**Opening the Window of Capacity**

Use this to track your general nervous system state over time. The real power starts with noticing when your state “shifts” from the optimal zone to hyper (too much) or hypo (too little) arousal. (Hyper = agitated, anxious, fight/flight/freeze. Hypo = spacey, withdrawn, flop/faint.) We all move in and out of these three zones, across time and situations, every day. We can develop our abilities to notice our states, and then we can develop actions and methods to help stay in our optimal zone, our Window of Capacity, or shift back to it more quickly.

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<th>HYPER-AROUSAL</th>
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<td><strong>Signs and signals:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Soothers:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sparkers:</strong></td>
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**Window of Capacity – Optimal Zone**

Stabilize and Stretch:

Thanks to Stephen Porges, Daniel Siegel, and others for the applied concept of window of tolerance, which I call the Window of Capacity.

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Steps to Opening the Window of Capacity

1. You can use this graph to take a snapshot of your capacity for learning and engaging socially, in the moment, or you can chart your levels across a day, or you can reflect on yesterday and how it went. You can also use it to track yourself in a more general way.

2. Your line might go up and down a little, or a lot, or it might stay pretty even. If you understand what triggers or invites you to go outside of the **Window of Capacity**, make note of that for yourself.

3. Everyone has cues they can notice when they are changing states in their nervous system; for example, many people might be able to notice their heart beating faster or skin flushing when they are hyper-aroused. Or someone could hear a negative and helpless ‘soundtrack’ in their head, when they are hypo-aroused. Look for your **Signs and Signals** that you are becoming either hyper-aroused or hypo-aroused. Learning how to recognize these shifting states as soon as possible is the best way to be able to develop skills at self-regulation.

4. **Soothers**: When you are hyper-aroused, what can help bring your nervous system back into the Window of Capacity?

5. **Sparkers**: When you are hypo-aroused, what can help up-regulate your nervous system?

6. **Stabilize and Stretch**: Over time, we can expand our Window of Capacity, through any activities that promote mind-body communication, self-regulation, positive perspectives, and compassion. What are you doing today, and every day, to expand your Window?