

HOW THE NERVOUS SYSTEM RESPONDS TO TRAUMA

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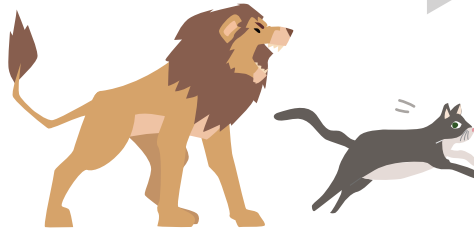
How does your nervous system figure out how to respond in a crisis?

It's a split-second, unconscious process designed to choose the best option for keeping you safe. Here's how it works:

IDENTIFY THE THREAT

CAN I ESCAPE?

YES



If we can quickly get far enough away from the threat, we might be able to escape and avoid interacting with it entirely.

FLY

NO

CAN I OVERPOWER IT?

YES



If we attack the threat before it attacks us, we might be able to weaken it and possibly keep it from attacking in the future.

FIGHT

NO

CAN I MAKE IT LOSE INTEREST?

YES



If our body closes up, becomes rigid, and won't move, we might be able to keep the threat from noticing or becoming interested in us.

FREEZE

NO

COLLAPSE

If our mind/brain disconnects from our body, like by dissociating, or in some cases by fainting, we might be able to avoid feeling as much of the pain.



In the face of threat, there isn't time to try every approach. In fact, your nervous system has to make these choices almost instantaneously. So while you may not understand the choice, or agree with it afterward, it's important to know that your body is taking care of you the best it knows how.