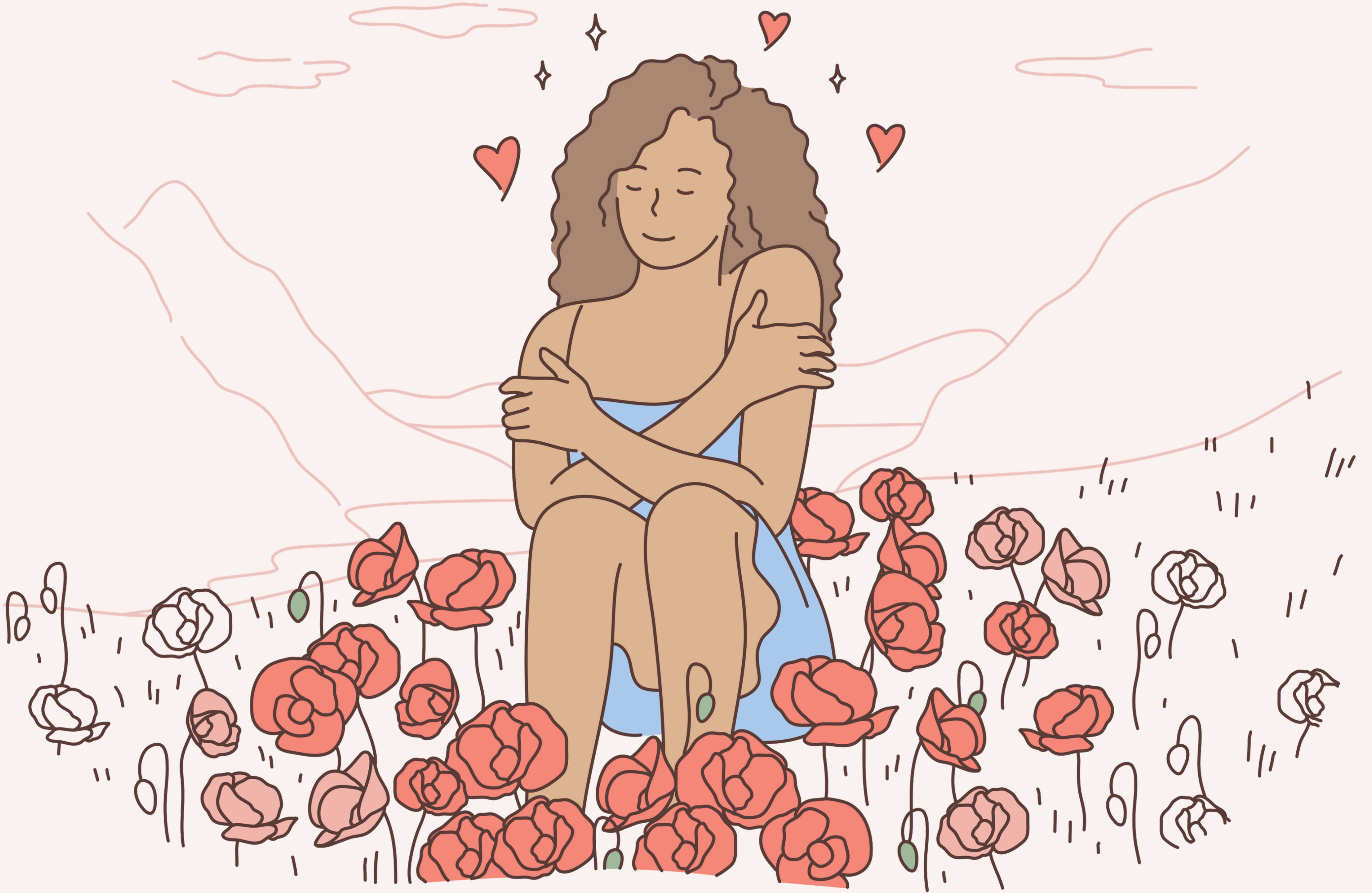


# Guide To:



*Emotional Regulation*

For Complex Trauma  
And Passive Suicidality

# Introduction To Emotional Regulation

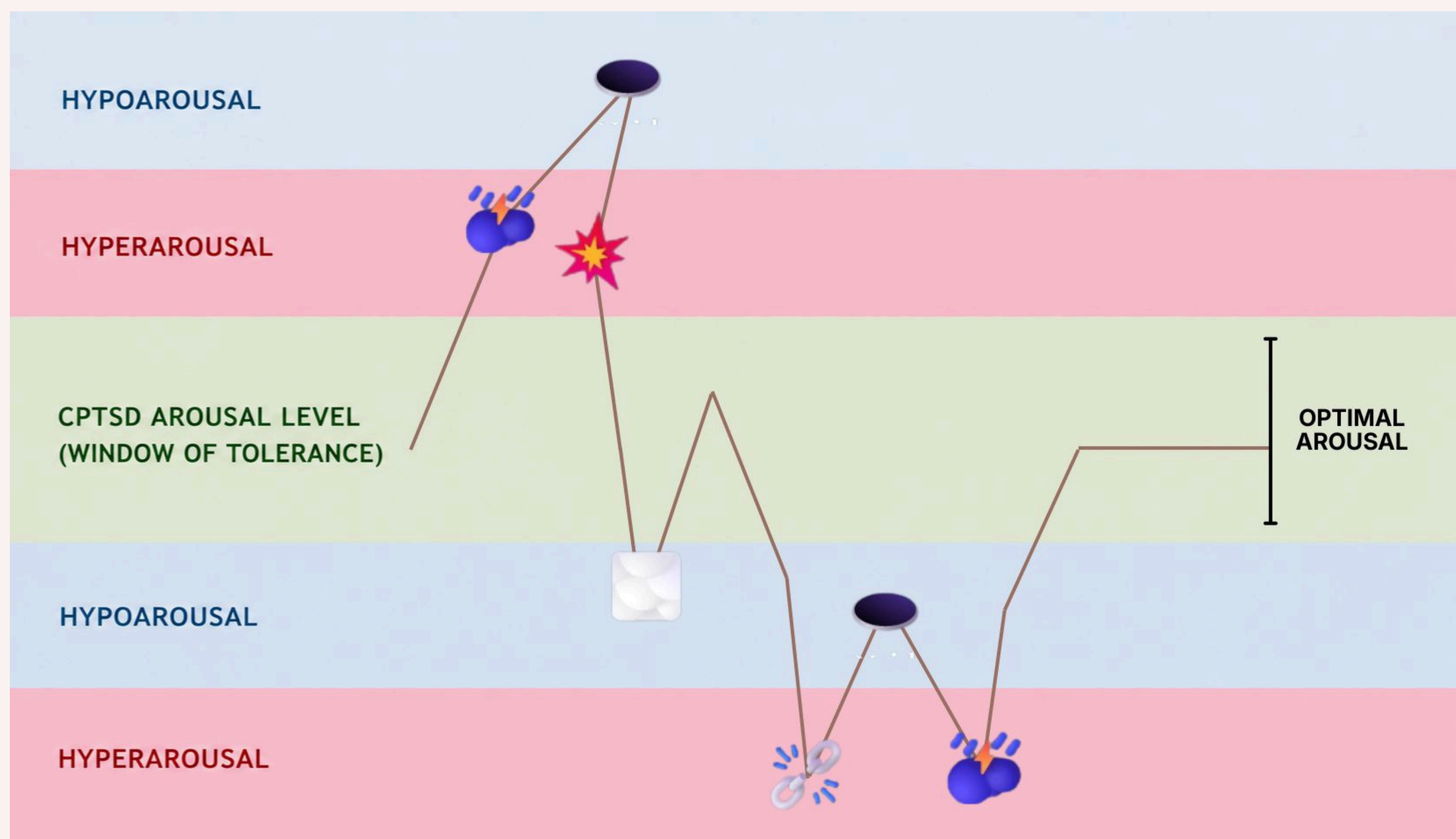


What is Emotional Regulation? Many people think that it's being able to control your feelings, but that's not accurate. Your emotions are like the weather, constantly shifting, sometimes intense, and always meaningful. Just as a sailor doesn't try to stop the ocean, we don't eliminate difficult emotions. Instead, we learn to navigate them.

At the heart of this work are five Disturbances, emotional states that pull you out of regulation. Each one has its own texture, its own triggers, and its own Inner Hero archetype waiting to be embodied. Through somatic exercises, reflection, and writing, this workbook will help you recognize which Disturbance you are in and take grounded action from within it. But first, we need to go through the gold-standard model of emotional regulation before we explain Disturbances: The Windows of Tolerance model.

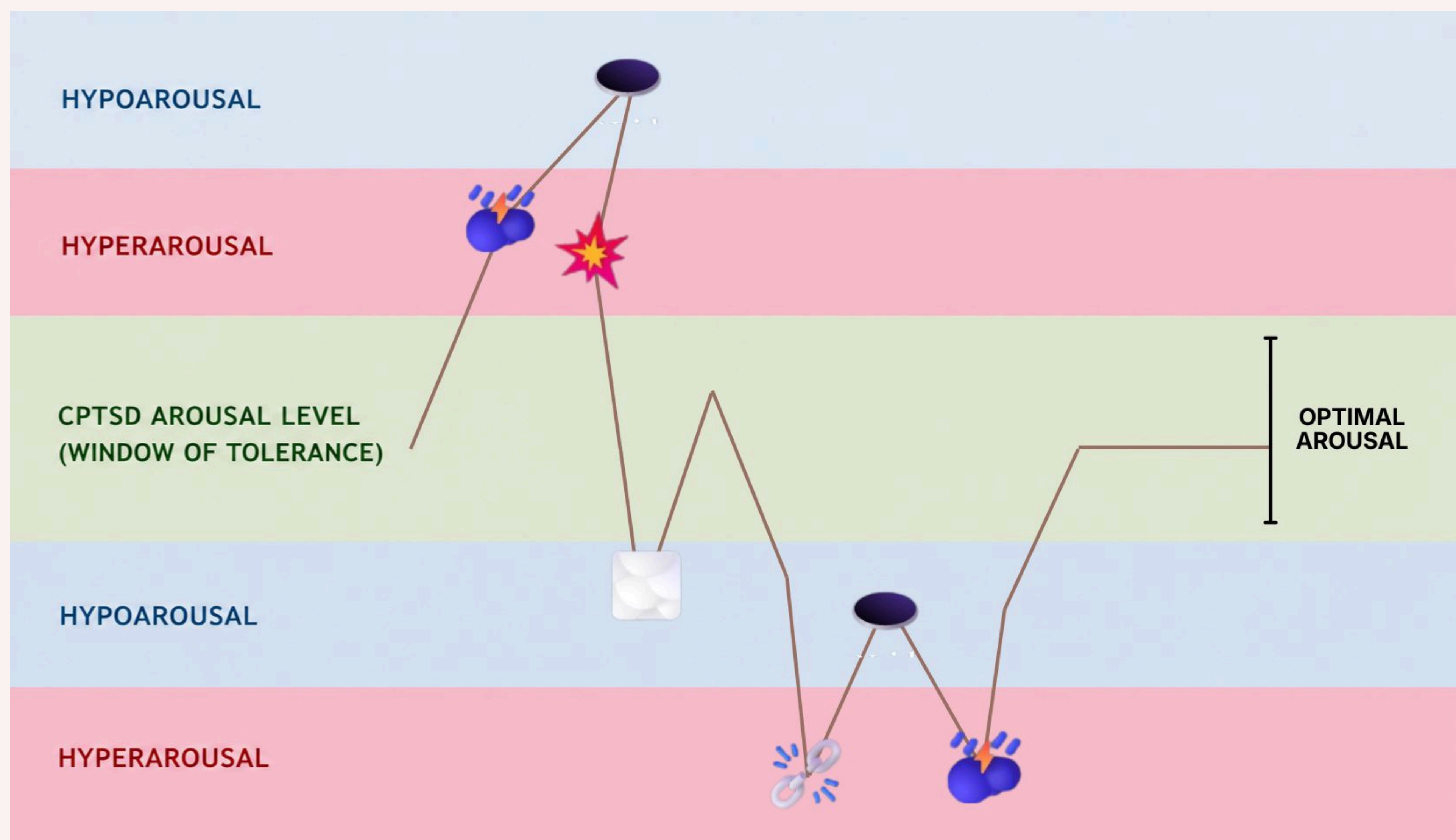
# The Windows of Tolerance Model

The Windows of Tolerance model is one of the most widely used frameworks in trauma therapy. The basic idea is simple: our stress levels naturally fluctuate throughout the day. The "window" marks the zone where stress is manageable, where we can still function, think clearly, and stay connected to ourselves and others. This is called optimal arousal, or the green zone. (The line represents our daily stress levels).



When we are within the green window, we may still feel stress but it stays manageable. When stress exceeds the window's upper boundary, we enter hyperarousal (fight or flight), which is linked to anxiety and anger. When it drops too far below, we enter hypoarousal (freeze or flop) - depression and numbness. Both are dysregulative states.

These survival responses — fight, flight, freeze, flop — evolved to protect us in genuine danger. The problem is that a traumatized nervous system activates them in response to everyday situations that don't actually require that level of response.



Unlike the traditional Window of Tolerance Model, with only one hyperarousal and hypoarousal state above and below the green zone, I've found as a therapist that there are multiple dysregulative states above and below the optimal arousal state.

Hence, this version of the model is what I call the Windows of Tolerance model, as we often need to regulate ourselves through multiple dysregulative states before going back into the green zone. This understanding is crucial for helping us understand the concept of Disturbances in the next section.

Disturbances are the specific dysregulating situation or trigger that is causing you to go into hyper or hypoarousal. Understanding what Disturbance you are in thus allows you to perform the somatic practice to regulate yourself back to optimal arousal.

The different emojis represent the Disturbances, and they are each tied to the hyperarousal, or hypoarousal states - Hyperdisturbances, and Hypodisturbances.

# The Five Disturbances

There are 5 Disturbances, or situations, that cause dysregulation, each denoted by an emoji. In the following chart, you will see the 5 Disturbances, followed by the feelings and thoughts they cause, followed by whether they are related to hyper or hypoarousal.

DISTURBANCE	FEELS LIKE	HYPER/HYPO	THOUGHT
The Storm	Flooded, panicked, overwhelmed by fear.	Hyper- Disturbance	“I can’t handle this. I’m going to be consumed by this. I’m totally overwhelmed.”
Intrusion	Angry, victimized, under attack	Hyper- Disturbance	“Why are they targeting me? I can’t do anything against them.”
Fracture	Ashamed, guilty, at war with yourself	Hyper & Hypo Disturbance	“I’m fighting myself. I hate myself. I can’t stop feeling guilty.”
The Void	Numb, empty, frozen, no energy	Hypo- Disturbance	“Nothing matters. I don’t feel joy. I can’t feel anything anymore.”
The Mist	Lost, directionless, confused	Hypo- Disturbance	“I don’t know what to do with my life. I don’t know where I’m going.”

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*Which Disturbance do you find yourself in most often?  
Which one feels most unfamiliar to you?*





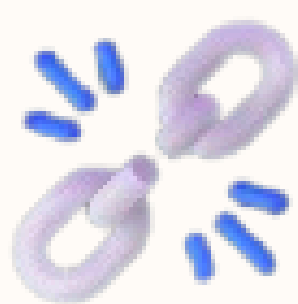


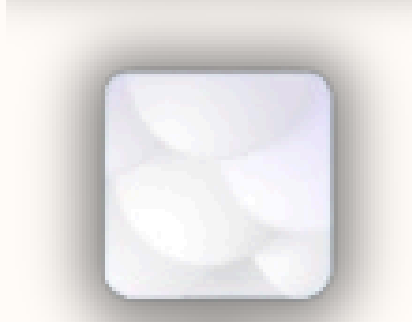

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Keep in mind that you can be in multiple Disturbances at one time.

**YOUR REFLECTION**

# The Inner Hero Archetypes

Knowing which Disturbance you are in allows you to identify the corresponding Inner Hero Archetype to embody: a version of you that has the qualities needed to overcome the situation. Each Archetype has a Somatic Practice allowing us to embody them.

DISTURBANCE	FEELS LIKE	INNER HERO	CORE QUALITY	SOMATIC PRACTICE
The Storm 	Flooded, panicked, overwhelmed by fear.	The Captain 	Steady, grounded, anchored	Anchoring Exercise
Intrusion 	Angry, victimized, under attack	The Guardian 	Dignified, protective, secure	Guardian Posture
Fracture 	Ashamed, guilty, at war with yourself	The Peacemaker 	Compassionate, connecting	Inner Connection
The Void 	Numb, empty, frozen, no energy	The Beacon 	Warm, gentle, igniting	Gradual Kinetic Stir
The Mist 	Lost, directionless, confused	The Navigator 	Confident, orienting, decisive	Spiral to Center Movement

Let us now go through each Disturbance, Archetype & Somatic Practice in detail.

# The Storm

Hyper-Disturbance • Inner Hero: The Captain

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The Storm is a hyperdisturbance, or a Disturbance that causes hyperarousal where you are flooded with fear, anxiety and insecurity from the possibility of something terrible happening in the future (whether it will actually happen or not). It feels like turbulent waves, high tides, and raging thunder all at once.

The Inner Hero you need to embody is the Captain, an experienced helmsman who has braved a thousand storms before. They know they have what it takes to get through this one. Their symbol is the anchor, because in the storm, your body becomes the anchor.

Ask yourself: "Am I reacting to what is actually happening right now, or to a story my mind is telling me about what might happen?"

## *Recognizing the Storm*

Place a check beside the signs you recognize in yourself when in a Storm

- Racing thoughts about the future
- Tight chest or shallow, rapid breathing
- Feeling like everything is out of control
- Difficulty focusing on anything else
- Catastrophizing — assuming the worst outcome
- Physical restlessness (pacing, fidgeting, can't sit still)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Anchoring Exercise

## Somatic Practice for The Storm To Embody The Captain

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This exercise uses the physical weight and sensation of your body as an anchor point during a Storm. You can do this seated anywhere.

1. Ground your feet. Place them flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Notice the contact point. What does the ground feel like beneath you — warm, cool, hard, textured?
  2. Soften your knees. Not stiff like a pillar, not limp — find the in-between, like a tree that can bend without breaking.
  3. Shift the weight down. Imagine the heaviness in your head as a color. Now, let it slowly fall — from your chest, to your stomach, to your hips, to your legs, to your feet. Let it spread through your whole body.
  4. Open your chest. Let your shoulders drop. Expand the space inside — not rigid, not collapsed. Steady and open.
  5. Double inhale + long exhale. Inhale through your nose almost to full... then take one small sip of air on top... then a slow, long exhale through your mouth. Repeat 3–5 times.
- 

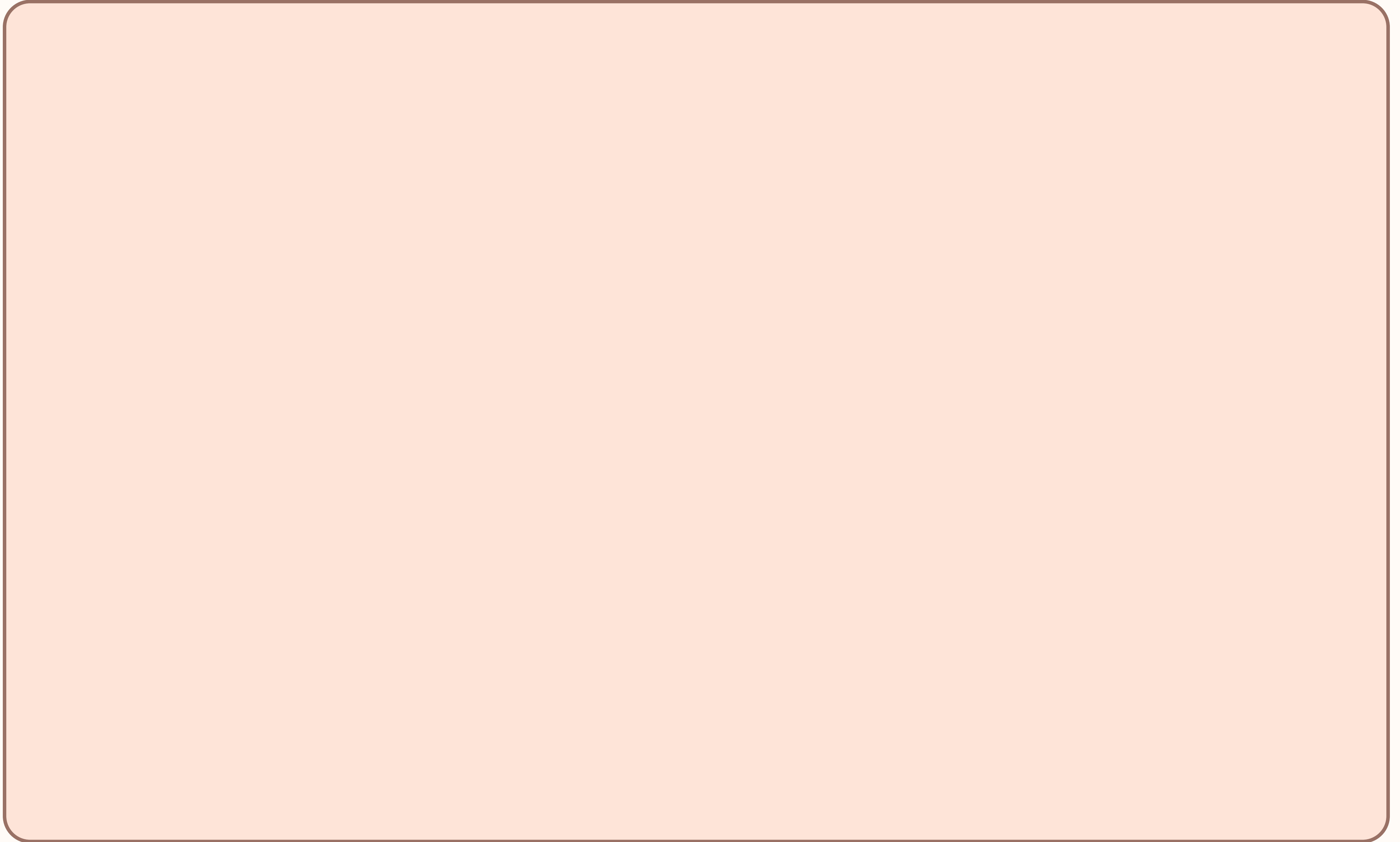
After you complete these steps, repeat these words to yourself:

### CAPTAIN'S AFFIRMATION

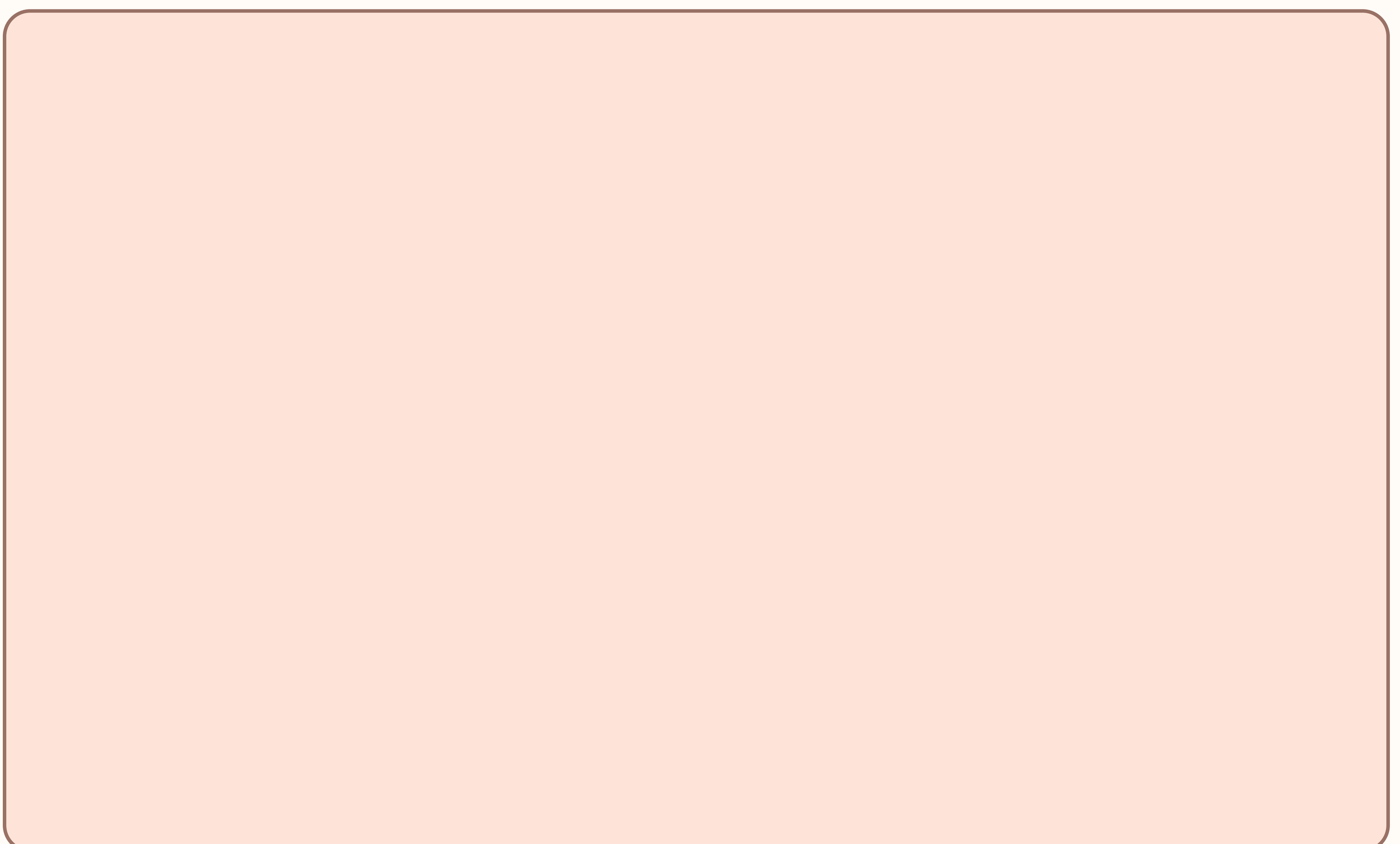
"I am here. I am a Captain of the Storm. No matter how intense the storm is, I am always myself, and I can handle the tides, the waves, and more."

# After the Exercise

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE IN YOUR BODY DURING THIS PRACTICE?



WHAT STORM WERE YOU IN? DESCRIBE IT BRIEFLY.



# Intrusion

Hyper-Disturbance · Inner Hero: The Guardian

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An Intrusion is a hyper-disturbance caused by external forces – most often relationship and family conflict, toxic environments, or a workplace that tests your boundaries. It doesn't require the other person to be malicious. Even a loving relationship can produce an Intrusion when something triggers you.

Intrusions make you feel victimized and targeted, robbing you of your sense of peace and control. The emotions they most often produce are anger, rage, powerlessness, and a deep sense of being wronged.

To meet an Intrusion, you must embody the Guardian – fiercely protective of your dignity and your boundaries. The Guardian resists being overcome by rage (which clouds thinking) and instead becomes strategic, decisive, and forward-thinking.

Ask yourself: "What part of my distress comes from the event itself, and what part comes from the story I'm attaching to it?"

# The Guardian Posture

## Somatic Practice for Intrusion To Embody The Guardian

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This somatic exercise helps you embody the energy of the Guardian through your breath and posture.

1. Breathing in security. Close your eyes. Imagine the energy of steadiness and dignity as a color – perhaps blue. With each inhale, breathe this energy in. Hold for 4 counts. Exhale. Notice: the energy remains even after the breath has left.
  2. Lengthen your spine. As if something is gently lifting you from the crown of your head. Not rigid – just upright. Let your chest open. Find quiet dignity.
  3. Ground your feet. If standing, feel them pressing down. If seated, feel the earth holding your weight. You do not carry yourself alone.
  4. Hand to chest and belly. One hand on your chest, one on your belly. Feel the warmth. Register: you are here, and you are secure.
  5. Observe what rises. Notice any chaos, powerlessness, or rage in your body. Where does it live? Without fighting it, let your posture respond – spine lifted, chest open, hands connected. You are not the feeling. You are the one holding it.
- 

After you complete these steps, repeat these words to yourself:

### GUARDIAN'S AFFIRMATION

"I am here. I am my own Guardian. I've got you.  
You are allowed to be here."

# After the Exercise

DESCRIBE THE INTRUSION YOU ARE EXPERIENCING. WHO OR WHAT IS INVOLVED?

WHERE DID YOU FEEL THE CHAOS OR RAGE IN YOUR BODY?

WHAT BOUNDARY NEEDS TO BE PROTECTED HERE? WHAT WOULD THE GUARDIAN DO?

# Fracture

Hyper or Hypo-Disturbance • Inner Hero: The Peacemaker

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Unlike Intrusions which come from outside, a Fracture is an internal conflict — a war within yourself. It causes tension, division, and self-sabotage, and is most often marked by shame and guilt.

## Shame

Feeling bad about who you are. Living with a constant sense of shame or self-blame. Over time, this can lead to hypoarousal, where the nervous system responds by becoming numb, disconnected, and shut down.

## Guilt

Feeling bad about something you did. Guilt often leads to hyperarousal, where the nervous system stays activated and the mind becomes focused on fixing, replaying, or judging what happened.

The Peacemaker, the Archetype you must embody for the Fracture, doesn't force resolution or judge your parts. Instead, they bring compassion, diplomacy, and intelligence to all the different voices inside you — including the ones you don't like, recognizing that each one once played a purpose.

Ask yourself: "What am I holding against myself, and what would happen if I approached it with understanding instead of judgment?"

# Inner Connection Exercise

## Somatic Practice for Fracture To Embody The Peacemaker

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You will need: a wall or solid chair to lean against, and a pillow or soft object to hold.

1. Notice the forces. With eyes closed, feel the different parts of you pulling in different directions. Color each one — red toward your head, blue toward one arm, green toward your legs, etc. It's messy. That's the point.
2. Lean into the wall. Slowly move your back into full contact with the wall or solid chair. Let it take your weight. Trust the support. Feel the forces become slightly more steady.
3. Hold the object to your chest. Press it gently against you. Imagine the colored forces slowly channeling toward your center — all their colors merging into one shape. What shape forms? A ball? A star? Notice it.
4. Release and breathe. Loosen your hold. The forces have found their center. Inhale fully through your nose, exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat.

---

After you complete these steps, repeat these words to yourself:

### PEACEMAKER'S WORDS

"There is space for all of you. I am listening. We don't have to fight. I see you. You are safe in this space."

# After the Exercise

WHAT COLORS (FORCES) DID YOU NOTICE IN YOUR BODY?  
WHERE WERE THEY PULLING YOU?

WHAT SHAPE OR OBJECT FORMED IN YOUR CENTER WHEN  
THE FORCES CAME TOGETHER?

WHAT PART OF YOURSELF ARE YOU AT WAR WITH RIGHT  
NOW? WHAT DO YOU THINK IT NEEDS?

# The Void

Hypo-Disturbance · Inner Hero: The Beacon

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The Void is not sadness. It's deeper than that.

Sadness allows you to feel. The Void feels like the absence of feeling itself. It's numbness, disconnection, and a loss of joy. Things that once mattered can start to feel distant, flat, or meaningless.

In the Void, the freeze-or-flop response takes over. Your nervous system shuts down to conserve energy. Getting out of bed feels impossible. Small tasks feel enormous. It can feel as though gravity itself is pulling you down, leaving you exhausted, disconnected, and unable to engage with life the way you once could.

It is important in a Void to embody the Beacon. The Beacon is not harsh, forceful, or demanding. They are warm, gentle, and kind — like a warm cup of milk on a cold night. You don't need to force your way out of the Void. You only need to protect the smallest spark.

Ask yourself: "What part of me has gone quiet, and what would it need to feel safe enough to come back online?"

# The Gradual Kinetic Stir

## Somatic Practice for the Void To Embody The Beacon

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This exercise can be done in bed, seated, or wherever you are.

1. Paint the weight black. Notice where the heaviness lives in your body. Color it black. Perhaps it fills your whole body, perhaps it's concentrated somewhere. Just acknowledge it.
2. Create the smallest spark. Wiggle your toes. Then your fingers. Roll your shoulders once. Turn your head left, then right. That's it. No force. Just movement.
3. Add rhythm. Let the movement become slightly rhythmic – a simple pattern like tap-tap, tap-tap. Let your body find its own rhythm. Start with fingers, then hands, then your whole body if it wants.
4. Let it grow naturally. Ask your body: do you want to move a little more? If you're lying down, maybe sit up. Maybe stand. Or maybe stay small. Both are completely okay.
5. Shake and release. If available to you, gently shake your hands, then arms, then shoulders, then legs. Loose and unstructured. Like shaking off a long day.
6. Inhale and reach. Breathe in and gently raise your arms or reach forward. Expand the space in your body. Exhale and let them fall. Repeat at your own pace.

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After you complete these steps, repeat these words to yourself:

### BEACON'S REMINDER

*"You don't need to create a burning fire. You only need to protect the smallest spark. And from that, energy can grow."*

# After the Exercise

WHERE DID YOU FEEL THE DARKNESS OR HEAVINESS?  
DESCRIBE IT?

WHAT WAS THE FIRST SPARK YOU NOTICED? EVEN  
SOMETHING VERY SMALL.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, FEELS EVEN SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT  
AFTER THE EXERCISE?

# The Mist



Hypo-Disturbance · Inner Hero: The Navigator

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The Mist often follows the Void. Once you have enough energy to get up, you look around and don't know where you are going — your sense of identity and direction is lost. It's not depression. It's aimlessness, confusion, lostness.

The Mist causes you to shut down not because of emptiness, but because you cannot find a path forward. You feel directionless, which is its own kind of paralysis.

The Navigator is the version of you that remains calm when lost. They don't panic. They trust that the map — the life blueprint within them — will show them where to go. They don't need to see the whole path. They only need the first step.

Ask yourself: "What if I don't need to know the whole path right now?  
What is the next step I can see?"

# The Spiral to Center Movement

## Somatic Practice for the Mist To Embody The Navigator

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Find an open space to walk in – doesn't need to be large. A room is fine.

1. Start in the center. Stand still. Feel your feet on the ground. Whatever confusion or uncertainty is present – acknowledge it, but treat it like a passing cloud. It does not need to guide you.
2. Begin walking in a wide circle. Slowly, intentionally. Feel each step – heel first, then foot. Let the circle hold you. You don't need to think your way forward. Just stay with the movement.
3. Ask inwardly: "What feels true for me right now? Not what should be true – just what feels authentically, genuinely true for me." Let the question sit without forcing an answer.
4. Spiral inward. Gently make the circle slightly smaller with each round. Each step brings you a little closer to yourself. Notice how the energy becomes more contained, more gathered.
5. Come to the center. When it feels right, complete one final spiral and stop. Stand still. Feel your feet. Feel where you are. Then ask: "What is the one next step that feels right? Just the first step."
6. Take one physical step forward. A single step towards an intentional future. Notice what that feels like.

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After you complete these steps, repeat these words to yourself:

### NAVIGATOR'S BELIEF

**"I know I will find my way. I don't need the whole path. I only need the first step."**

# After the Exercise

WHAT AREA OF YOUR LIFE FEELS MOST LIKE A MIST RIGHT NOW?

WHAT FELT TRUE FOR YOU DURING THE SPIRAL WALK?  
WRITE WHATEVER AROSE, EVEN IF IT'S SMALL.

WHAT IS YOUR ONE NEXT STEP? (KEEP IT VERY SMALL AND SPECIFIC).

# My Personal Regulation Plan

Use this page to create your own quick-reference plan. When you are in a Disturbance, your thinking brain is less available to you – having a plan written here means you don't have to figure it out in the middle of the storm.

MY MOST COMMON DISTURBANCE IS:

MY EARLIEST WARNING SIGN THAT I'M ENTERING THIS DISTURBANCE  
(PHYSICAL SENSATION, THOUGHT, BEHAVIOR):

THE SOMATIC PRACTICE I WILL DO FIRST:

MY PERSONAL AFFIRMATION OR REMINDER (CAN BE FROM THE  
WORKBOOK OR YOUR OWN)

# Closing Note

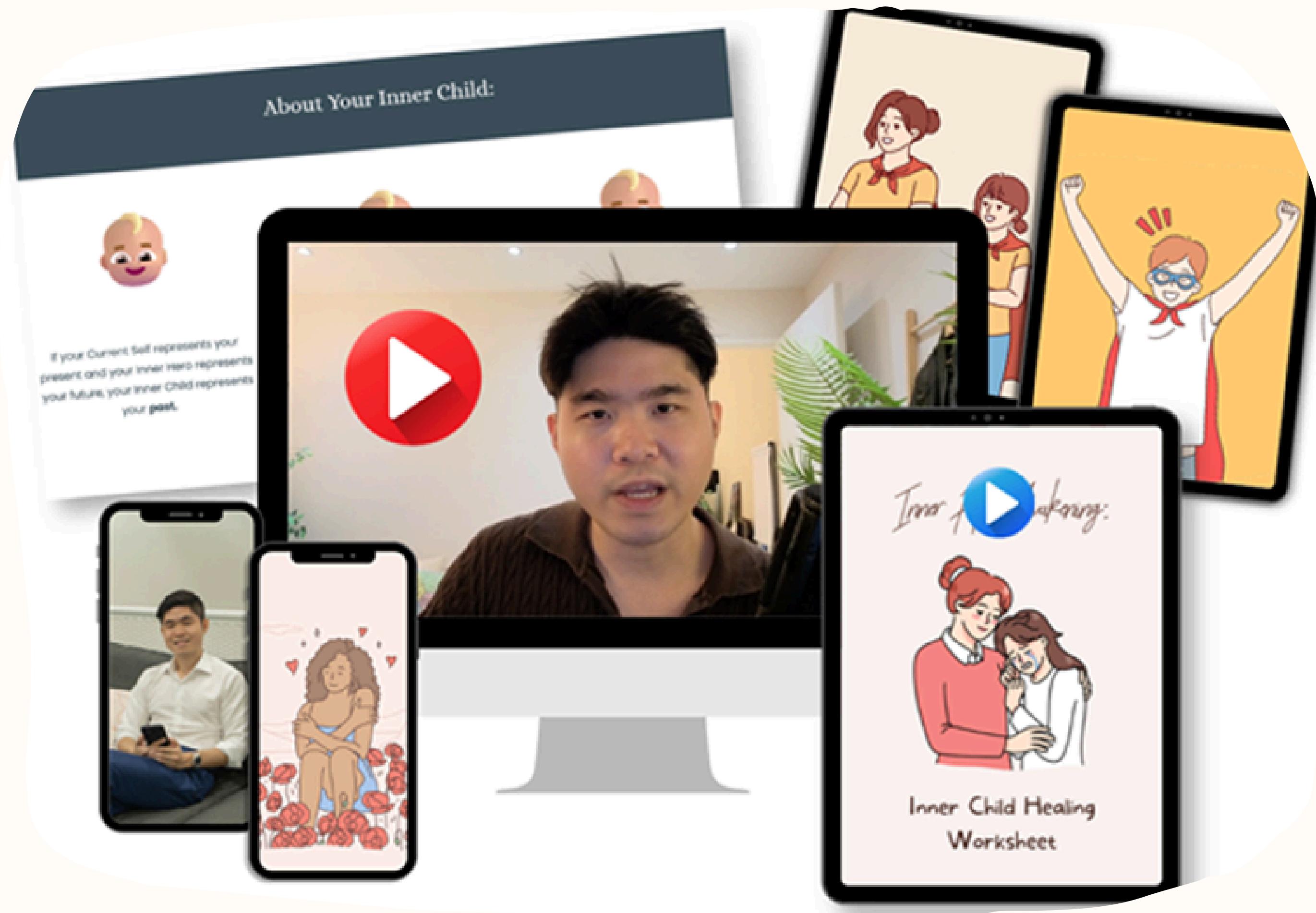
Emotional regulation is not a destination. It is a practice – something you return to, again and again, in the middle of real life. You will not always catch your Disturbances early. You will not always do the exercises perfectly. And that is completely okay.

What matters is that you now have language for your inner weather, and tools to meet it. Every time you return to these pages, you are practicing the most important skill of all: choosing to stay with yourself, even when it's hard.

REMEMBER

**"You don't have to stop the storm. You only have to learn to navigate it."**

# Healing Your Inner Child Online Course



Get 50% OFF Now!

If you found this mini eBook helpful, great news: I have an online course all about Emotional Regulation as part of my online course, Healing Your Inner Child. It contains modules on emotional regulation, healing Inner Child wounds and Inner Hero Work. The best thing? For everyone who has bought this eBook, it is 50% off for a limited time only. Get your spot today by clicking the button below!

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P.S. If you've enjoyed working on this eBook, please send a copy of your finished eBook with as many boxes filled in as you can to [support@mentalhealthceo.com](mailto:support@mentalhealthceo.com), and I'll send you a bonus Inner Hero resource worth **\$47** for free. Looking forward to your responses!

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