HYPERAROUSAL: activation exceeds the capacity to integrate. Feels like high stress, panic, overwhelm, fast heart rate, not able to think clearly, and other Sympathetic Nervous System activation.

HYPOAROUSAL: insufficient activation to integrate material. Feels like flat affect, numb, mind slow and disconnected, hard to feel body sensations, cold and other Dorsal Vagal activation signs like limp muscles, no tone, breathing suppressed.

Regulated arousal

Dysregulated activation = trauma

Window of tolerance

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM:
1. HYPERAROUSAL: fight and/or flight, hyperdefending, emotional reactivity, hypervigilence, intrusive imagery, obsessive/cyclical thoughts, inhale of breath
2. FREEZING: high activation coupled with immobility, frozen defensive responses

3. PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM/VENTRAL VAGAL: regulated arousal, things feel manageable, calm, relaxed, connected to exhale of breath, normal heart rate, good digestion, restful, frontal lobes are online and thinking is clear, mindfulness, good social engagement and connection to others

4. HYPOAROUSAL/DORSAL VAGAL: feigned death, collapse, flat affect, cognitive dissociation, numbing, disabled active motor defensive responses

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TRAUMA THERAPY FIRSTLY WORKS TO EXPAND THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

When the window expands, then we gain greater ability to stay calm in the face of problems or hardship. We also begin to have better regulation of our nervous system so we can think and talk about difficult things without it being re-traumatised. Our bounce-back abilities improve leading to faster recovery from setbacks. Then we can begin to look in more depth at trauma material in counselling.

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