

## Creating safe spaces in school (ideas informed by Dr. Tina Rae)

### What?

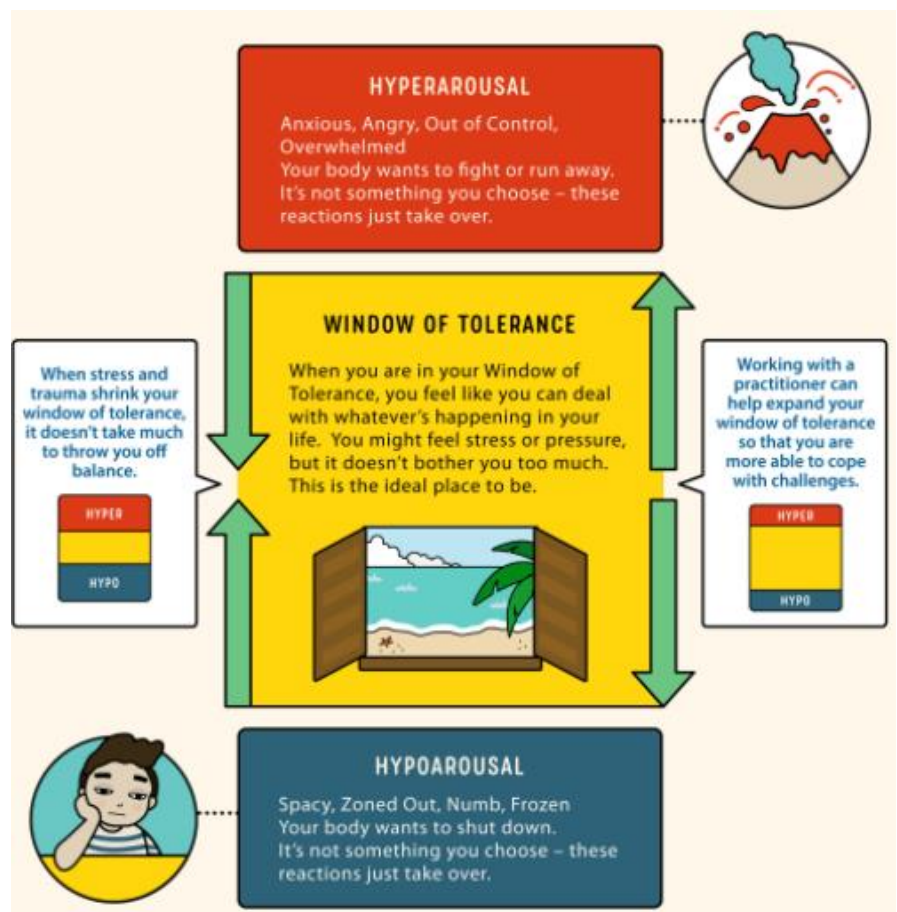
- Creating a sense of calm
- Creating a space children can go to in order to remain calm
- A space they can use to help down regulate and return to calm when dysregulated
- A space of safety where we can give opportunities to find and remain calm

### Why

- Develop self-awareness and awareness of feelings and thinking patterns
- Becoming independent in using this as a tool
- Tool of self-regulation
- A safe space to experience, process and explore feelings which can seem overwhelming
- Safe space to provide a base for children to use the tools to respond to whatever state they are in so they can go back into their own window of tolerance

### The window of tolerance

- We all have our own unique window of tolerance
- When we are within our own window of tolerance we feel we can achieve
- When stress shrinks this window of tolerance we are thrown off balance resulting in hyperarousal (anxious, angry, overwhelmed, body wants to run or fight) or hypoarousal (space out, shut down, not connected)
- Helping children to expand their own window of tolerance so they are better able to manage
- 6 minute video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wcm-1FBrDvU&t=234s>
- Dr. Pooky Knightsmith explanation of the window of tolerance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYab1q5N9-U&t=268s>



## Interventions

- Process interventions – when children develop self-awareness, independence, flexibility and adaptability. These are things we can teach and model as long as we have them for ourselves.
- We can do these things in the context of the calm corner (grounding, breathing, mindfulness etc)
- Compensation interventions – external supports such as adapting classroom environment, increasing predictability (visual timetables), sensory accommodations, routines, adult support.
- How are process and compensation interventions part of the calm corner.

## 5 key considerations

**Location** – enough room for what you need. Bean bag? Small table? Chair? Small sofa? Can children access it easily? Is the space semi-private?

**Furniture** – adequate seating area? Small desk for space for reflection activities?

**Meaningful visuals** – emotional temperature scale? Breathing, calming, visualisation techniques?

**Calm down tools** – sensory tactile tools they can use to regulate their emotions and return to their window of tolerance. Glitter jaw, timer, stress/squeeze ball, poppers – whatever suits class/group needs – talk to class about what they think will work for them.

**Teaching about the calm corner** – All will need to be taught about how to use and why it is helpful. A social story about the calm corner would be a useful visual. Explaining it is somewhere where we go to regulate and regain our sense of calm. This needs to be explained alongside what resources are there and how to use them.

## What it isn't

- Time out or reflection
- A punishment
- Management technique to remove child from class

## What it is

- A safe space we go to regulate and regain our calm