



Emotions and Animal Defenses

EMOTIONS, LOW AROUSAL, & HYPOAROUSAL

Purpose: To differentiate emotions that pertain to the feigned death/shut down animal defense (and thus occur below the window of tolerance) from emotions that occur at the lower edges of the window and identify resources for each kind of emotion.

Directions: Reflect on the difference between emotions you have experienced that were accompanied by low arousal and those accompanied hypoarousal related to animal defenses. Then complete the prompts below.



Your Window of Tolerance

Low Arousal

Hypoarousal

1. Think of different times when you experienced the emotions below, accompanied by low arousal. Write any other relevant emotions on the last line. Describe how your body feels when you experience each emotion.

Disappointment _____

Sadness _____

Boredom _____

Other _____

2. Think of different times when you experienced the emotions below, accompanied by hypoarousal related to the animal defense of feigned death/shut down. Write any other relevant emotions on the last line. Describe how your body feels when you experience each emotion.

Shame _____

Despair _____

Absence of feeling _____

Other _____

3. Identify two resources that might help you tolerate emotions accompanied by low arousal, and prevent them from dropping into the hypoarousal zone.

4. Identify two resources that would help you regulate emotions accompanied by hypoarousal.

Discuss with your therapist what physical action or actions (e.g., standing, pushing, running, or another action) would be most useful to work with these emotions.