- > I am choosing this intentional stressor.
- > I use my agency to decide when I begin and end this practice.
- > 3 intentional stressors for this class: cold exposure, breathwork, & acupressure mat

TITRATION means...

- > I am slowly and gently increasing my exposure to this stressor.
- > I commit to not intentionally blowing myself out of my window of tolerance.
- > I trust that I will be ok, even if I do blow myself out of my window of tolerance.
- > I understand that consistent exposure to small stressors over time is preferable to trying to navigate a stressor I'm not yet ready for.

3 EXAMPLES OF INTENTIONAL STRESSORS

- > cold exposure/cold plunges
- > breathwork with breath holds
- > acupressure mat

The common theme with each of these intentional stressors is that they give you opportunities to RELAX AROUND DISCOMFORT and SURRENDER TO WHAT'S HAPPENING so your body-mind-spirit can experience stress and discomfort and realize, "Hey, this isn't fun, but I'm ok."

You might even be surprised to discover that, with consistent practice, you actually begin to love and even crave these intentional stressors!

ACUPRESSURE MAT



> stressor: pain

> best to use with no shirt on

> first couple of minutes are the hardest and provide a wonderful opportunity to relax around pain

ACUPRESSURE MAT CONTRAINDICATIONS

Do not use if...

- > you have skin inflammation such as a sunburn, back acne, eczema, or psoriasis
- > you have unregulated high blood pressure
- > you have thin skin due to something like Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome or diabetes
- > you have a blood coagulation issue
- > you have an open wound on your back
- > you have a fever or acute illness

COLD PLUNGES



- > stressor: cold
- > most effective at 60°F or less
- > the colder the water, the more uncomfortable (TITRATE!)

COLD PLUNGES

- > easy opportunity to practice complete presence + somatic & cognitive awareness
 - > sovereignty practice: you choose when you get in, how long you stay, & when you get out
 - > great way to practice overriding the nervous system's stress response
- **I do not recommend cold plunges if you are in burnout/functional freeze or shutdown/chronic depression

COLD PLUNGE TIPS FOR WIDENING YOUR WOT

#1 — Your nervous system's instinct to cold temperatures is to GASP!

Hold your breath going in to the water so that you have to EXHALE once you get in rather than INHALE (gasp).

COLD PLUNGE TIPS FOR WIDENING YOUR WOT

#2 — Practice muscle relaxation.

When we're faced with something our nervous system perceives as threatening, we instinctively contract our muscles. Your muscles will constrict in cold water — unless you override that nervous system response by noticing where there's muscle constriction and intentionally releasing it.

COLD PLUNGE TIPS FOR WIDENING YOUR WOT

#3 — Repeat a mantra... IF you're actually feeling ok.

if you're employing the breathing and muscle relaxation above, then you're purposefully putting your nervous system into a calm state — the PERFECT state for mantras because your nervous system can actually believe what you're saying!

COLD PLUNGES CONTRAINDICATIONS

Do not use if...

- > you have unregulated low blood pressure or impaired circulation
- > you have Raynaud's, cold urticaria, & other hypersensitivities or intolerances to cold
- > you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- > you have epilepsy
- > you are in a chronic freeze-shutdown nervous system state (hypothyroidism, chronic depression, burnout, constant overwhelm, chronic fatigue)

COLD PLUNGE SAFETY TIPS

- > go with a friend until you're comfortable going alone
- > wear watershoes, especially if plunging in a wild body of water
- > don't take a hot bath or shower to warm up; let your body warm up naturally by laying in the sun or wrapping in layers of clothing or doing movements like squats or jumping jacks
- > get out of the water BEFORE you start shivering
- > DO NOT drink alcohol before cold exposure

BREATHWORK W/ HOLDS

- > stressor: breath & sensation
- > also an excellent way to mobilize a frozen or collapsed nervous system
- > I like & use the Wim Hof Breathing Method (WHBM) which is forced hyperventilation with breath holds.

BREATHWORK W/ HOLDS

- > you will feel sensations such as tingling in hands, arms, face, and/or feet
- > you will likely but not always feel lightheaded or dizzy
- > you will be able to hold your breath for longer than you think possible

BREATHWORK W/ HOLDS

"Breathing is the easiest and most instrumental part of the autonomic nervous system to control and navigate. In fact, the way you breathe strongly affects the chemical and physiological activities in your body."

— Wim Hof Method Breathing Exercises

BREATHWORK W/ HOLDS

#1 — Sit or lie down.

#2 — Take 30-40 deep breaths with your eyes closed and all your focus on your breath. Inhale through the nose or mouth and exhale through the mouth.

#3 — After the last exhalation, inhale one more time, exhale completely, and stop breathing. Hold until you feel the urge to take a breath.

#4 — Take a big, full breath to fill your chest and lungs, hold 15 seconds. Resume normal breathing or repeat.

BREATHWORK W/ HOLDS

You can find a video tutorial from Wim Hof here:

<https://www.wimhofmethod.com/breathing-exercises>



BREATHWORK

CONTRAINDICATIONS

"When you do the WHM, the rapid breathing simulates the body's natural stress response and arouses your sympathetic (fight, flight, freeze) nervous system. Think of how you would breathe if you were running from a predator or you'd just got a massive fright. It would be similar to the WHM breathing, right?

There's nothing inherently wrong with manufacturing a stress response through breathwork. One of the strengths of the WHM when done correctly is it builds resilience to stress so when you're in a "real" stressful situation (like freezing cold water, for example) you're better equipped to deal with it. Studies are finding it may also have other valuable health benefits."

— The Risks of the Wim Hof Method

BREATHWORK CONTRAINDICATIONS

Do not use if...

- > you are already in a highly stressed out, sympathetic nervous system state
- > your nervous system doesn't naturally down-regulate OR you don't have skills to down-regulate
- > feelings of dizziness, tingling, or lightheadedness will trigger anxiety or panic attacks or health anxiety

If this breathing method causes fight/flight activation that doesn't resolve on its own within a few minutes, you can **DOWN-REGULATE** your nervous system with another type of breathing — 1:2 breathwork.

DOWN-REGULATING 1:2 BREATHWORK

#1 — Lay on the ground or a bed comfortably.

#2 — Soften your belly. Relax your muscles. Close your eyes.

#3 — Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds and exhale out your nose for 8 seconds. (Or inhale for 3, exhale for 6; or inhale for 5, exhale for 10.)

#4 — Practice for 10 minutes.

With each of these intentional stressors, you'll find that consistent practice and returning to safety during the exercise translates to being able to tolerate more stress when not doing the exercise.

And, of course, your own feelings and sensations CAN be your intentional stressors.

If you have an uncomfortable sensation in your body, use that as your stressor. Be present with it. Feel it. Notice any ego stories about it. Over time, your ability to be present with and feel your own discomfort will grow too!

A dark, textured circular shape, resembling a watercolor blot or a dark ink smudge, is centered on a solid blue background. The texture is grainy and uneven, with some lighter blue areas visible at the edges of the dark circle.

**quick break
then Q&A!**