

Arousal

Arousal refers to the state of our nervous system and describes our level of alertness. In order to attend, concentrate, and perform tasks in a manner that meets the demands of the situation, our nervous system must be in the appropriate state of arousal for that particular task and situation. Playing a game of table tennis, we need to be physically and mentally alert and respond quickly, whereas threading a needle we need to be physically still and mentally focussed. Our arousal levels tend to fluctuate over the course of the day in response to social and environmental demands, for example a fire alarm going off, being bullied, falling over in the playground or being read to. Most of us are able to **self-regulate** so that our state of arousal stays within an optimal zone, or what we call the **Just Right State**. Some of us, however, find it difficult to access our Just Right State, and throughout the day we may have low arousal (can't seem to get going, feel lethargic, slow and maybe a bit floppy), high arousal (hypervigilant, hyperactive, seemingly minor incidents result in considerable distress, may become overwhelmed and freeze or shut down), or we may fluctuate between low and high arousal states.