

Window of Joy

(Tolerance)



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE (JOY)

YOUR CAPACITY TO REGULATE EMOTIONS.

MOVE FROM STUCK IN SURVIVAL MODE TO
STUCK IN JOY!

The joy of the Lord is your strength

NEHEMIAH 8:10B

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IS THE ABILITY TO GUIDE YOUR BODY BACK TO CALM AFTER A NORMAL RESPONSE TO LIFE'S STRESSORS. DYSREGULATION OCCURS WHEN WE BECOME STUCK IN A STATE OF SURVIVAL.

THE GOAL IS NOT TO ELIMINATE ACTIVATION, BUT TO RECOGNIZE HEALTHY NERVOUS SYSTEM RESPONSES AND GENTLY WORK WITH THEM—ROOTED IN GRACE RATHER THAN SELF-JUDGMENT.

THE GOAL IS TO LEARN YOUR UNIQUE RHYTHMS AND MOVE/DANCE TOWARD AN ABUNDANT LIFE OF JOY.

WINDOW OF JOY

A window is an opening that allows you to peer into the other side, shaping how you perceive the world. The capacity of your window of tolerance influences this perception—stains, cracks, or smudges can distort it. Pain from abuse, grief, or overwhelm may shrink your resilience and capacity for emotional regulation, which is a normal response. You did what was necessary to survive your darkest days, taking a stance of defense, but sometimes the defenses linger. You're stuck, but you won't stay here. Now that you recognize that you can begin to remove the self-made armor you put on and replace it with God's armor. As a child of God, His armor is your inheritance, beloved!

Window of Tolerance is a term used to describe your emotional capacity and how you respond to stressors in life. When there is unresolved trauma in our lives, that window shrinks. Our window expands when we have a stronger sense of safety internally.

I started calling it the window of joy! There is a well-known verse used from scripture that led me to this. "...the joy of the Lord is your strength." The word 'strength' could also be replaced with 'refuge' or 'stronghold'. Part of the work in expanding your window is spiritual, and it requires tearing down strongholds of darkness and replacing them with the stronghold of the Lord!

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds." 2 Corinthians 10:4

These strongholds that form are usually the result of lies we start to believe about ourselves, God, and others because of our painful life experiences. That's when we start creating unhealthy patterns to protect ourselves..

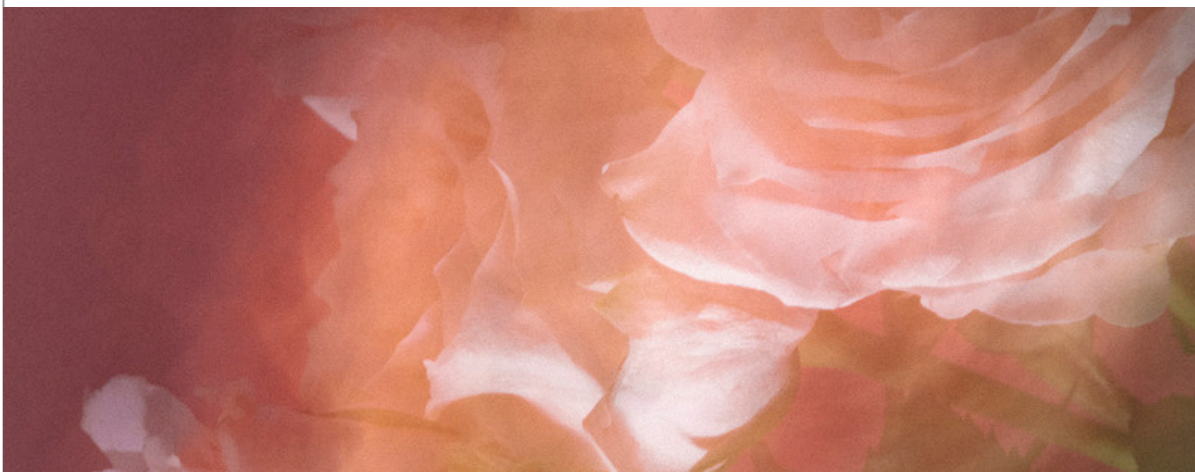
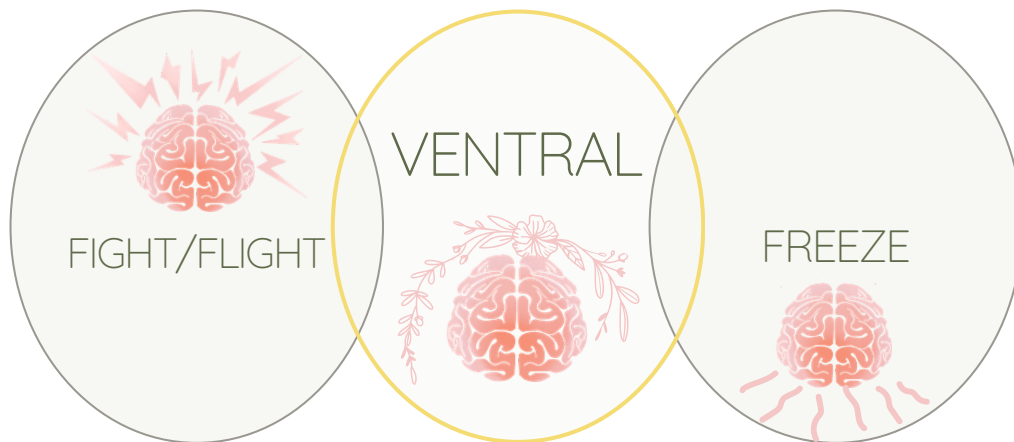
The Hebrew word for strength in that well-known verse is also used in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold for my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Do you see the safety in this truth? By connecting all of these verses, I realized we could get stuck in joy—the joy of the Lord is your stronghold. Joy is a state we can anchor ourselves in no matter our circumstances.

3 STATES OF YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

Autonomic nervous system (ANS)

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) controls our involuntary functions—the things we don't consciously manage—such as breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, and digestion.

When trauma occurs, the ANS can become stuck in survival mode. Wholeness begins with understanding the different nervous system states, identifying which state you're living in most often, and learning how to gently guide your body back to a place of safety and calm.



Fight/flight - Sympathetic - Hyperarousal

- Shaking
- Unsafe
- Racing Thoughts
- Tension
- Panic
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Rage/Anger

Freeze - Dorsal - Hypoarousal

- Shut Down
- Exhausted
- Shame
- Depressed
- Defeat
- Numb
- Overwhelmed

Ventral - Window of Tolerance - Optimal Energy

- Joyful
- Calm
- Safe
- Regulated
- Present in the moment
- Emotions are tolerable
- Relaxed

*You were created
for joy, peace, &
abundance*





IDENTIFY YOUR STATE

When you identify what state you are in, you can begin the work to move towards increasing your window of tolerance and truly living from joy.

You might actually find yourself swinging back and forth between the two extremes, but never sensing the ability to remain in a state of regulation.

Identifying your state is important to know which way to move. This is a time to pause and get curious about your internal state. There is no judgment, don't attempt to analyze, but in gentle curiosity, feel what your body is telling you.

After reading this pause and close your eyes. Take three deep breaths, a longer exhale than inhale, and feel what your body is telling you. What do you sense? Where is the tension? Are you anxious? Do you feel disconnected? Maybe this is a good time to grab your notebook and journal what you just experienced. Don't overthink it, just write it out. What state came to your mind first? Are you in fight/flight or freeze?

Moving back into your window of tolerance/joy from each state takes practice. In fight or flight, there is excess energy to be discharged. In freeze, there is a need to reconnect with yourself. In either state, moving towards safety and presence is the goal, and it happens in small shifts. Repetition is key to emotional regulation.

Be intentional about pausing and doing this in the morning and throughout your day. Practice strengthens your ability to move back to a state of ventral after you have a normal nervous system response to an abnormal situation.

Practice is what helps rewire your brain and create new patterns of sustainable joy.

REWIRE - RENEW - REDEEM

Neuroplasticity is the brain's capacity to grow and evolve through life experiences. Plasticity means the ability to be shaped, molded, or altered.

Rewire through Redemption

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:1-2

Writing a new story

As we consider this transformation, think of writing a new story—surrender the pen to your Creator and allow Him to redeem it.

- Your lived experiences – most of us develop survival patterns from pain. As a result, we build defensive armor, which often leads to unhealthy/self-destructive patterns.
- There is nothing wrong with you. You have responded normally to abnormal circumstances. To let our defenses down is to find consistent safety. “The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.” Psalm 28:7
- We must be careful not to shift all the blame onto others, but to take responsibility for our part also through humility and repentance. In a soft surrender, we begin to allow our Creator to pick up the broken pieces, and a new hope—a new story begins as He glues the pieces back with His love. Beauty does arise from the ashes.

Small shifts to create sustaining patterns of joy!

From here, begin with small shifts to create sustaining patterns of joy! Recognize that this work takes time. Intentional small practices help rewire and renew patterns. We are complex beings—this is more than just changing our thoughts. Whole-body healing occurs through repeated safe experiences that shift how we perceive the world and how we show up. This is experiential healing.

Rooted in Love

“Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong.” Ephesians 3:17

Take time to read verses 14-21 from this passage. Let this prayer wash over you. This is your inheritance, beloved. Allow each step of God rewriting your story to be rooted in His love and His abiding presence.

START YOUR DAY WITH INTENTION IN PRESENCE

Every morning, be intentional to start your day by being present with Jesus and yourself, and then with others throughout the day. This isn't meant to be a check off your list, but a relational act toward your healing. This is inviting Holy Spirit in to lead your day.

Find a safe, quiet space. Get curious about why you feel the way you do. No judgment, just gentle curiosity. Take those deep breaths and notice the way you feel. Ask God to show you what it looks like for Him to redeem your story and live the life of abundance He promises each day. Start your day with intention and pause three times a day with intention. In these moments, learn and honor your capacity. If we constantly push past our current capacity, we get bogged down. Honoring our capacity in small ways will allow us to grow it and our resilience.

In these pauses, choose a scripture to meditate on. Breathing in words and breathing out the words. Such as Psalm 23

Breathe in "The Lord is my Shepherd. Breathe out, "I shall not want." Breathe in, "He makes me lie down in green pastures. Breathe out, "He leads me by waters of rest."



*Create a
sacred space
to grow*

ROOTED IN PRESENCE

First, presence with God.

Practice being rooted in His love through His Word, meditation, and intentional pauses throughout the day—thanking Him for what you do have and acknowledging Him as your safe refuge.

This kind of presence cultivates joy and abundance. No matter your circumstances, God is with you, and He is for you.

“You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” Psalm 16:11

Second, presence with yourself.

Don't rush past your day. Offer yourself the same compassion and grace you so freely give to others. Be intentional in reminding yourself that you are human—and that peace is not the absence of trials, but the regulation we can cultivate through them.

Allow normal feelings and responses to the ups and downs of life rather than pushing them away. Move with gentleness, curiosity, and compassion.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the foremost commandment. And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Matthew 22:37-39

Third, presence with others.

Co-regulation is vital for healing from past trauma and for moving through life well. Identify the safe people in your life—the ones you can turn to when things feel overwhelming. Safe presence is deeply healing.

It reminds us that we are not alone and reflects God's good design for us to bear one another's burdens.

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 5:2

SIMPLE WAYS TO BRING YOURSELF BACK TO PRESENCE

This will look different for everyone. Through daily practice, you'll discover what works best for you.

The 5 Senses Grounding Exercise

- Sight – Name five things you can see. Describe them and allow yourself to enjoy them.
- Touch – Find four things you can touch. Notice their texture and temperature.
- Hearing – Name three things you can hear. Pay attention to the tone and volume.
- Smell – Identify two things you can smell. Don't rush this—linger if you can.
- Taste – Notice one thing you can taste. Savor the flavor and experience it fully.

Butterfly Hug

Cross your arms over your chest and gently hug yourself. Remind yourself: I am safe, and I am worthy of receiving love.

Go for a Walk

Pay attention to the beauty of nature around you. Let it become a time of prayer and worship to the One who created it all.

Sing or Hum

Hum a tune or sing a song that brings you joy. Your voice can be a powerful regulator. If you're up for it, dance as you sing! Life is better when we dance through it!

Pay Attention to Your Breathing

Notice your breath without trying to change it. Simply observe the rhythm—inhale and exhale. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Feel your body rise and fall as you breathe. Slow your breath just a little. Inhale through your nose for a count of four, then exhale through your mouth for a count of eight. Let your exhale be long and soft. If it feels comforting, whisper a prayer or a word of truth with your breath. Inhale: a deep breath of grace
Exhale: hope.

There are many grounding techniques, but these are a few simple places to start. Start small. The greatest steps toward healing happens in small, consistent moments of practice.

You're not looking for a quick fix, but for transformation—one that unfolds over time as you move toward healing, safety, and wholeness.

THE MOSAIC OF LIVING IN THE BOTH/ANDS

All of our stories are full of both/ands. There are broken parts, and there are beautiful parts.

Remember, the goal is to be rooted in love and to move through this life with grace. Be gentle with yourself. There is power in living softer and strength in gentleness.

Shattered and broken, yet one whole beautiful creation that tells our stories of:

- loss & gain
- empty & full
- selfishness & sacrifice
- fear & courage
- unbelief & faith
- heartbreak & love
- despair & joy
- turmoil & peace
- depression & hope

Incomplete, yet complete all at once.

Learning to live and exist in the both/ands requires intentionality—choosing to focus on what is good and holy. It means being aware of the internal battle while allowing the light to overcome the darkness we all face. It takes courage and faith to acknowledge our weaknesses and take action toward the strength we need to live an abundant life in heart, mind, and soul.

All the broken, shattered pieces, God gently begins to arrange them. Not as they were before, but into something new. A fresh story of your life begins to rise. New hope emerges as He carefully binds the pieces together with His love. A light that the darkness cannot extinguish.

God fortifies you with His strength, and the beautiful mosaic that forms tells a story of joy—one far greater than anything you could have written yourself. The mosaic window of joy.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

This guide is an introduction to your path of wholeness. Healing - recovering from trauma is a process. It is not linear, and it doesn't look the same for everyone. Your story is unique, your nervous system is unique. Learning what works for you will take practice and safe lived experience to expand your window of joy.

Next steps you can take - remember small shifts. Choose one to start, and add others as your capacity increases.

- Start identifying the lies you are believing. Maybe it's a lie about your worth. Start replacing it with the truth that you are worthy. You, beloved, are worthy!
- Find someone you trust to confide in. Whether it's a trusted friend, a professional, or a spiritual leader in your life. Having some type of mentor grounds you and helps you stay accountable.
- Pick a scripture a week to meditate on. I have listed some on the next page.
- Journal without judgment. Journaling might look like you just writing one sentence a day about how you feel.
- Pick short affirmations and reminders to speak to yourself through each day.
 - I am worthy
 - I am worth fighting for
 - I am loved
 - Take a deep breath of grace. Exhale Hope.
 - There is power in living softer
 - There is strength in gentleness
 - The joy of the Lord is my place of safety
- Give yourself space to rest. Rest is holy. Rest is where renewal, restoration, and revival begin.



SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4–5

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

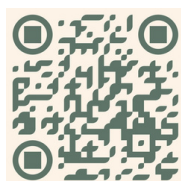
“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Philippians 4:8

- Romans 12:1-2
- Romans 8
- Ephesians 3:14-21
- John 10
- John 15
- Psalm 32
- Psalm 27
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 16



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