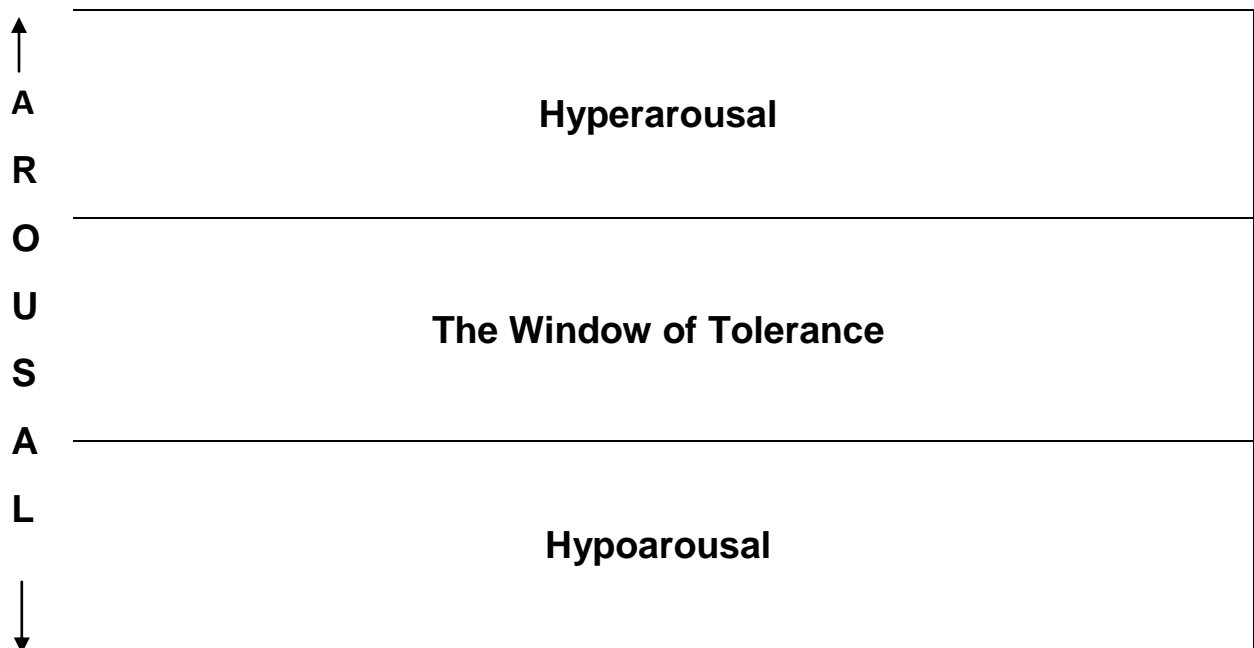


## Understand and Monitor your Personal Response to Stress

Each of us have limits to what we can handle at any moment in any given situation. For example if you are experiencing stress with college work, finance, family, relationships etc there is a limit to how much stress you can experience and continue to function effectively. Too much stress can push a person into anxiety, strong emotion and hyper arousal. It can also push a person to shut down mode into numbness, passivity and hypoarousal (see figure A).

**Figure “The Window of Tolerance”**



Ogden, P., defines the Window of Tolerance as an area of Arousal in which we can function. Around the midline of this window of tolerance all the questions of optimal performance are within our reach. The adrenaline rush is enjoyable, our outlook is optimistic and we know we can draw on our skills and function well. Further towards the edges of

the Window of Tolerance we can still function but feel stressed (a lot of our growth happens along these edges but our performance can be impaired).

Everyone's window of tolerance is sized differently based on personal history. Some people have wide "windows" and they can accommodate emotional ups and downs without much distress. Other people have narrow "windows" and for those people the emotional roller coaster of performance can be scary. Different emotions and situations have different window widths for different people.

When our stress levels increase the windows gets narrower and our ability to move within the window becomes less flexible and accurate.

The stress can be from internal and external sources including;

- Increased challenge and/or decreased belief that we can meet the challenge.
- Internal criticism and negative self-talk
- Negative feedback from our peers/others
- Significant increase in frequency of tasks/demands
- The occurrence of unexpected events
- Inadequate nutrition, sleep or self-care

With increasing stress, adrenaline intensifies our experience and when it gets too intense these charges can move us out of or too near the edges of our "window of tolerance" and dramatically negatively impact our performance. We over-exert, over-react, get consumed by worry, feel over-whelmed with rapid thoughts and negative self-talk.