

THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

OVERACTIVATED

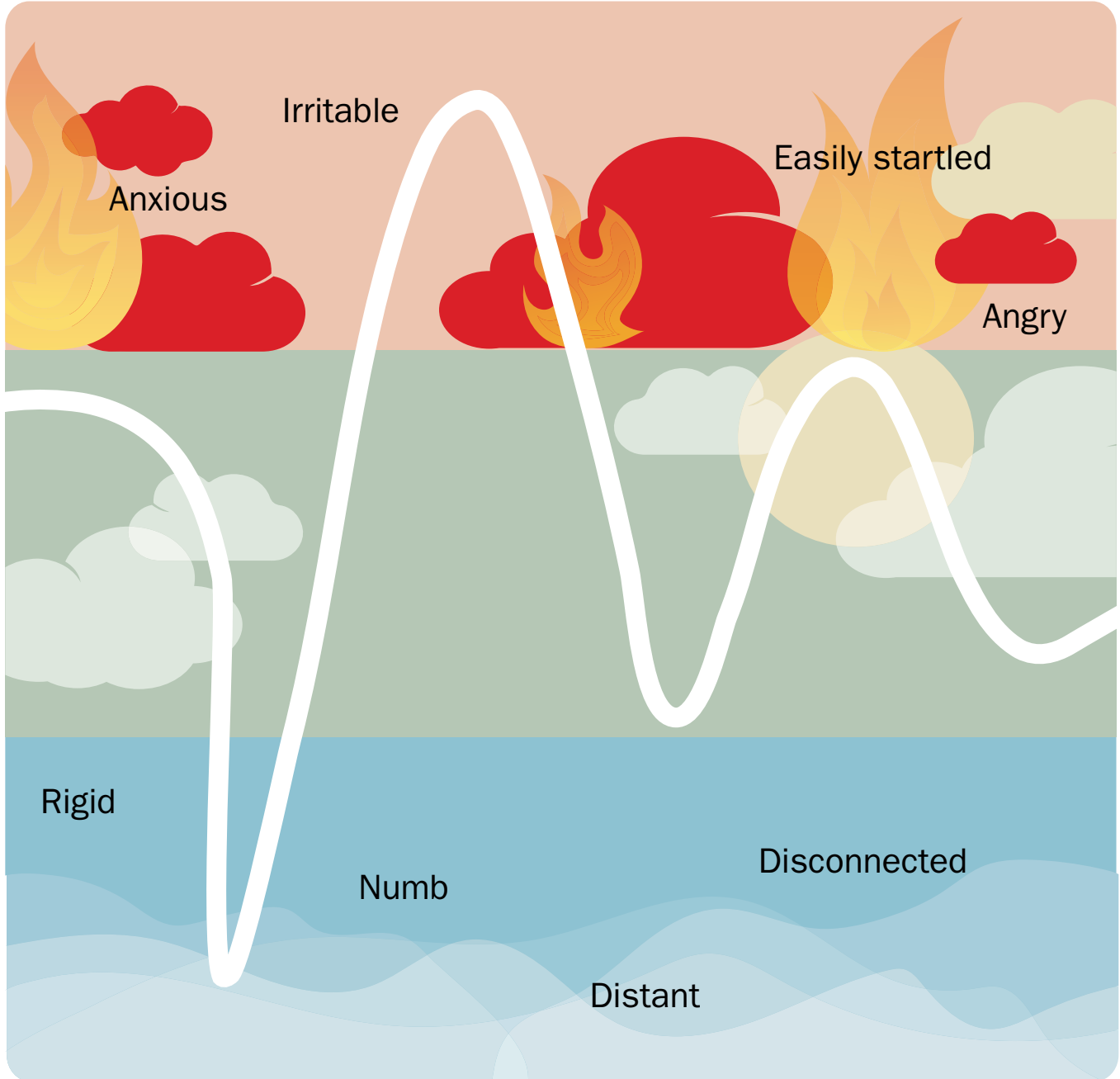
The body goes into a state of readiness for fight or flight, and it becomes difficult to focus, think clearly, or understand others.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Here we are adequately activated. We are able to think, feel, and reflect. We are present and can manage what is happening.

UNDERACTIVATED

Heart rate and breathing slow down, and we may become sluggish, numb, or frozen, with a reduced ability to pay attention or respond.



THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Regulation – to calm, reassure, and support

The Window of Tolerance is a model that shows how we as humans react when we experience intense stress, danger, or feel threatened. For people who have experienced trauma, this window is often narrower - meaning it takes less for them to become overwhelmed.

When we move outside the Window of Tolerance

When someone has experienced trauma, the body may continue to react as if the danger is still present - even when it's not. Things that remind them of the distress can trigger an alarm response. The body may go into fight/flight or freeze mode. We move outside the Window of Tolerance.

What happens then?

We may lose track of the conversation, struggle to think clearly, or feel overwhelmed. But there are ways to help. Regulation through:

Thoughts: Conversation, reflection, and new insights can help bring us back.

Relationships: Safety, support, and being met with understanding are important.

Body and senses: Simple exercises can help the body to calm down and feel safe.

Regulation through body and senses



Taste: Have a lozenge, or notice the taste of coffee or tea.



Smell: Notice scents in the room. Smell coffee or tea.



Look: Look for circles or squares. Count points of light in the ceiling. Rest your gaze on to something beautiful, calm, and safe - such as a view or an image.



Listen: Listen to sounds around you. What do you hear right now? Can you find another sound? Play some music.



Grounding: Can you feel the surface beneath you?
Standing: Press your feet gently into the ground or curl your toes.
Sitting: Notice the backrest and how your body meets the seat.



Use your body: Touch your fingertips together. Rub your palms together. Arch and straighten your back.



Breathing: Raise your shoulders as you inhale, hold briefly, then release them as you exhale.