

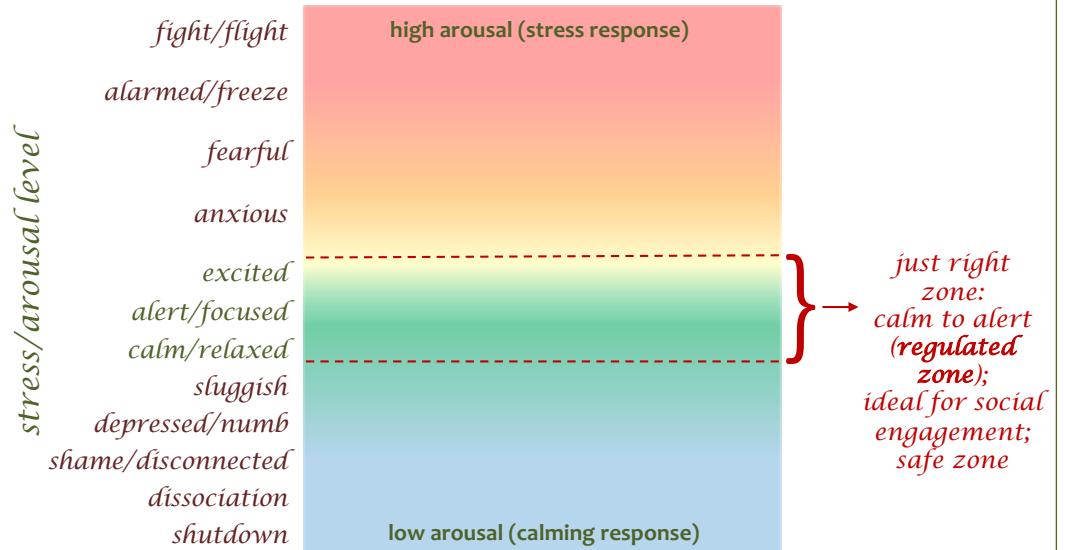
looking at the stress response



Our brain is always on the lookout to determine whether we are safe. If there is real or *perceived* danger, the stress response is one way our brain and body try to protect us. The stress response is most often activated by:

- **threat of harm** (emotional or physical)
- **uncertainty** (lack of predictability) that includes unfamiliarity, lack of control and lack of information

the stress/arousal continuum



based, in part, on the work of Wilbarger & Wilbarger (1997) and Ogden & Minton (2000)

Whenever we are outside of the 'just right zone', we are less regulated and tend to react automatically instead of choosing how we want to respond. As we move further away from our 'regulated zone' (particularly as our arousal level increases):

- the higher, thinking part of our brain is used less
- the lower, more automatic or reactive parts of our brain take over
- we tend to become:
 - distracted (don't take in information well)
 - less empathic (less understanding of other people's feelings)
 - more impulsive (act before thinking)
- we tend to forget what we know!
- our "thinking" is more black & white; we see things as right or wrong, all good or all bad – there is less room for anything in between
- we often see even neutral cues (such as facial expressions) from others as a threat or potential threat
- our social engagement system (facial expressions, ability to listen, eye contact & tone of voice) is less accessible

