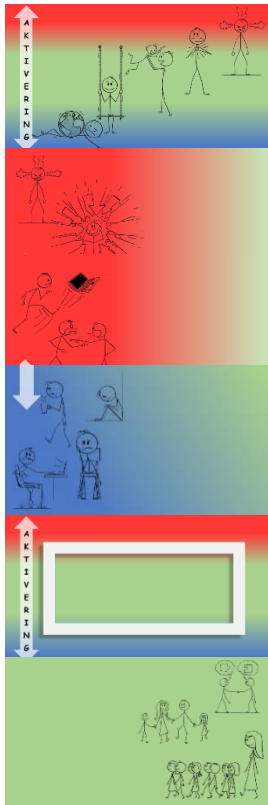


# The Window of Tolerance

I guess we all have days where we get more done than other days. Or times during the day when it feels easier to master than other times. How we function can be affected by many things, such as how we sleep at night, how long ago it is since we ate or had a break, but also if there is a lot of exhausting things going on in life right now. Such things affect the state we are in. It affects our emotions, and what is called activation.



Activation, or arousal, is how strongly we are "turned on", our breathing, pulse, muscle tension and bodily restlessness. We can imagine degrees of activation in such a model, from very low, on the blue color, to very high on the red color.

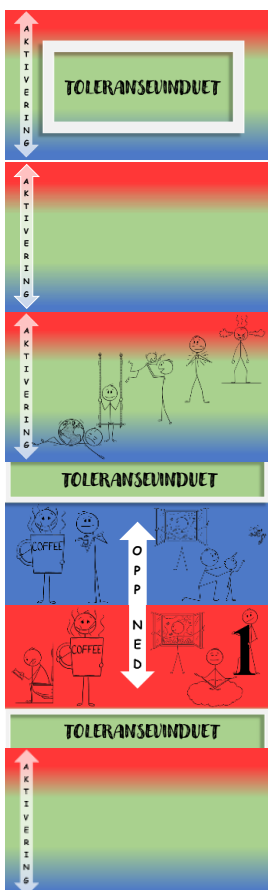
In the red zone, there is too much pressure in us for us to be able to be sensible, we have a high pulse, tense muscles, a lot of restlessness in the body.

We can start shouting, lack control over our choice of words, and can easily do things we regret afterwards. Reason has taken a break, and emotions rule alone. The stress level is high, and we go on defense mode.

At the bottom, in the blue zone, the activation is too low. We are almost turned off and function quite badly. The muscles are too relaxed, our stress level is too low to achieve anything. A shift from blue to red mode can also happen quickly, if we are met with expectations we cannot handle.

In in the middle, however, in this green zone, is a nice place to be.

We have just the right amount of activation. A little stress is actually good for performance! We can both think and feel at the same time when in this area. We can do most of the things that we normally do and manage well: we learn, work, play, listen, help, clean, collaborate and so on.



This area is called the Window of Tolerance. Because inside this green zone, we are in the window where possibilities are open. This is where we function and can get things done.

How much we tolerate before our activation or arousal becomes too high or too low varies from person to person, at different parts of the day, and at different periods of life.

We can experience a more narrow Window of Tolerance in such periods where "it's a bit much right now". Experiencing trauma or frightening experiences in life also affects us and can cause us to more easily go up to red mode or go down to blue mode.

It can be helpful to have some tricks to achieve an appropriate level of activation, because the state we are in greatly affects how we succeed with difficult tasks. Not everything suits everyone, so find out what is the most effective for you or for people you want to help.

In order to achieve a higher activation when needed, it can help to have some food or drink, some fresh air, or using one's senses in an activity.

In order to reduce activation it may be wise to create some distance from the situation. Go to the bathroom, find something to drink, or eat a banana. Get some fresh air. Many people also benefit from taking long breaths or counting.

The Window of Tolerance is not an actual thing we have inside us, but a model that can help us notice the level of activation in ourselves or in others. The model can also help us to take action so that we can enter a state that is good for us before facing things in everyday life that can be difficult.