

## Hyper-arousal

When events or circumstances take us out of our **Just Right State** into hyper-arousal, we may progress along an arousal continuum from alert to alarm, fear and, ultimately, terror. Hyper-arousal may involve feelings of anger, anxiety, lack of safety, racing thoughts, sensory pain and sensory and emotional overload. When a person is in a state of hyper-arousal, they lose their capacity to perceive cues of safety in the environment but instead are hypervigilant to perceived threat. In hyper-arousal, the individual may perceive neutral and even benign events and interactions as threatening. They may lash out physically or verbally, cause damage to property or try to run away from the perceived threat. It is important to remember that these types of response are not within the individual's control and are motivated by their experience of fear and a lack of safety. When an individual is in a state of hyper-arousal, their hyper-aroused yet fearful presentation may be described using such terms as "oppositional", "defiant", "demand avoidant", "non-compliant", "stubborn" or "resistant". When the individual's **presentation or way of being** is construed in this way, it may anger, frustrate or mystify the people around them, with the result that the individual may experience increased isolation and fear, pushing them even further away from their Just Right State. It is important, therefore, to recognise a hyper-arousal presentation for what it is, namely an expression of alarm, fear or terror that seeks a compassionate response based on the principle of **co-regulation**.

