

Survival Responses

Explained

Fight, Flight, Freeze, and Fawn are automatic survival responses our brain, body, and nervous system will use when we are danger. Sometimes we have these responses to something that is not usually dangerous, like a having hard conversation, doing something new, or recalling a bad memory.

FREEZE



What It Feels Like

Feeling Numb, Disconnected, Scared
You might experience stiff muscles, find it hard to move, feel your heart beat slow down, feel frozen in your body, have difficulty breathing, find it hard to notice your thoughts, and find it hard to speak.

What Can Help

Take Slow Deep Breaths
Try to gently move your body, start by wiggling fingers or toes, and then try to stretch your arms and legs
Say to yourself "I am safe."

FLIGHT



What It Feels Like

Feeling Anxious, Scared, Irritable
You might experience restlessness in your arms and legs, a fast heartbeat, upset stomach, and startle easily. You might look around you often to look for a way out and try to run away.

What Can Help

Take Slow Deep Breaths
Use your 5 Senses, Name 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.
Squeeze your muscles and release a few times

FIGHT



What It Feels Like

Feeling Anger, Rage, Defensive
You might experience a fast heartbeat, tight jaw, tight fists, fast breathing rate, and restlessness in your body.
You might yell, and feel urges to be verbally or physically aggressive.

What Can Help

Take Slow Deep Breaths
Name your feelings
Squeeze your muscles and release a few times
If arguing, take a short break and then come back and talk through the situation

FAWN



What It Feels Like

Feeling Anxious, Overwhelmed, Confused
You might experience a fast heartbeat, restlessness, or other symptoms but may feel disconnected from these.
You may try to people please, over apologize, and be overly agreeable.

What Can Help

Take Slow Deep Breaths
Name your feelings
Ask yourself what you need right now to help yourself
Set healthy boundaries and say no to things that harm you