

A BRILLIANT ME IN ACTION ONE PAGE GUIDE TO...

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The **Window of Tolerance** is a model developed by Dr. Dan Siegel to describe the optimal zone of arousal in which a person can function, learn, and relate well to others.

WHAT?

- Within the window, we feel calm, alert, and regulated.
- Outside the window, we may experience:
 - Hyperarousal (fight/flight: anxious, angry, overwhelmed)
 - Hypoarousal (freeze/shutdown: withdrawn, numb, “zoned out”)

Everyone’s window is different—and it can shrink or grow depending on stress, trauma, or support.

Children need to be within their window to engage with learning and relationships. Understanding this helps staff to identify students who are struggling and support regulation.

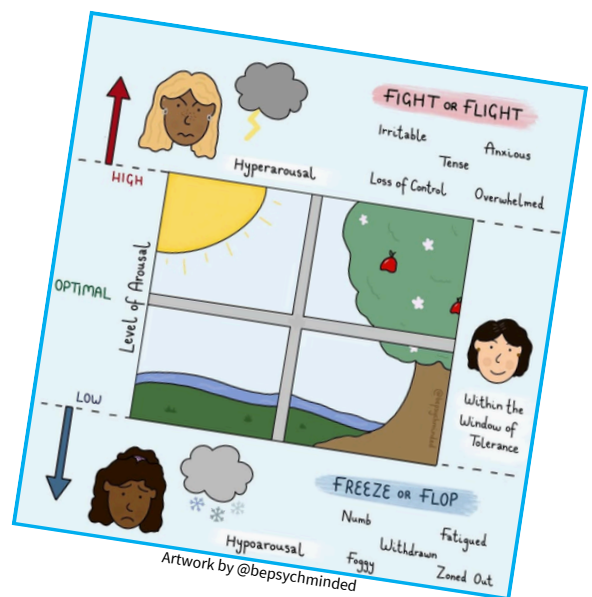
WHY?

This model helps staff and pupils understand that behaviour is often a sign of being outside their “window,” not a choice to misbehave. It supports regulation, resilience, and compassionate responses. The language of “*being in or out of your window*” can empower children to notice and manage their own states, strengthening emotional literacy and self-regulation.

The Window of Tolerance is perfectly aligned with helping children develop **self-awareness** and learning **to self-manage**.

SEL?

- Introduce a simple version with child-friendly visuals (e.g. green/yellow/blue zones).
- Help pupils identify what it feels like when they’re “in” or “out” of their window.
- Co-create calming and energising strategies to return to the window (e.g. breathing, sensory tools, movement breaks).
- Train staff to recognise dysregulation and respond supportively and consistently.



FIND OUT MORE

- [Video: The Window of Tolerance \(Beacon House\)](#) and [flier \(pdf\)](#)
- [Video: The Window of Tolerance Explained](#). (Dr Pooky Knightsmith)
- [Dr Lori Desautels has some useful resources on the Window of Tolerance](#)
- [Brain Box resources](#)

Book

- The Whole-Brain Child by Dr Daniel J Siegel & Dr Tina Payne Bryson (good introduction)

SEE ALSO

- Regulate, Relate, Reason
- PACE
- Polyvagal Theory