

Finding a Window  
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There is a lot of hurt in the world today.

So much hurt, and we have access to viewing it on a daily basis, whether it be through social media, texts from friends, the news, or watching it in real life and real time.

I read an article recently by Nadia Bolz-Weber in which she talked about how our brains and, more importantly, our hearts aren't meant to have that kind of full, all-clearance access to such traumas. Seeing the hurt of another is something that you can't always shake off easily, so what do you think it does to you when you see the trauma of the world every day as you scroll?

To some, it may be simple to detach and know there is little to nothing we can do, but to others, it sticks in our heads and it sticks to our hearts, leaving a gunky, caking mud that doesn't wash off easily. ... Then, as that muddy caking builds up, either our own hurts begin to feel never-ending, like the biggest thing we have ever seen in our entire lives, or the opposite occurs—they feel insignificant and not worthy of our time or energy.

This is in part because of something called the “window of tolerance,” a term coined by Dr. Dan Siegel that describes where a person is in terms of ability to function most effectively. When someone is outside of their window of tolerance, they experience either hyper-arousal (fight or flight—adrenaline rushing through the body making them feel like the world is ending and they need to protect themselves), or hypo-arousal (freeze—the body slowly shutting down because it is exhausted from any amount of time in hyper-arousal and needs to withdraw). Both sides of the window make normal functioning feel impossible.

When we are inside our window of tolerance, we are able to be more resilient and cope better with what life throws our way, big and small, and we are able to function at an optimal level.

If you are like me, you may not have a very large window. Mine has grown over the years thanks to professional therapy and help, as well as a lot of self-work, but it still looks about like a doggy door most days. Maybe one for a German Shepherd now, though! What we want is a window that we can sit in and bask in the light. Maybe a big bay window—those are nice, right? They're pretty, large, and you can chill out there for a while. We want a bay “window of tolerance.” That's my new term. That's my new goal.

Because I want to help people! Don't you? People need me, and people need you. We have a purpose here. I am on fire for it, and I want to fulfill it in all the possible ways! As a Christian, I believe it is quite literally my God-given duty to love and to serve those around me. Sometimes I take that to the extreme, and I walk into other people's space and overstep their boundaries, but it's truly because I care.

However, in order to love and to serve others, I have to love and serve myself too.

In my opinion, one of the best ways to stay in your window of tolerance is taking care of yourself, and I truly believe that to be a biblical command. “[Jesus] said to him, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands’” (Matthew 22:37-40 HCSB).

Jesus tells us that the Law and the Prophets depend on our loving God, and also on our loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. This means that following God’s law depends on our loving ourselves and taking care of ourselves so that we can stay functioning.

Sometimes, that self-care will look like taking a power nap on a tough day, turning off social media for a bit, putting the phone on silent, eating a meal because you know your body needs your care even though you don’t feel like it and you are busy, taking time to do nothing so your body can settle from all the craziness that is life, or taking a break from everything. Whatever your self-care looks like—this is your permission, your sign, your reason to start doing a better job of it.

You want to take care of, love, and serve others? Do that for yourself first. Even Jesus took breaks and time away from the crowds to go off and be alone with His Father. We, as His disciples, should learn and do the same.