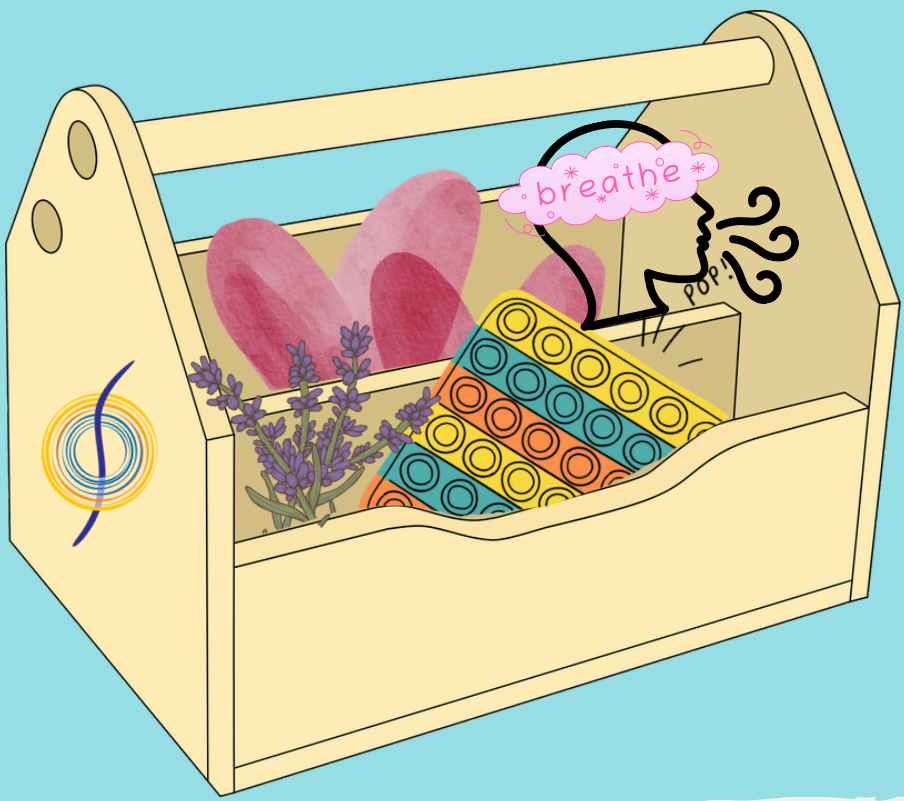
BUILDING A SURVIVOR-CENTERED COPING SKILLS TOOLKIT



A zine by SASS

Published June 2026

What is SASS?

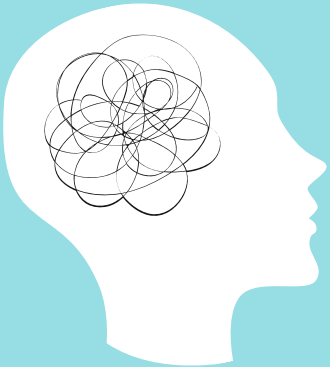
SASS stands for Sexual Assault Support Services and we are an organization in the movement against sexual violence. We've been around since 1991, and have evolved over the past three decades, as has our understanding of the dynamics of sexual violence.

SASS's mission is to create opportunities for survivors of sexual violence and their supporters to find healing, justice, and liberation. SASS is a confidential and judgment-free space. We believe survivors.

SASS will not disclose any information about a survivor or their experience to doctors, parents, employers, law enforcement, any state or federal agency (including ICE), landlords, attorneys, or anyone else without explicit and written permission from the survivor to do so.

SASS SERVICES ARE ALWAYS FREE AND INTENDED FOR SURVIVORS AND THEIR FRIENDS, FAMILIES, PARTNERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

Understanding the Basics



Experiencing trauma can change our ability to cope with everyday things

Triggers can be identifiable or unidentifiable



@frizzkidart

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

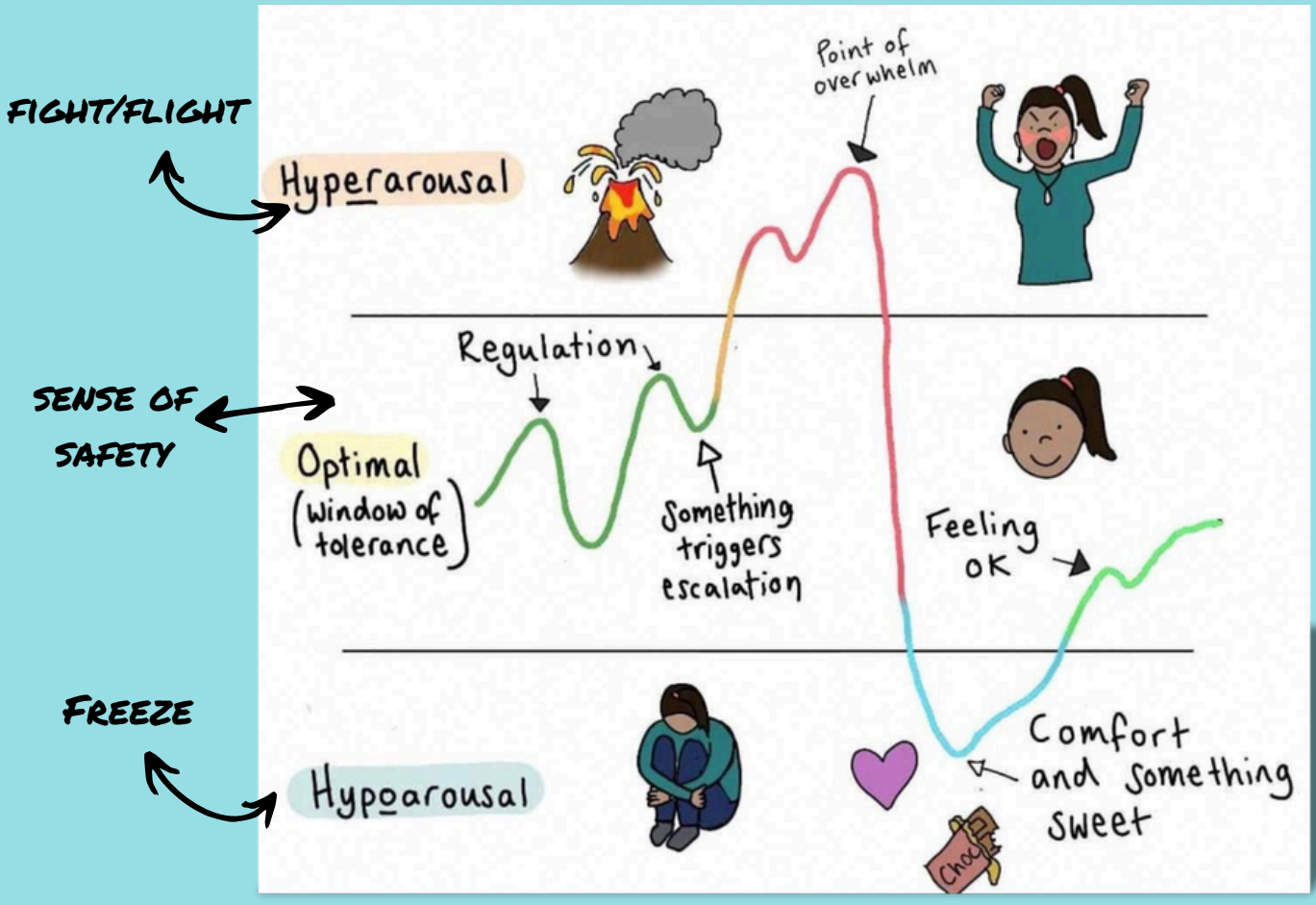


Image sourced from vibhahealingcentre.com

Flight/Fight During extreme stress you move out of your window of tolerance and into fight or flight mode. Anxiety | Panic | Fear | Anger | Aggression	Overloaded
Window of Tolerance Where you can handle and process your feelings in a healthy way while being able to function and thrive. You increase your tolerance with coping skills. Safe | Capable | Grounded | Self-Aware Mindful | Engaged | Self-Soothing | Connected	Comfortable
Freeze During extreme stress you just completely shut down and withdrawal physically/emotionally. Depression | Fatigue | Numb | Disconnected Disassociated | Checked Out | Unfocused	Shut Down

@BlessingManifesting



Emotional regulation is often misunderstood as staying calm. But true regulation is about being able to respond, not just react.

The Window of Tolerance refers to the zone of arousal in which a person is able to function most effectively. When you're within this window, emotions feel manageable. You're able to think clearly, make sound decisions, connect with others, and regulate your reactions-even in the face of stress.

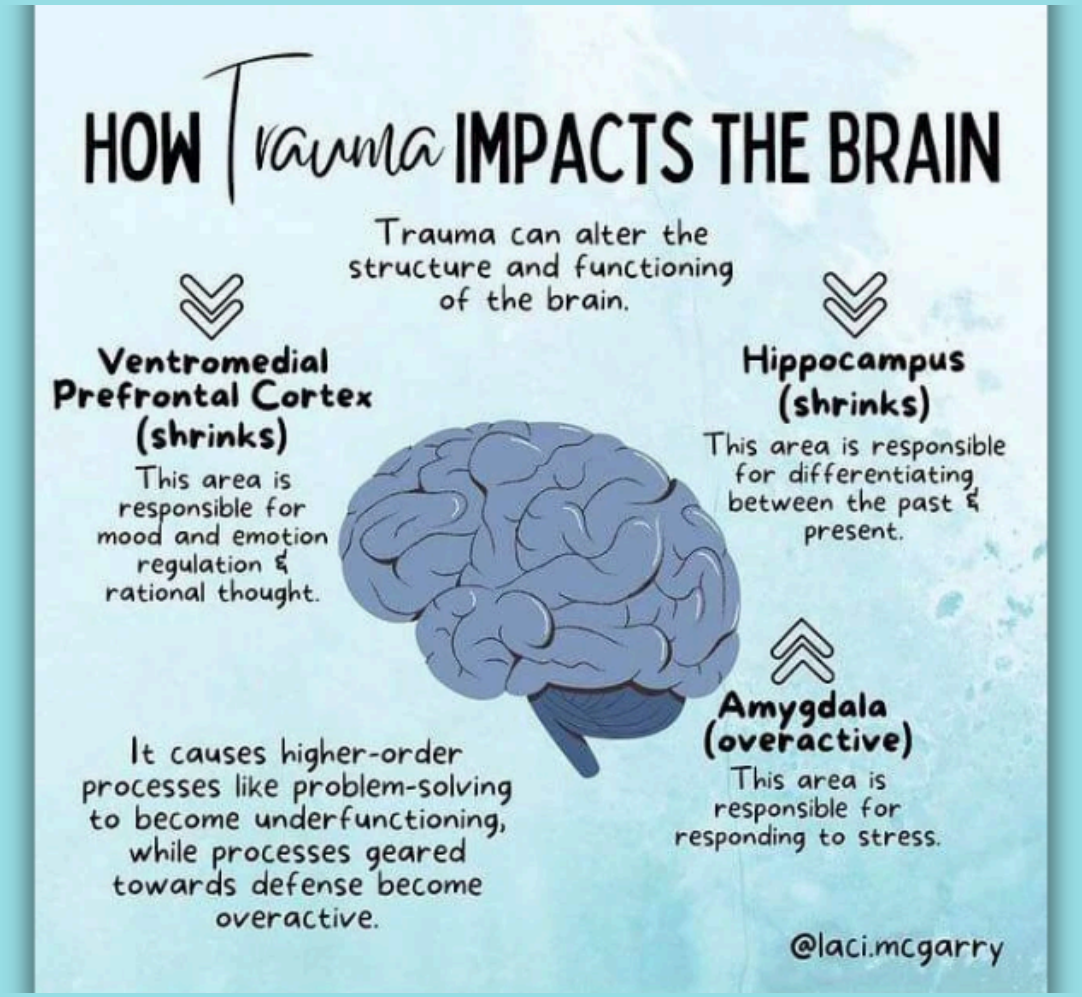
But being "within the window" doesn't mean you're emotionally flat or unaffected. It means you're emotionally flexible: you can feel, process, and respond appropriately without becoming overwhelmed or shutting down.

Trauma can sometimes shrink your window of tolerance, so it doesn't take much to push you into hyper- or hypo-arousal.

This info comes from vibhahealingcentre.com

REMEMBER

Whatever someone's brain does during a traumatic experience is *what the brain believed it had to do to keep that person alive.*



BUILDING YOUR COPING TOOLKIT



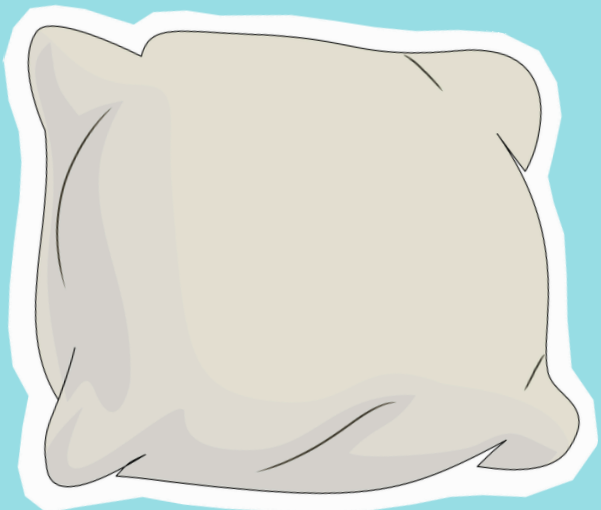
A coping toolkit is a collection of physical items meant to help when you're feeling dysregulated. It should be easily accessible and contain a variety of items.

Items to consider:

- Silly Putty, clay, or slime
- Essential oil and cotton balls
- Fidget toys/stress ball
- Notecards of affirmations
- Totems or grounding objects
- Sour candy
- Instant hot or ice packs
- Ear plugs
- Playlist of calming or grounding music

BODY-BASED COPING SKILLS

- Movement (Go for a walk. Squiggle. Wiggle around. Dance. Stretch. Be silly and active for a few minutes.)
- Care for your physical needs (try youfeellikeshit.com if you need ideas)
- Wall push, pillow throw, throw a ball (alone or with others), rip paper
- Progressive relaxation body scan
- Breathing exercises (box breathing)
- Set a timer to feel all of your feelings
- Plunge your face or hands in cold water
- Gargle, hum, chant, or sing (bee breath or Bhramari Pranayama)
- Self-havening (see next page)





WHAT'S SELF-HAVENING?

For centuries, healers have known and used the power of touch in human health care to reduce pain and treat a wide range of chronic and acute conditions. Modern research has shown that using the touch of a hand on the body can yield positive therapeutic outcomes. Touch can be used to help heal stress and emotional trauma.

"Psychosensory" refers to the use of sensory input for psychological healing and has its origins in traditional Chinese medicine. Let's focus on the Havening Techniques® which uses mindful touch to reduce PTSD and other stress-based disorders like anxiety, depression, panic, and phobias.

Havening incorporates the application of touch to four locations found to exhibit the greatest delta wave response: the brow, cheek, shoulders, and hands. Delta wave activity can create a electrochemical state permissive for healing.



This information comes from Dr. Kate Truitt (drtruitt.com)

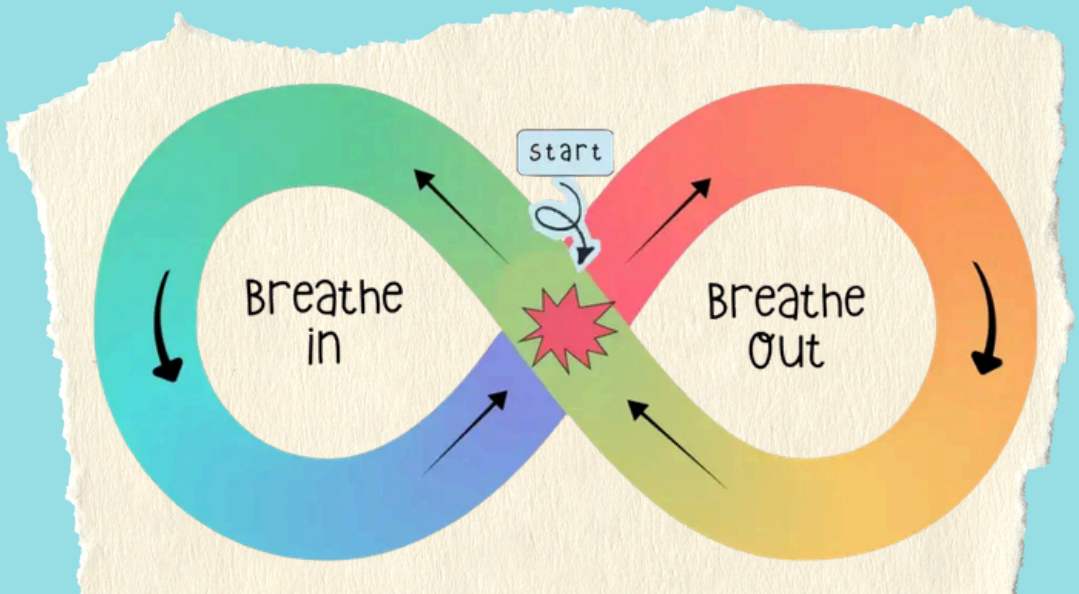


MINDFULNESS & GROUNDING

Practices to try:

- 5-4-3-2-1 Senses Activity
- Grounding Object
- Mindfulness Meditation (Leaves on a Stream)
- Body Scan
- Verbal Orientation
- Naming colors or shapes
- Affirmations
- Walk in the grass or dirt barefoot

SLOWLY TRACE WITH YOUR FINGER



Gentle Distraction

- Count by 3s
- Alphabet game
- Declutter a room
- Cook something new
- Watch something funny

How to play the Alphabet Game

Focus your mind on a category (e.g. fruits) and begin listing one item for each letter (e.g. apple, banana, cherry, etc.)



Find Connection

- Call a friend
- Snuggle a pet
- Call a support line
- Water a plant

WANT SOMEONE TO TALK TO?



Call us!

SASS

24/7 Crisis & Support line **Always free, always confidential**

(541)-343-7277 or 1-844-404-7700 **www.sass-lane.org**

I don't like phone calls. Can I text?

Yeah, homie! Monday thru Friday from 9 am to 5 pm