NEW RIVER HEALING, LLC

Window of Tolerance

Know your zones, notice when you leave, and find your way back

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Therapist:** Nathan Cooke, LCSW

What is the window of tolerance?

Your window of tolerance is the zone where you can feel your emotions and still think clearly. Inside it, stress is manageable: you can stay present, make choices, and connect with people. When stress, trauma reminders, or exhaustion push you outside the window, your nervous system shifts into survival mode.

Leaving the window is not a failure. It is your body trying to protect you. The skill is noticing when you've left and knowing what helps you come back. Over time, with practice and support, the window itself can widen.

MY THREE ZONES

Zone	What it can feel like	How I know I'm here
▲ **Above the window** *Hyperarousal: fight or flight*	**Racing heart, shallow breathing, tight muscles. Anxious, panicky, angry, or on edge. Racing thoughts, hard to sit still, easily startled, overwhelmed, reactive.**	**My signs:** _____ _____ _____
● **Inside the window** *Regulated: present and flexible*	**Calm enough to think and feel at once. Can notice emotions without being swept away. Curious, connected, able to make choices and handle the ups and downs of the day.**	**My signs:** _____ _____ _____
▼ **Below the window** *Hypoarousal: shutdown*	**Numb, flat, heavy, or far away. Foggy thinking, low energy, disconnected from body or feelings. Hard to speak, move, or care. Feeling frozen or checked out.**	**My signs:** _____ _____ _____

What tends to push me out of my window?

People, places, times of day, body states (hunger, poor sleep), memories, or situations

_____

_____

_____

COMING BACK INTO MY WINDOW

When I'm ABOVE my window: calm down	When I'm BELOW my window: wake up
Slow things down and signal safety ☐ Breathe out longer than you breathe in (in 4, out 6) ☐ Name 5 things you see, slowly, out loud ☐ Press your feet into the floor and feel the support ☐ Butterfly hug: cross your arms and tap slowly, left and right ☐ Walk, stretch, or shake out tension ☐ Lower the input: dim lights, quiet room, step away ☐ Hand on heart or a hand on your belly My own: _____ _____	*Gently bring energy and senses back online* ☐ Stand up, change position, or walk around the room ☐ Look around and name colors, shapes, and sounds ☐ Splash water on your hands or sip a cool drink ☐ Notice a strong taste or smell, like mint or citrus ☐ Put on music with a steady beat ☐ Text or talk to someone you feel safe with ☐ Take a few slightly fuller, quicker breaths My own: _____ _____

WIDENING MY WINDOW OVER TIME

Things that widen my window	People who help me feel safe	Things that shrink it
Sleep, movement, meals, time outdoors, practice when calm… _____ _____ _____ _____	*Names, and how to reach them* _____ _____ _____ _____	*Skipped sleep, isolation, alcohol, overload…* _____ _____ _____ _____

In therapy: we do trauma work, including EMDR, from inside your window. If you notice yourself leaving it during a session, say so or give a signal. We will slow down and come back before going further.