# The Four F's
## of Trauma Responses

## FIGHT

- The fight response involves standing up to the threat & trying to defend oneself or others.
- It is a natural response to stress & can be healthy in short-term situations where assertiveness & strong boundaries are needed.
- It can manifest as physical fights, yelling, physical aggression, and/or throwing things.
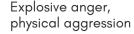
**Unhealthy**     **Healthy**

Explosive anger, physical aggression     Firm boundaries, assertiveness

## FLIGHT

- The flight response involves trying to escape the threat or danger.
- It involves a release of stress hormones that signals us to flee from the danger or threat.
- It can manifest as running away (literally or metaphorically) and/or avoiding the situation altogether.

**Unhealthy**     **Healthy**

Isolation, avoidance from triggers     Removing self from danger

## FREEZE

- The freeze response involves feeling paralyzed or unable to act in the face of the threat.
- It is a state of shutting down (hypo-arousal) or being overwhelmed (hyper-arousal) & involves an immediate stilling of movement where stress hormones are released to protect & help us adapt to situations.
- It can manifest as feeling numb, feeling disconnected, and/or dissociating (spacing out) from the situation.
- In reflecting, people will often see themselves from a third-person point-of-view ("It's like watching a movie of myself")

Unhealthy                           Healthy

Dissociation,                 Taking a moment
feeling stuck/numb            to pause & assess

## FAWN

- The fawn response involves people-pleasing behaviors to avoid conflict & trauma via appeasing behaviors.
- It can involve desperate attempts to meet others' needs to the degree that an individual disconnects from their own emotions, sensations, & needs.
- It can manifest as agreeing with everything the abuser says, doing things to earn approval, & being unable to say "no."

Unhealthy                           Healthy

Excessive people-            Being empathetic
pleasing, denying own        & compassionate
needs, feeling guilty,       towards others,
others > self                others = self