

Window Of Tolerance

A helpful concept for coming to understand yourself is identifying something called your **Window of Tolerance**. We all have one and to you, that it can be big, it can be small and it can also expand as well as shrink!

Take a look at your life at the moment. There are probably things that you feel you can do easily without feeling emotionally unsettled, worried or out of your comfort zone. There are probably things too that you think, hold on! even the idea of that is making me sweat and makes my heart race. When we get that feeling it means we are moving toward being out of that place where we can be certain we can feel safe. We can call this moving out of our window of tolerance.

Example

There are so many examples of when we find ourselves confronting our Window of Tolerance. In fact this can happen every day. Here is one example of someone who might be dealing with feelings in relation to the current lockdown situation.

Imagine that you have had some difficulty in the past with going out and seeing friends, not a big deal but sometimes you have preferred to stay at home, you know that you feel safe there. Along comes lockdown and we have been told that you can't go out. You have now spent the last 8 weeks not going out. However, lockdown has come to an end and you are aware that there is pressure to return to normal, back to work, school, Uni or whatever you may have been involved in. How does this feel? It's likely, if similar to many of us, the fact that you have not been out for a while, that you have got used to your home and your creature comforts that this has adjusted your window of tolerance, possibly shrinking it more to the four walls of you home.

What does the mean for your overall emotional wellbeing now that lockdown has finished? Well maybe this could be likened to a corresponding physical health problem, where it's been easy to get out of our regular physical fitness regime. On a physical level if you have stopped that hour jog in the morning or the weekly trip to the gym, you are likely to know that at some point it will help you to get back on track and this to begin with will feel a bit like hard work.

In terms of your emotional wellbeing, your Window of Tolerance can be likened to a way of measuring your emotional tolerance rather than your physical fitness. If you decide to get back on track with your physical fitness and start up your fitness regime again, it's likely that you would take this slowly to begin with. You can also do this with your emotional or mental health. You can start to slowly stretch or expand your Window of Tolerance to ease you back into the world.

How Do You Expand Your Window Of Tolerance

What is one important area in your life that you might feel your tolerance has shrunk in recently? Can you identify where your tolerance level is now? It might be, for example, that

you are aware that you had no difficulty going into the park, supermarket, walking down the street prior to lockdown but now that all feels uncomfortable. What would be one way of slowly beginning to expand your Window of Tolerance, just like doing those slow easy work out exercises that slowly get you back in shape.

You can decide on this, you can be your own mental health coach. How much of going into those places is tolerable for you now? Now add a bit more to that, so that it stretches you a bit but without it feeling too unsettling or overwhelming. Practice doing this for a while and then expand a bit more each day, week and so on. You will notice that your Window of Tolerance will grow again and your mental and emotional health will definitely feel a boost.