




**GOOD LIFE
RECOVERY**

Emotional Regulation in Recovery

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What is Emotional Regulation?


It is the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of life with a range of emotions that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to allow you to have spontaneous reactions as well as have the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed.



What is Emotional Regulation?

Emotional regulation is a complex process that involves initiating, inhibiting, or modulating one's state or behaviour in a given situation, including:

- ❖ your feelings
- ❖ your thoughts
- ❖ your physiological responses (ex., heart rate)
- ❖ emotion-related behavior (bodily actions or expressions).



What is Emotional Regulation?

Functionally, emotional regulation can also refer to processes such as the tendency to focus one's attention to a task and the ability to suppress inappropriate behavior under instruction.

Emotional regulation is a highly significant function in human life.

These are skills that are lacking when someone is in active addiction, partly because the part of our brain that is involved in impulse control is offline.



What is Emotional Dysregulation?

This is when your nervous system is out of balance and begins to go into the fight/flight or freeze response.

Fight/flight:

You begin to feel agitated. You may feel anxious, revved up or angry. You don't feel out of control, but you also don't feel comfortable in your own skin. You are on your way to a hyper aroused physiological state.



Hyper Arousal

This is when you feel extremely anxious, angry or even out of control.

Unfamiliar or threatening feelings can overwhelm you, and you might want to fight (argue or snap at someone, get condescending, say nasty things, provoke someone, etc.) or you may run away (or fantasize about running away).



What is Emotional Dysregulation?

Freeze:

This is when you start to feel like you are shutting down. You may feel a little spacy, lose track of time, or start to feel sluggish. You don't feel out of control, but you also don't feel comfortable in your own skin.

You are on your way to a hypo aroused physiological state.



Hypo Arousal

This is when you feel extremely zoned out and numb, both emotionally and physically.

Time can go missing. It might feel like you're completely frozen.

It's not something you choose – your body takes over.



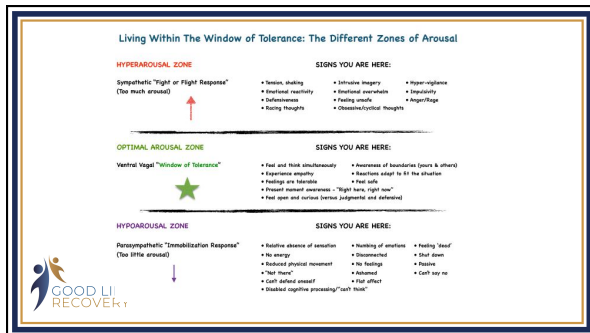
The Window of Tolerance

This is where we want to live in our sobriety. It is the calm in the middle – where we are at rest and ready to meet life and all the unpredictability it presents.

It is where things feel 'just right', where you are best able to cope with the punches life throws at you.

You are calm but not tired. You are alert but not anxious.





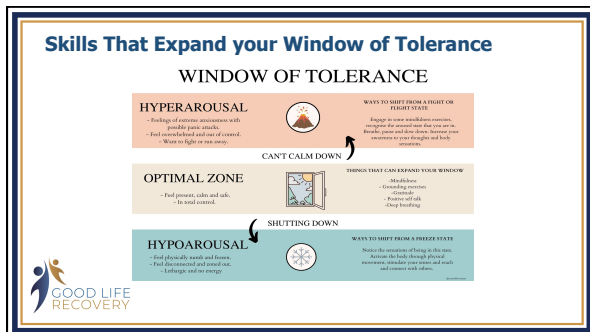
Understanding Our Own Nervous Systems

It's important to pay attention to whether you go high or low. Often this depends on which strategy we used in our early life.

Ex. kids who are abused may dissociate to survive (freeze response); so, will tend to do so when overwhelmed as adults.

Then it's essential that we learn skills to expand our window of tolerance so that we can move comfortably through a myriad of emotions without getting overwhelmed.

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Exercise:

Take a minute and jot down:

- a) when you are more likely to rev up – and what triggers that;
and also,
- b) when you are more likely to shut down – and what triggers
that.

Next:

Make a list of skills you will work on to help you get back to balance
and stay emotionally regulated.