

# HOW THE BRAIN AND BODY RESPOND TO THREAT

When the brain senses threat (real or perceived), the body jumps into action. The body typically responds in one of three ways: fight, flight or freeze.



## FIGHT

### THE BRAIN

This is an unconscious reaction, but it's like the brain is saying, "If I attack first, this threat can't attack me, or its attacks against me will be weaker."

### THE BODY

The body may experience a rush of adrenaline, tightened fists and joints, outbursts, physical violence, aggression, digestive issues, and/or trembling or shaking.



## FLIGHT

### THE BRAIN

The brain is signaling that there is danger and alerting the body to escape and flee to safety.

### THE BODY

The body may respond by leaving the situation, walking or running away, hiding or retreating.



## FREEZE

### THE BRAIN

The brain is overwhelmed by threat and shuts down as a protective measure.

### THE BODY

The body may become disengaged, numb, "play dead", decrease the heart rate, hide, or be unresponsive.

The brain doesn't have time to make a conscious decision about which option to choose. In fact, during times of stress, the brain responds instantly and automatically. It is the brain's way of protecting the body from danger!

# SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

Pay attention to your body's response to stress.

How do you typically respond?

Do you have more fight, flight or freeze responses?

What triggers a stress response in you?

What helps soothe you to bring you back to a more regulated state?

The brain and body connection is very powerful.  
When we are aware of how our body is responding to our environment,  
we can better care for ourselves, both physically and mentally.