

# Common Reactions to Trauma

## Re-experiencing the Trauma

Trauma survivors may re-experience their trauma through thoughts, feelings, memories, and other means. Re-experiencing a trauma can be very distressing, and may trigger uncomfortable emotions such as fear, anger, or sadness.

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks (uncontrollable vivid images and memories of the trauma)
- Distressing thoughts and feelings about the trauma
- Emotional distress or physical responses after experiencing a trauma reminder

## Avoidance of Trauma Reminders

Because reminders of a trauma can be so distressing, it is common for trauma survivors to use avoidance to control these reactions.

- Using drugs or alcohol to suppress uncomfortable thoughts and emotions
- Avoidance of activities related to the trauma
- Avoidance of people, places, or things related to the trauma
- Suppressing thoughts related to the trauma
- Avoidance of conversations about the trauma

## Negative Thoughts or Feelings

Negative thoughts or feelings may begin or worsen after experiencing a trauma. Some of these thoughts and feelings might not seem to relate directly to the trauma.

- Excessive blame toward oneself or others related to the trauma
- Loss of interest in activities
- Feelings of isolation or disconnection from surroundings
- Difficulty experiencing positive feelings
- Loss of memory related to the trauma
- Excessive negative thoughts about oneself or the world

## Hyperarousal

Reactivity, or a feeling of being “on edge”, may begin or worsen after experiencing a trauma. This category includes a broad range of physical and psychological symptoms.

- Becoming irritable, quick to anger, or aggressive
- Heightened startle reaction
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequently scanning the environment or watching for trauma reminders
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feelings of anxiety, and related symptoms such as a racing heart, upset stomach, or headaches
- Risky or impulsive behaviors

# Up-regulating, Maintenance, & Down-regulating Worksheet

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## Hyper-Arousal

*"To hot!!!"*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

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## Optimal

*"Just right."*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

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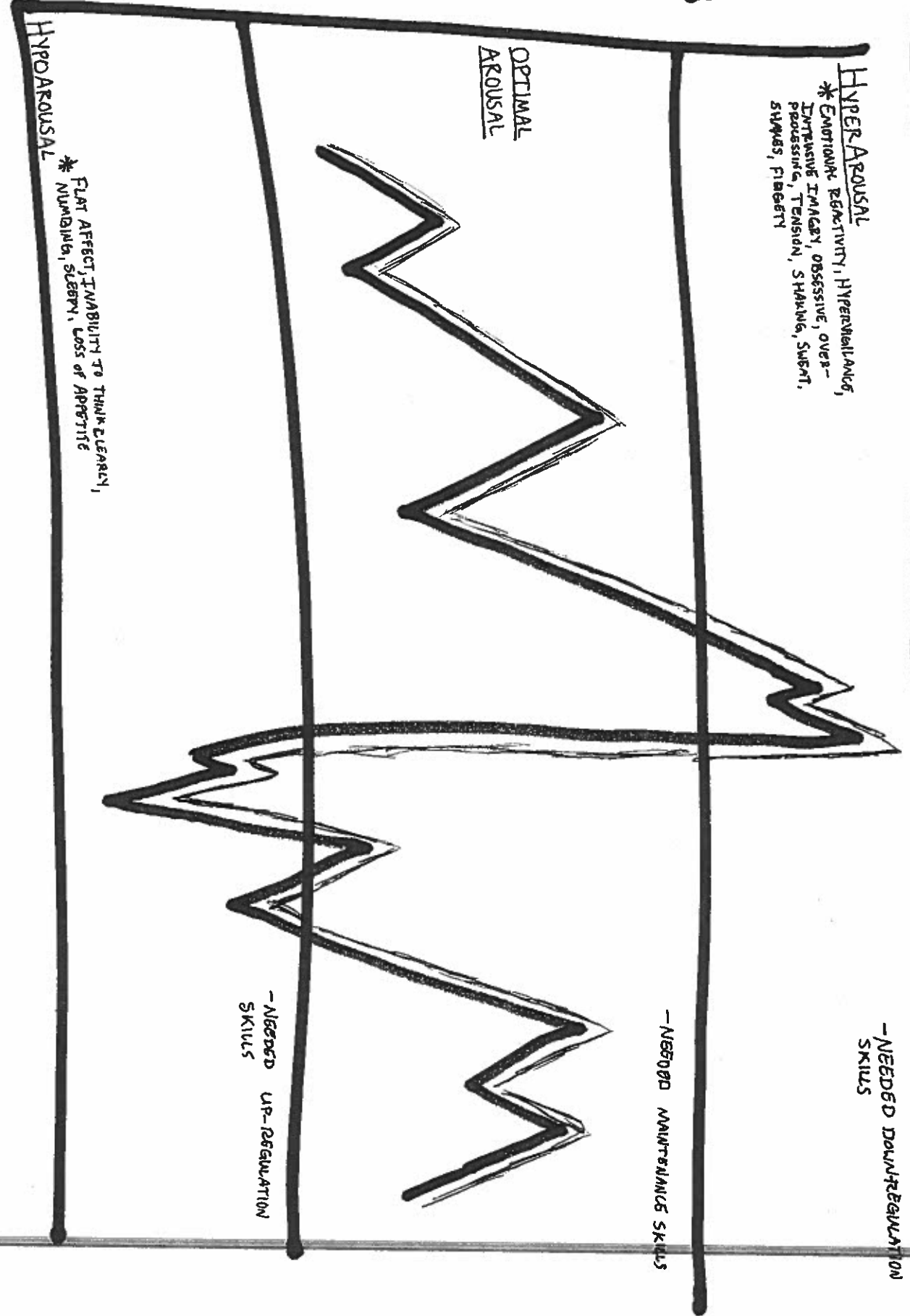
## Hypo-Arousal

*"...to cold..."*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

# THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

# A R O U S A L



**HYPERAROUSAL**  
\* EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY, HYPERVIGILANCE,  
INTRUSIVE IMAGERY, OBSSESSIVE, OVER-  
PRESSURING, TENSION, SHAKING, SWEAT,  
SHIVERS, FIBERITY

**OPTIMAL  
AROUSAL**

**HYPOAROUSAL**

\* FLAT AFFECT, INABILITY TO THINK CLEARLY,  
\* NUMBING, SLEEPY, LOSS OF APETITE

-NEEDED DOWNREGULATION  
SKILLS

-NEEDED MAINTENANCE SKILLS

-NEEDED UP-REGULATION  
SKILLS