

# The Stress Response: Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn

The four automatic ways the body meets a threat, what each is doing, and how to steady it. Educational overview.

Under threat, the body reacts automatically in one of four ways. None of them is a choice or a fault, and none of them is a failing. They are old survival responses. Naming which one is running helps you steady it.

Response	What it can look like	What it's doing	One way to steady it
<b>Fight</b>	irritable, angry, clenched jaw, urge to argue or control.	mobilizing to confront the threat.	slow the exhale, step back, name it, then choose your next move.
<b>Flight</b>	restless, anxious, urge to escape or stay busy, can't sit still.	mobilizing to get away from the threat.	plant your feet, slow the breath, orient to what is safe right now.
<b>Freeze</b>	stuck, numb, blank, can't move or decide.	an ancient protective shutdown.	small movement, gentle orienting, remind yourself the danger may be past.
<b>Fawn</b>	people-pleasing, appeasing, over-apologizing, own needs vanish.	staying safe by keeping others happy.	pause, notice your own need, try one small honest boundary.

A racing heart or a frozen mind is a false alarm, not danger itself. If these responses run often or get in the way of your life, that is worth talking through with a clinician.

**Learn more: [Stress Response at shrinkdaily.com/concept/stress-response](https://shrinkdaily.com/concept/stress-response)**