FIGHT – FLIGHT - FREEZE

Spirit 2 Spirit
Trauma Healing
Certification

The Refuge
a Healing Place
Because there is no time to think when facing threat, our primary responses are instinctual. Our brain’s main function is survival! We are wired for it. At the root of a traumatic reaction is our 280-million-year heritage—a heritage that resides in the oldest and deepest structures of the brain known as the reptile brain.”

Peter A. Levine & Maggie Kline – Trauma Through A Child’s Eyes
FIGHT - FLIGHT - FREEZE
“In response to threat, the organism can fight, flee, or freeze. These responses exist as parts of a unified defense system. When fight and flight responses are thwarted, the organism instinctively constricts as it moves toward it’s last option, the freezing response.”

Peter A. Levine – Waking the Tiger
“Trauma is not in the event itself; rather, trauma resides in the nervous system.”

“The basis of “single-event” trauma (as contrasted to ongoing neglect and abuse) is physiological rather than psychological.”

Peter A. Levine & Maggie Kline – Trauma Through A Child’s Eyes
FLIGHT

SURVIVAL

Every now and then, your best bet is to run like hell and hope you're faster than your peers.
“We are biologically programmed to freeze (or go limp) when fight or flight is either impossible or perceived to be impossible. Freeze is the last ditch, “default” response to an inescapable threat, even if that threat is a microbe in our blood.”

Peter A. Levine & Maggie Kline – Trauma Through A Child’s Eyes
FREEZE

SURVIVAL

When you are in deep trouble, say nothing, and try to look like you know what you're doing.
“Infants and children, because of their limited capacity to defend themselves, are particularly susceptible to freezing and therefore are vulnerable to being traumatized. This is why adult support is so crucial in preventing trauma and helping our youngsters heal.”

Peter A. Levine & Maggie Kline – Trauma Through A Child’s Eyes
• “Trauma symptoms form in a spiraling process that begins with primitive biological mechanisms. At the core of this process is the immobility or freezing response, a defense mechanism summoned by the reptilian brain.”

Peter A. Levine – Waking the Tiger
• “As it constricts, the energy that would have been discharged by executing the fight or flight strategies is amplified and bound up in the nervous system. In this emotional and anxious state, the now frustrated fight response erupts into rage; the frustrated flight response gives way to helplessness.”

Peter A. Levine – Waking the Tiger
FREEZE

• “Another scenario is that constriction will continue until the rage, terror, and helplessness have built up to a level of activation that overwhelms the nervous system. At this point immobility will take over the individual will either freeze or collapse. What happens then is that the intense, frozen energy, instead of discharging, gets bound up with the overwhelming, highly activated emotional states of terror, rage and helplessness.”

Peter A. Levine – Waking the Tiger
Regarding trauma, pathology can be thought of as the maladaptive use of any activity (physiological, behavioral, emotional, or mental) designed to help the nervous system regulate its activated energy. Pathology (i.e., symptoms) becomes, in a sense, the organism’s safety valve. The valve lets off just enough pressure to keep the system running.”

Peter A. Levine – Waking the Tiger
"The Emergency reaction of the fight-or-flight response is akin to throwing everything on a ship overboard to avoid sinking, or burning the furniture in winter to avoid freezing to death. The focus on survival supersedes all medium – and long term plans and goals."

Louis Cozolino, Ph.D. – The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy
“These biological processes need to be reversed as soon as possible after the crisis has passed to allow the body to recover and return to the job of repair and long term maintenance. It is apparent that this system was designed to cope with the risks involved with brief periods of stress in emergency situations; it was not designed to be maintained for weeks or years at a time.”

Louis Cozolino, Ph.D. – The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy
FIGHT – FLIGHT – FREEZE
“When stress occurs, our bodies mobilize for one of the three F’s: freeze, fight or flee (the fight-or-flight response).”

Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D. – *The Owner’s Manual For The Brain*
FIGHT - FLIGHT - FREEZE
“Dilation of the pupils, for maximum visual perception even in darkness.”

Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D. – The Owner’s Manual For The Brain
THIS REACTION INCLUDES

YOU SEE BETTER WHEN YOU'RE SCARED
“Constriction of the arteries for maximum pressure to pump blood to the heart and other muscles (the heart goes from one to five gallons pumped per minute).”

Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D. – The Owner’s Manual For The Brain
“Activation of the adrenal gland to pump cortisol, which maintains pupil dilation and artery constriction by stimulating the formation of epinephrine and norepinephrine, sensitizing adrenergic receptors, and inhibiting the breakdown of epinephrine and norepinephrine.”

Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D. – The Owner’s Manual For The Brain
“Enlargement of the vessels to the heart to facilitate the return of blood.”

“Metabolism of fat (from fatty cells) and glucose (from the liver) for energy.”

_Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D. – The Owner’s Manual For The Brain_
“Constriction of vessels to the skin, kidneys, and digestive tract, shutting down digestion and maximizing readiness for the fight-or-flight response.”

Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D. – The Owner’s Manual For The Brain
**The Response**

- Our senses and perception are sharpened.

**The Pro**

- Time appears to slow down giving us opportunity to respond faster to a threat.

**The Con**

- Can cause a feeling of being out of reality and cause anxiety especially in the aftermath.
The Response

• Depersonalisation a feeling of being outside of ourselves or distant.

The Pro

• Possibly protects the mind from the traumatic event.

The Con

• Can create a feeling of unreality and some feel they are going insane.
The Response
• Noradrenalin production temporarily increases.

The Pro
• Makes us more aggressive and gives us a better chance to survive a fight.

The Con
• That aggressiveness can become a coping mechanism in non threatening situations. Can be aggressive to those around us.
The Response

- We sweat profusely.

The Pro

- Cools us and prepares us for exertion. Makes us slippery and harder to grab.

The Con

- Can be a cold clammy and unpleasant feeling.
The Response
• Increased blood flow to our muscles.

The Pro
• Our muscles tense and prepare for the fight or flight.

The Con
• Can cause aches, pains and tension headaches.
The Response

- Our heart beats faster.

The Pro

- Increases our blood pressure and prepares us for peak exertion.

The Con

- Can trigger panic attacks and a fear that we are dying.
Cortisol is released and makes our blood stickier.

Blood clots easier so we will lose less blood if injured.

Too much cortisol can slow your metabolism, causing weight gain. Longer term this can increase the risk of heart attack or stroke.
The Response

• We breathe more rapidly and shallowly.

The Pro

• Oxygenates the blood for peak exertion.

The Con

• Can cause hyperventilation. Can cause confusion, pins and needles or dizziness. May feel like you are suffocating and cause panic.
• May urinate or empty the bowels.

• This makes us lighter so we can run faster.

• It can make anxious people hyperconscious about it happening again. Some will avoid going out or have to plan around bathroom facilities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Response</th>
<th>• Stimulates glycogen breakdown in muscle tissue. Switches off glycogen production.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pro</td>
<td>• Glycogen is broken down in muscles to release rapid energy to run or fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Con</td>
<td>• Alters blood sugar levels, causing mood swings or fatigue. May lead to cravings for unhealthy sweet foods and therefore weight gain long term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Response
- Immune system is suppressed or suspended.

The Pro
- Conserves energy for us to survive the immediate threat the long term threat or sickness is less important in the moment.

The Con
- Makes us more vulnerable to everyday diseases and infections. Long term it may increase the risk of getting cancer.
The Response

• Digestion Stops. Blood is diverted from the gut to the arms and legs.

The Pro

• Provides blood to the areas it is needed most.

The Con

• Can lead to gastrointestinal problems, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers and colitis.