

"Optimal performance, conscious learning, and effective decision-making are most likely to occur at moderate stress levels. Where there is enough stress activation to keep us alert and focused but not enough to enter our distress zone." - [Elizabeth A. Stanley](#)

"Acceptance is simply the willingness to recognise and accept how things are. It is the courage to permit negative thinking to inform our understanding without allowing it to define our approach to the future." - [Gabor Maté](#)

Insights to understand stress tolerance

1. Reflect on your tolerance

Reflect (but don't dwell) on experiences that could affect whether you have a narrow/wide window of stress tolerance whether it be 1. Childhood trauma 2. Adult shock trauma 3. Duration

How wide or narrow is your window of stress currently?

2. Recognise stress & its impact

When you're stressed you:
1. Gather less information
2. Focus solely on the negative
3. Likely to accept the first workable option.
4. Stereotype
5. Analyse less
6. Make more mistakes.

How have these stress factors impacted you at work in the past?

3. Regulate how you respond

If you can regulate how you respond to stressful situations at work by using different tactics (going for a walk, meditating, HITT workouts), you widen your window and rewire your brain.

Which activities could you do to regulate your stress at work?

4. Increase your emotional competence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify emotions. Emotional competence is the ability to express your emotions with complete freedom (not repress them) which can help you to communicate more effectively in stressful situations.

How could you increase your emotional competence to interact constructively with others?

5. Abandon your 'attraction' to positive thinking

Trust yourself to face the full truth of situations, whatever that full truth may turn out to be; positive or negative. The ability to understand & include all of your reality in how you understand the world is a strength against stress.

How can negative/positive thinking affect your stress tolerance at work?

6. Being yourself is you at rest

Spending lots of time not being your true self at work can take a toll on your stress levels and on your feeling of belonging. Instead recognise that you can be lots of 'ands', not defined by one thing. You can be 'strong' and 'ask for help.'

Who could you talk to if you don't feel like yourself at work?



Ideas for action

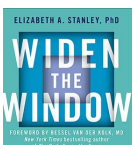
See your personal signals of stress

Do the contacts point exercise.
1. Sit on a chair grounded 2. Think about a situation you find stressful. 3. Assess your body's reactions to this stress. This is your personal signal for stress you can't ignore.

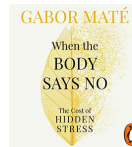
Set your boundaries

Boundaries give you autonomy and control over your working week to help lessen stress. What's one small change you could make to increase your autonomy at work?

Recommended resources



Widen the Window: Training Your Brain and Body to Thrive During Stress and Recover from Trauma
by Elizabeth A. Stanley



When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress
by Gabor Maté