



**IT ISN'T ABOUT
THE BUBBLEBATH:
DEPARTING FROM
CONVENTIONAL
SELF-CARE WISDOM
TO TAKE BETTER
CARE OF YOURSELF**

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CONVENTIONAL SELF-CARE WISDOM



**YOU *JUST HAVE TO* MAKE TIME
FOR IT!**

(Has that ever felt impossible?)

CONVENTIONAL SELF-CARE WISDOM



**IT WILL FEEL AWESOME WHEN YOU
DO IT!**

(Ever not really felt relief? Unsure of what even to do?
Felt more stressed while trying to do self care?)

CONVENTIONAL SELF-CARE WISDOM



**IF YOU'RE EXHAUSTED OR BURNT
OUT, IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT
TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF!**

(Ever felt shame for knowing you "should be taking better care of yourself" while not actually being able to make it happen?)

(Ever felt like you couldn't have space to report struggle without being told to "just take care of yourself?"

CONVENTIONAL SELF-CARE WISDOM



(OR, MAYBE YOU LOVE IT, IT WORKS
GREAT...AND YOU WANT TO BUILD ON
WHAT IS WORKING!)



THE SELF-CARE TRAP

Self-care presented as the elusive cure-all that you're obligated to perform prior to expressing exhaustion, stress, or overwhelm

(Yes, caring for ourselves IS important... but... a lot of the narratives and conventional wisdom around self-care aren't super useful)

TODAY:

Why traditional self-care narratives and practices often fail us.

What frameworks and knowledge we can use instead



WHO I AM



**PSYCHOTHERAPIST
SPECIALIZED IN THE
RELATIONAL
NEUROSCIENCES**



**MULTIDISCIPLINARY
ARTIST**

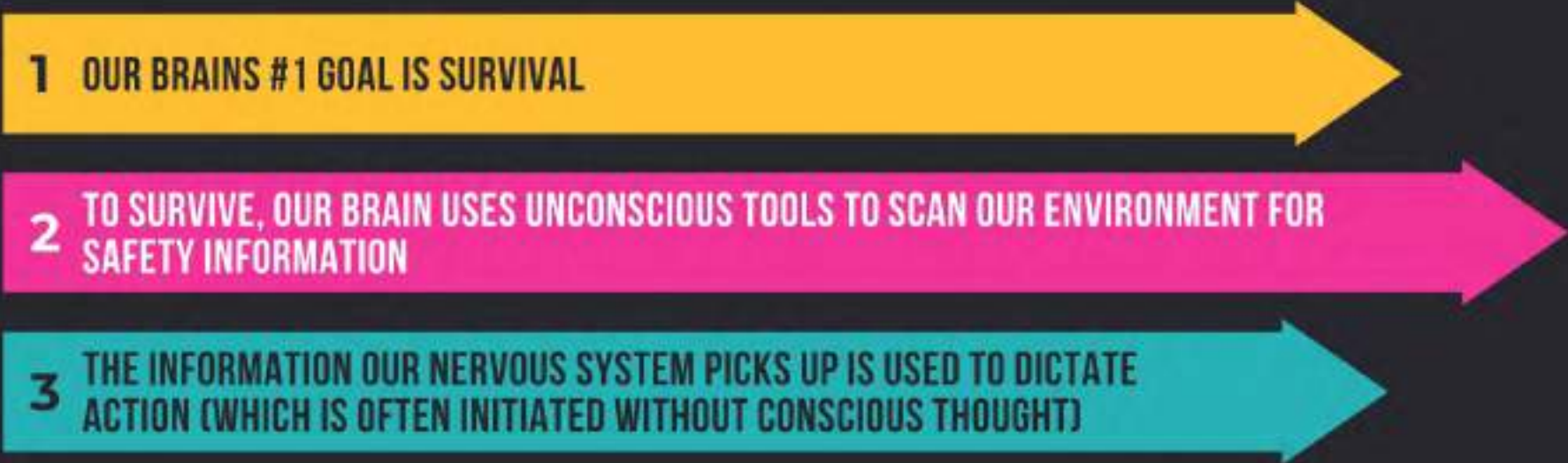
- Applied Improv
- Circus



**CREATIVE TRAINER &
FACILITATOR (WITH A
COMMUNICATION
SCIENCE DEGREE TO
BACK IT UP)**



THE NERVOUS SYSTEM: THE MISSING LINK



1 OUR BRAINS #1 GOAL IS SURVIVAL

2 TO SURVIVE, OUR BRAIN USES UNCONSCIOUS TOOLS TO SCAN OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR SAFETY INFORMATION

3 THE INFORMATION OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM PICKS UP IS USED TO DICTATE ACTION (WHICH IS OFTEN INITIATED WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT)



THE BEAR CHASE ANALOGY

THE BEAR CHASE ANALOGY



**YOU'RE WALKING ALONG IN THE
WOODS**

THE BEAR CHASE ANALOGY



**YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM IS
SCANNING THE ENVIRONMENT
AND RESPONDING
(NEUROCEPTION)**

THE BEAR CHASE ANALOGY



YOU SEE A BEAR

Body responds automatically (fight/flight)

THE BEAR CHASE ANALOGY



**BEAR CHASES YOU --> YOU RUN
FOR YOUR LIFE**

THE BEAR CHASE ANALOGY



**NERVOUS SYSTEM THINKS:
RESTING = DANGER,
MOBILIZATION = STAYING ALIVE**



THE SELF-CARE TRAP, CONT.:

If we're running from a metaphorical bear - and we try to get our body to slow down and enjoy a bath - it makes PERFECT SENSE that it isn't easy to do.

Your subconscious nervous system may be associating rest and stillness with DANGER, and might be actively working to prevent that danger.

(Sometimes, rest doesn't *feel* like the most important thing for survival - even when we need it)



**LIVING THE
BEAR-CHASE
LIFE WHEN
THE BEAR
ISN'T THERE**

BEAR CHASE LIVING WITHOUT THE BEAR



REASON #1

- Our brain's "scanning mechanism" gets shut off to prioritize survival energy

BEAR CHASE LIVING WITHOUT THE BEAR



REASON #2

Our system is used to being in FULL SPEED
AHEAD mode

BEAR CHASE LIVING WITHOUT THE BEAR



REASON #3:

We don't have a FELT sense of safety - even if we're physically safe.

KEY FOR SURVIVAL = SAFETY





MANAGING THE PARADOX

I need rest and restoration v. my body is fighting against it

KNOWING AND NAMING WHAT IS HAPPENING



**IF SELF-CARE IS HARD FOR YOU -
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE MOST
STRESSED - YOU'RE NOT ALONE**

- And this makes sense neurobiologically.
- Nothing is wrong with you, your nervous system is trying to do an important job

KNOWING AND NAMING WHAT IS HAPPENING



EXTERNALIZING THE INTERNAL CREATES ROOM FOR CHANGE & REMOVES SHAME & BLAME

- It makes sense that self-care has been hard for me. My nervous system has been mobilized and activated for so long that it has lost touch with the practice of resting without it feeling dangerous.
- I recognize the feelings that come up around stillness and rest - and can name them for what they are.
- I will seek small, progressive ways to help my nervous system re-awaken to rest as safety

TAKING ACTION



WAKE OUR BRAIN UP TO SCANNING

- Help our brain ID and see markers of safety
- Validate the feelings that prevent ease with this - but encourage brain to see counter-evidence

TAKING ACTION

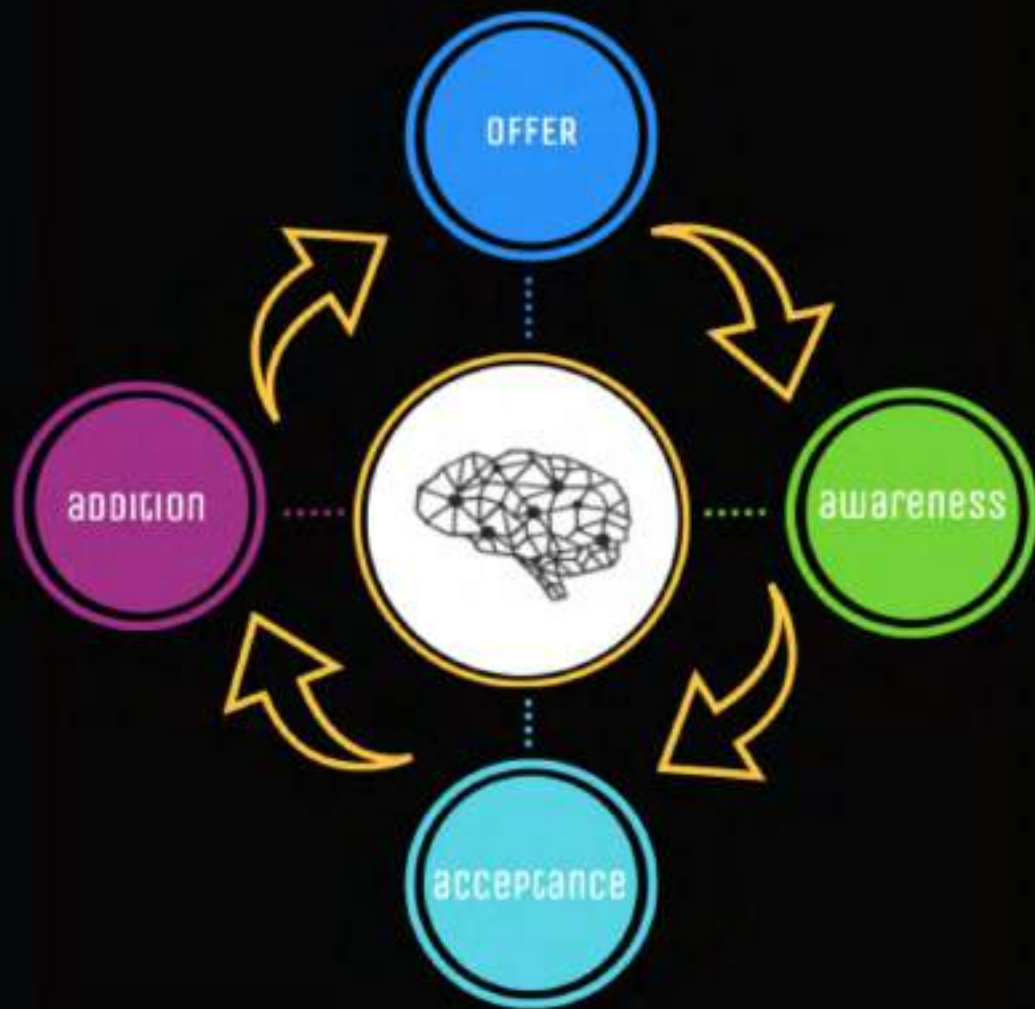


ID THE SMALL STEPS

- Drinking water = I'm not in danger
- What things bring in felt safety proactively for me?
- What things can I integrate re-actively to help myself find felt safety? (without waking the bear)
- Start SMALL Ex: Three deep breaths
- Lower stress level: do something with people that bring feelings of safety



YES AND VACATION



CONJURE MAGICAL SPACES WHEN NEEDED

IMAGINATION AS A "LOW-BAR" ASK FOR A STRESSED BRAIN

BE THE "THRIFT STORE" VERSION OF THE IDEAL

HOMEWORK

EXPLORE 'YES AND' / CREATIVITY TO BREAK TUNNEL VISION



PLAY WITH OTHERS!
GREAT FOR ALL!

LOOK FOR LITTLE WAYS TO SAY "YES" TO WHAT YOU SEE, NOTICE,
AND FEEL. LOOK FOR THE "YES."

CHECK DOOR SENSORY SAFETY SIGNALS:
REST MUSIC, COMFY CLOTHES ETC.

STORY INSPIRATION

RIFF OFF OF OTHERS' IDEAS/STORIES

TAKEAWAYS



CONNECTIVITY TO OURSELVES AND OTHERS = NERVOUS SYSTEM SOOTHING

- It is easy to “lose ourselves” in the daily grind
- Rooting into what you know /knew can be grounding

LOOK AT OLD PICTURES THAT CONNECT TO HAPPY TIMES

REVISIT AND TELL OLD STORIES

AVOID TALKING SOLELY ABOUT STRESSORS

NAME TRUTHS: I AM SOMEONE WHO...

HOMEWORK

RE-VISIT PREVIOUS ENJOYMENTS



OLD FRIEND

OLD HOBBIES

MIX UP YOUR ROUTINE

CHILDHOOD FAVORITES

GET SOMETHING SPECIAL



WHEN DO YOU FEEL BEST?

IDENTIFYING FELT-SAFETY MARKERS

REFLECT ON SAFEST, BEST FEELING PLACES

SEEK MORE HIGH-SAFETY EXPERIENCES

ADD IN HIGH-SAFETY MARKERS IN REGULAR DAY

HOMework

EXPLORE SAFETY MARKERS

PEOPLE

FOOD & DRINKS

CLOTHES

ACTIVITIES

TEXTURE





I KNOW VS. I WONDER

**HOLDING CURIOSITY
AND POSSIBILITY**

PICK RANDOM THINGS TO WONDER ABOUT

(WONDER = BRAIN AWAKE)

WONDER ABOUT WHAT MIGHT FEEL RESTORATIVE
AND ATTAINABLE

WONDER ABOUT YOUR CAREGIVING ROLE

HOMework

WONDER ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT RE-DEFINE
YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF-CARE

YOURSELF

OTHERS

ACTIVITIES

RANDOM ITEMS

YOUR CAREGIVING RELATIONSHIP





IN THE MIDDLE

FIGHTING TUNNEL VISION



MIRRORING

FINDING PRESENCE



BOOKS!

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PETER WILSON

Katharine Holab

Special Secret

B. & C. Rowe

Again

Billson & C. Rowe

ERROL THE PAIL

Margaret Hamilton

cook MARY WHITE

Everyday Ma

ce Experiment

HEARTLINES

IZINT

A NGOKUPHIMISELA

HEARTLINES

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WA NGOKUPHIMISELA

That in the Mirror?

s That in the Mirror?



1. THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

WOT BASICS

The WOT is the “zone of arousal” in which we function most effectively.

IN THE WINDOW

We're able to receive, process, and integrate information and respond to the demands of daily life without much difficulty.

OUTSIDE OF THE WINDOW

Our nervous system responds by going into survival mode - and we feel driven to fight, flight, or lee.

THE ACCELERATOR AND BRAKING SYSTEM

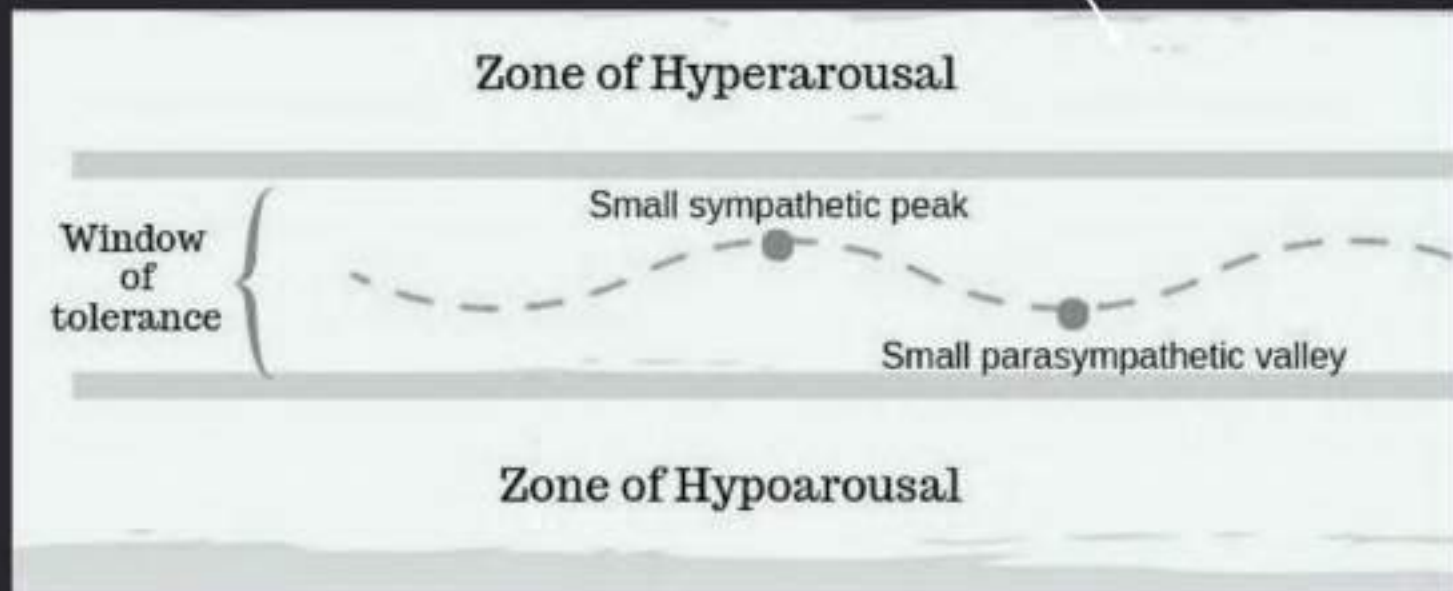


THROUGHOUT THE DAY,
WE ENCOUNTER THINGS
THAT “ACCELERATE”
OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM



AND ALSO THAT ENGAGE
THE “BRAKING” SYSTEM
OF OUR NERVOUS
SYSTEM

WOT LOW STRESS DAY



WHEN WE'RE IN OUR WOT



**OPTIMAL AROUSAL
ZONE**



**CALM, BUT NOT
TIRED**



**ALERT, BUT NOT
ANXIOUS**



**READY FOR SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT (VVP)**



RELAXED



FLEXIBLE



**READY TO
PROBLEM-SOLVE
AND LEARN**

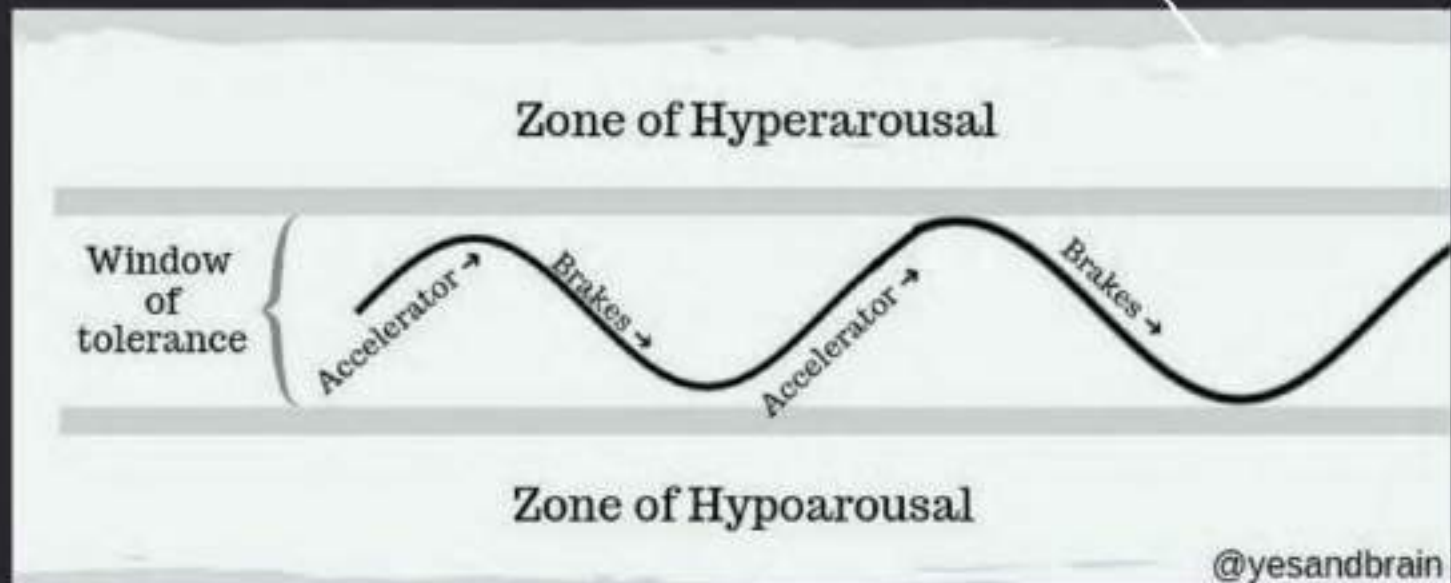


**ABLE TO MANAGE
THE STRESSORS
AND SOOTHERS OF
THE DAY**

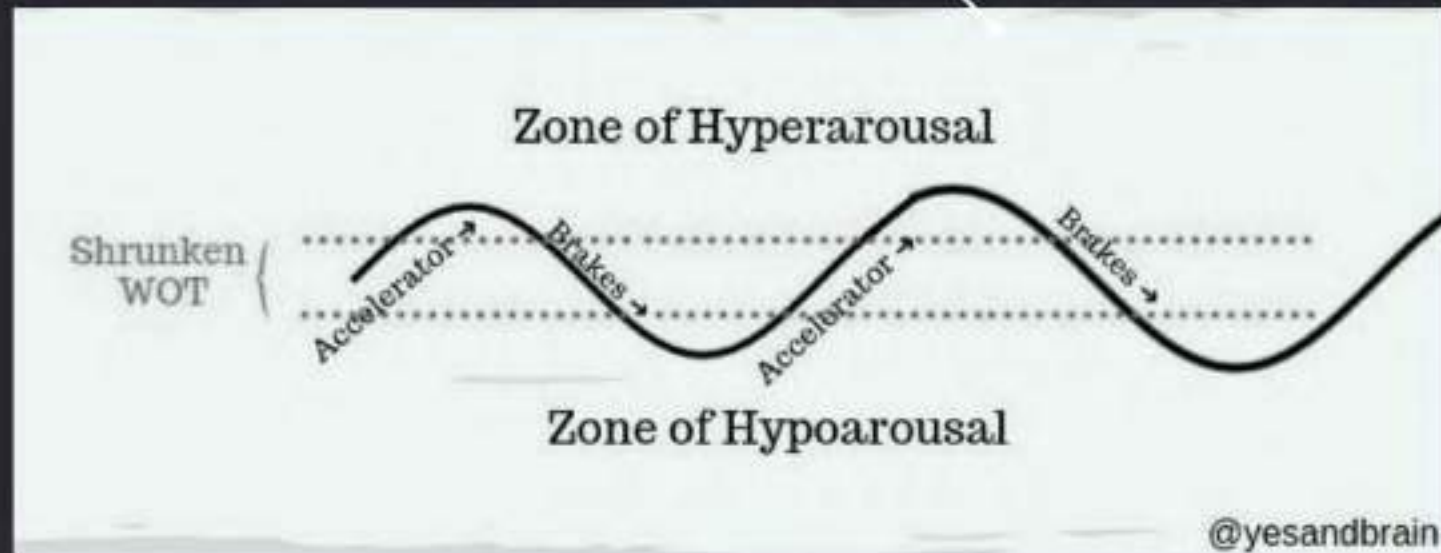


**CONNECTED &
COMMUNICATE
WELL**

WOT HIGH STRESS DAY



SHRUNKEN WOT



WHEN WE'RE IN OUR ZONE OF HYPERAROUSAL



OVERWHELMED



**CAN'T ACCESS
LOGICAL BRAIN**

(But maybe has racing thoughts)



**READY TO
MOBILIZE AWAY
FROM THREATS**



ANXIOUS



ANGER/AGITATION



**PHYSIOLOGICAL
CHANGES**

Heart rate increases,
blood pressure etc.



STRESSED



**SYMPATHETIC
ACTIVATION**



**STRUGGLES TO
COMMUNICATE
WELL/LISTEN**

WHEN WE'RE IN OUR ZONE OF HYPOAROUSAL

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
|  | ZONED OUT |  | SPACEY |  | NUMB |
|  | CAN'T ACCESS
LOGICAL BRAIN |  | SURVIVAL STATE |  | PARASYMPATHETIC
ACTIVATION |
|  | BODY WANTS TO
SHUT DOWN,
FREEZE, OR
IMMOBILIZE |  | PHYSIOLOGICAL
CHANGES
<small>Mixed and varied</small> |  | DISSOCIATIVE
COLLAPSE |