



Just Right State

The Just Right State is our optimal state of arousal – when we’re in the Just Right State, we are able to perceive cues of safety in the environment. We feel calm, safe and alert, we’re ready for connection and interaction and we can manage and thrive in everyday life. Being in our Just Right State is like sailing within a river of wellbeing (Siegel and Bryson, 2012), where we can respond flexibly and adaptively to everything that we encounter over the course of the day without being knocked off course. The Just Right State is a psychological and physiological state in which we are capable of re-setting after becoming activated or disconnected as a result of experiencing stress. Resetting might involve “cooling down” if we have become activated (taken out of our Just Right State and into hyper-arousal) or “reconnecting” if we have become disconnected or withdrawn (taken out of our Just Right State and into hypo-arousal). As an example, consider the experience of a school pupil in class when the fire alarm goes off unexpectedly. Her heart may race, her breathing accelerate and she may tense her muscles, but once the sound has died down, she is able to resume attending to her lesson. In the Just Right State, our social engagement system is online and available to us, meaning we have capacity to engage in higher brain functions such as academic learning, problem-solving, abstract thought, imaginative thought, social interaction and emotional connection. At times, though, events, demands or circumstances can take us out of our Just Right State with the result that our autonomic nervous system is tipped into survival mode – fight, flight or freeze – and we lose access to our

social engagement system. We might feel overwhelmed and go into **hyper-arousal** or we might disconnect or withdraw and go into **hypo-arousal**. Our Just Right State may be broad or narrow and our access to it may change over the course of the day, depending on our resources and the social and physical environments and situations we find ourselves in. By using the principle of **co-regulation**, the people around us can support us to get back into or to remain in our Just Right State.

Siegel D and Bryson TP, 2012. The Whole-Brain Child. Bantam. New York. p12