

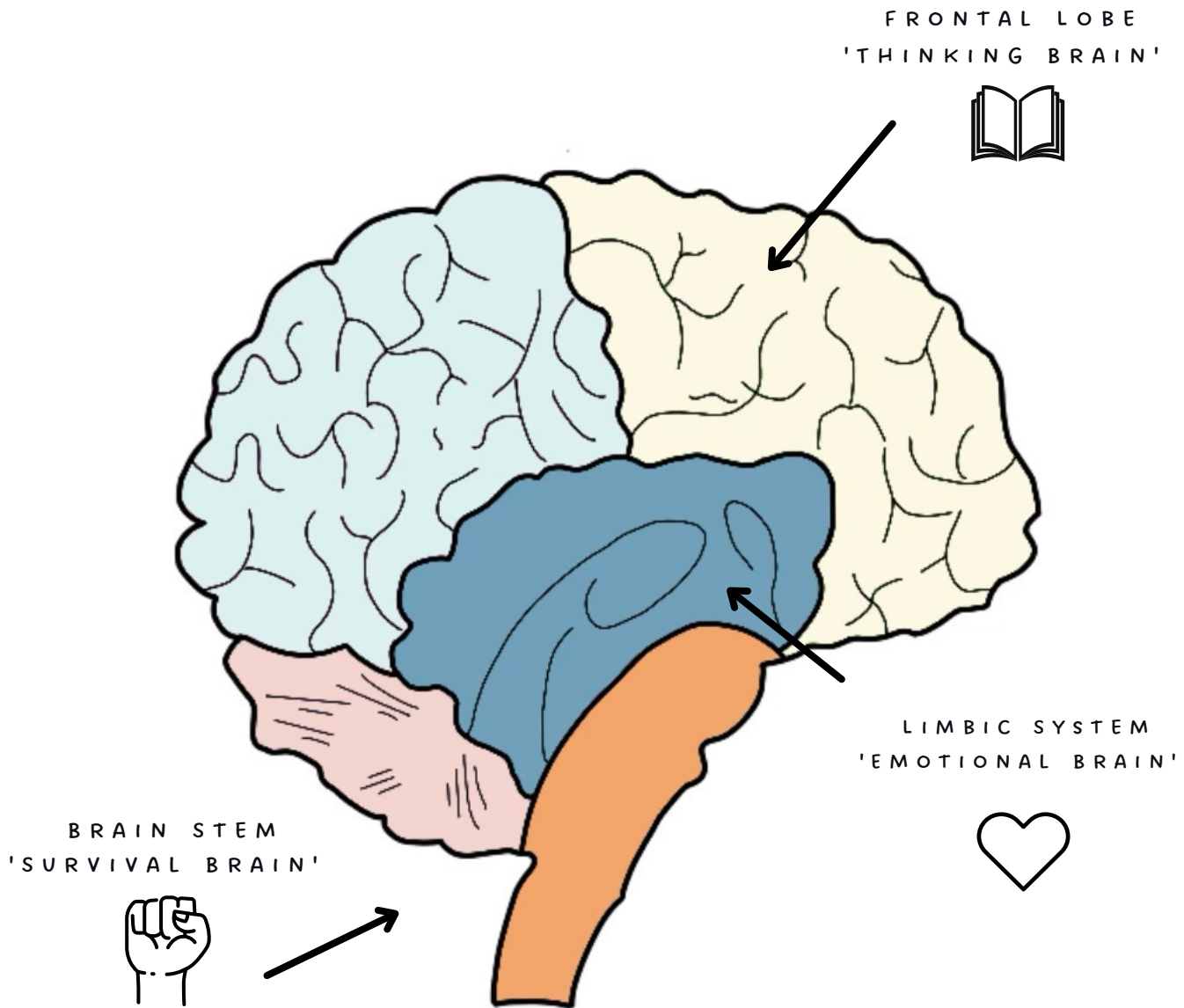
THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE

Worksheets to help you understand and navigate your fight, flight or freeze responses to stress and worry.



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THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE



'SURVIVAL BRAIN' - Prioritises your survival functions, such as your heart beats faster so that you can breathe in more oxygen, which is important if you need to fight or run away.

- More energy makes it's way to your limbs so you can run faster and be stronger.

'EMOTIONAL BRAIN' - Your emotions become extremely intense and act as a warning sign to help us quickly respond to danger and threats.

'THINKING BRAIN' - Temporarily goes 'offline' - so that the energy your brain would normally use is now prioritised to other body systems to help keep you safe.

WORRIES

A worry is a feeling of unease, fear, or nervousness when thinking about unpleasant things. It is a type of thinking, often about something that might happen in the future, leaving you feeling frightened, nervous, or anxious. Some people call it worries, anxiety, or stress.

People that worry a lot often feel very nervous about the potential dangers of what could or might happen in certain situations.

A worry can be a specific thought that makes you feel nervous, such as "what if I make a mistake during my drama play and everyone laughs at me" or it can be a more general feeling that you get, such as getting butterflies in your tummy or feeling sick even though you're not sick.

Worry is a normal feeling and can serve us well in several situations. For example, worrying about a math test can help us study more, or worrying about a sports game can help us prepare better and perform well. However, when we worry too much, and it starts to interfere with things in our everyday life, then it is not good, and we need some special tools and tips to help us overcome our anxious feelings.



Everybody experiences worries; however, if you are starting to feel worried more often or can't seem to stop thinking about your concern and it is leaving you feeling upset, then this mini book will help you manage your worries so that they don't bother you anymore.

Just move through this booklet at your own pace, listen to your body, and please speak up if you feel uncomfortable about any of your feelings because talking always helps.

TIMES WHEN I HAVE FELT ANXIOUS

Everybody feels worried or anxious from time to time. For example, maybe you felt concerned when you had to get a needle at the doctor's office, or perhaps you were worried when you started school for the first time because you didn't know anyone. It is even completely normal to feel worried if you have to talk in front of many people at your school assembly.

Try and think of times when you felt a little bit anxious.

TIMES WHEN I FELT ANXIOUS WAS



SURVIVAL MODE OF WORRIES

Without the ability to feel worried, humans wouldn't have survived. Back in the caveman days, when we were hunters and gatherers, worry and stress would alert us to potential life-threatening dangers, such as being face to-face with a sabre-tooth tiger.



In the caveman days, the 'fight or flight' mode kept them alive, as they would either make a mad dash away from the tiger or fight it for survival. In the modern world, this response can still serve us well and help us survive dangerous situations, such as quickly responding to a car that is coming your way on the footpath, by running out of its way.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE

Everybody has the fight or flight response, it is a natural response, and it is designed to help keep us safe from danger. However, if your response remains switched on when there is no real danger, or if it gets switched on too quickly and makes you feel nervous all the time again when there is no danger, then the response will turn into anxiety. It will start to interrupt your daily functioning.

In other words, there are healthy fight-or-flight responses, and there are unhealthy fight-or-flight responses. For example, healthy responses might happen when you have a test at school, visit the doctor's office for a needle, or even watch something scary on tv.

The difference is that the triggers that cause you to have an unnecessary fight or flight response are your thoughts, memories, and emotions. As a result, you can become afraid and fearful of things that you think might happen in the future.

ACTIVITY

SEE IF YOU CAN PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF SOME HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY RESPONSES TO THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE.

HEALTHY RESPONSE

Seeing a car coming quickly towards you

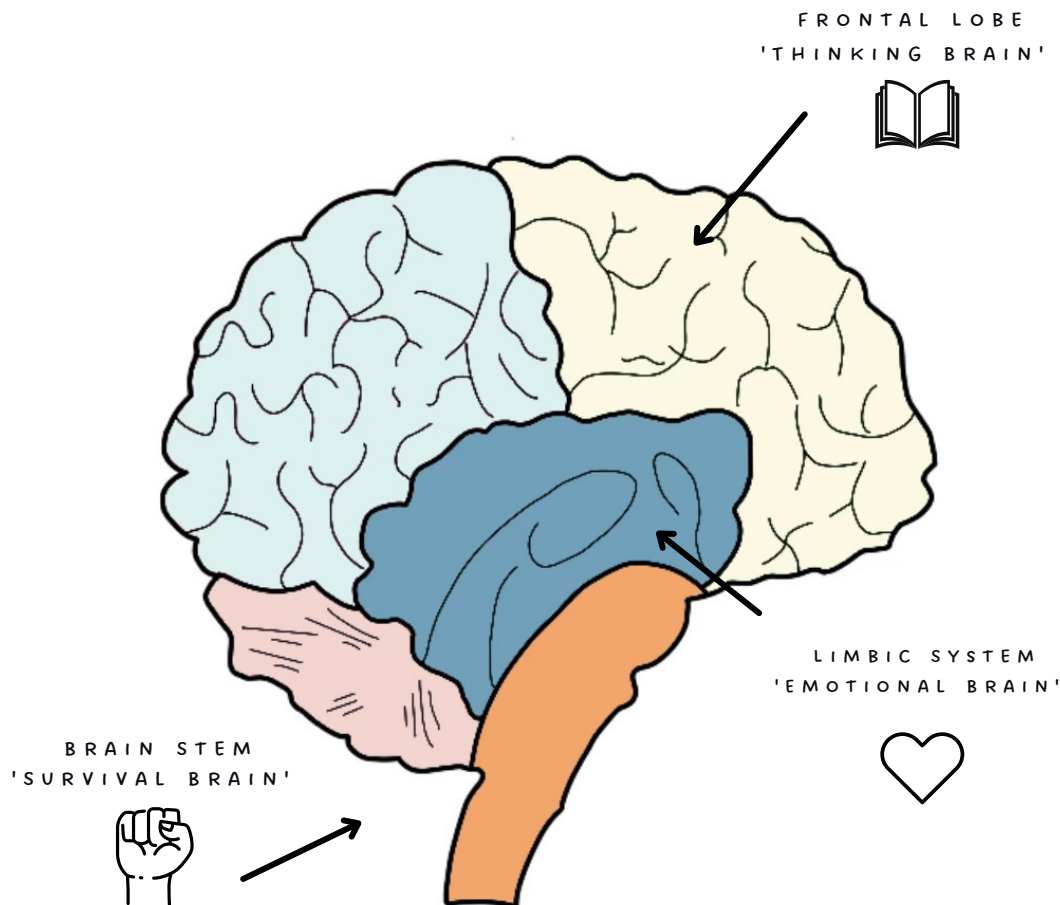
UNHEALTHY RESPONSE

Worrying all day that Mum won't pick me up after school, even though she has never forgotten

INSIDE THE BRAIN

When we feel a sense of potential danger and fear, our body instinctively goes into protective mode to keep us safe, and this fear response starts in the part of the brain called the amygdala. The amygdala activates the fight or flight response, assesses the emotional significance of things that happen in our environment, and decides whether or not something is a threat to you.

So let's say that your amygdala decides that the spider creeping towards you is dangerous to you; it will initiate your body's fight or flight response as a way of helping you respond to that threat.



The amygdala automatically sends a signal to another part of the brain called the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus activates the pituitary gland, which then activates the adrenal gland. And finally, the adrenal gland secretes the hormones cortisol, noradrenaline, and adrenaline, which triggers fear in the fight or flight response.

THE BODIES RESPONSE TO ANXIETY

The amygdala -> hypothalamas -> pituitary gland -> adrenal gland

Releasing these chemicals helps prepare the body for physical action, such as muscles becoming tenser, the heart pounding faster, and our pupils becoming more dilated, allowing us to see better. We get a rush of more energy, enabling us to respond quickly to dangerous situations.

Many people understand that worries and anxiety have an impact on us both mentally and emotionally. However, it is also essential to make the connection between how you feel physically in these anxious moments.



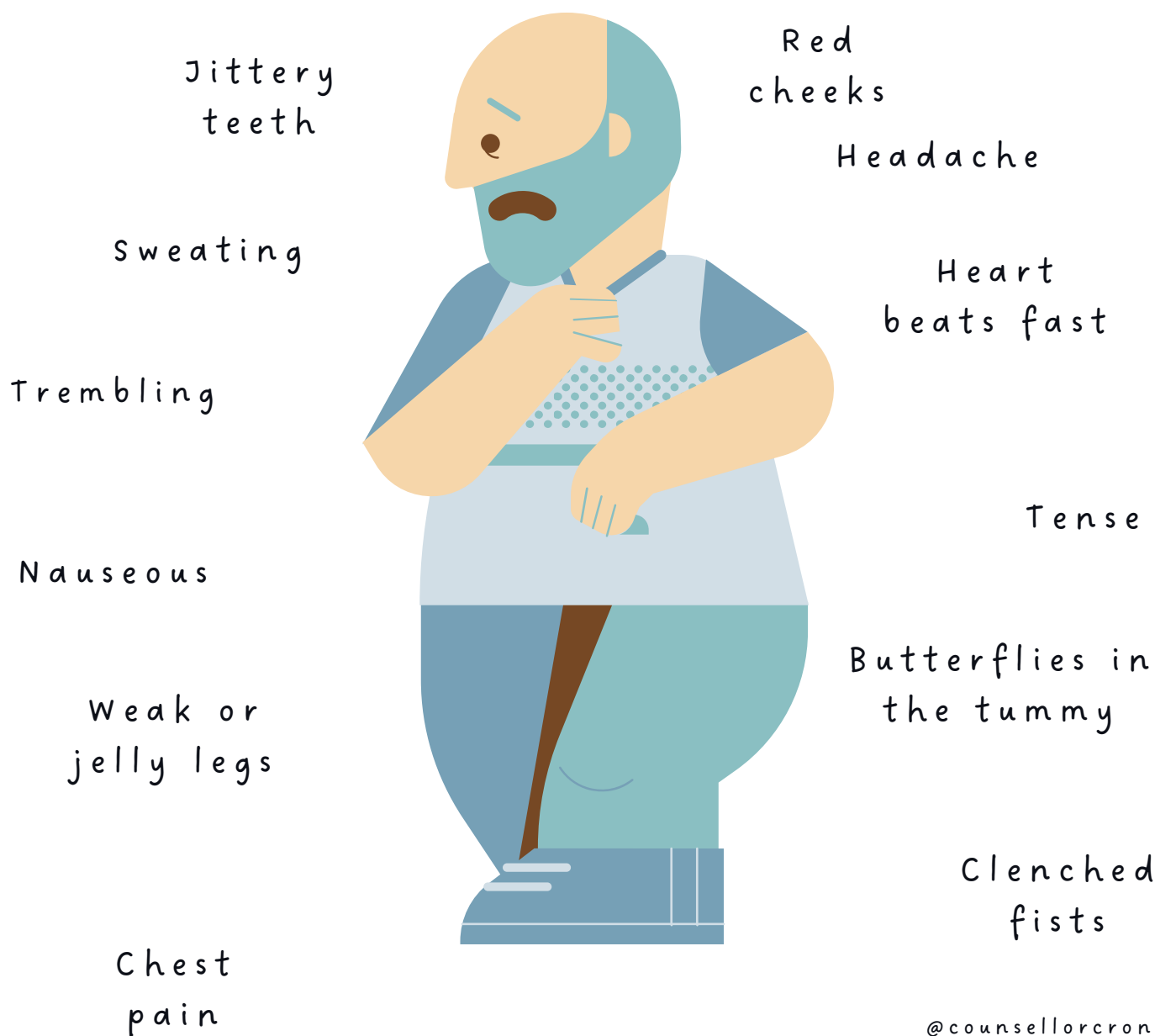
All of these changes produced by the fight or flight response are healthy and needed if there is a real danger. They help you to respond successfully if you have any threat that you might encounter. However, when the response continues and occurs without real risk, it creates anxiety.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

As already mentioned, our brains are wired to respond to a perceived threat, and we can't always distinguish between an actual physical danger (such as a tiger) or a threat caused by worry or fear.

The release of those chemicals is part of the sympathetic nervous system that involves involuntary physical responses.

Everybody's body will physically respond to anxiety in many different ways. But some common physical symptoms are shown below.



PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Everybody will respond differently to fear and anxiety.

Try and identify 3 times when you felt anxious, think about how your body felt in those moments.

THOUGHT

FEELING

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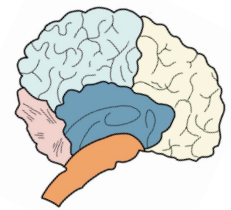
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PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY



Can you identify what your responses are?

COMMON SYMPTOM	NEVER	AT TIMES	OFTEN
Rapid heartbeat			
Sweaty			
Headache			
Fast breathing			
Trembling			
Cold			
Butterflies in tummy			
Jelly legs			
Nauseous			
Dizzy			
Tense			
Dry Mouth			

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The Window of Tolerance is referred to as the 'optimal zone' of arousal in which a person is able to function most effectively and emotions can be processed in a healthy way.

HYPERAROUSAL

- Feelings of extreme anxiousness with possible panic attacks.
- Feel overwhelmed and out of control.
- Want to fight or run away.



DYSREGULATION

- Feelings of frustration and agitation increase.
- Uncomfortable feelings start to increase but still in control.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

- Feel present, calm and safe.
- In total control.



THINGS THAT SHRINK YOUR WINDOW

- Stress
- Things that trigger trauma
- Anxiety
- Rejection
- Abandonment

THINGS THAT CAN EXPAND YOUR WINDOW

- Mindfulness
- Grounding exercises
- Gratitude
- Positive self talk
- Deep breathing

DYSREGULATION

- Getting close to the stage of shutting down.
- Uncomfortable feelings start to increase but still in control.

HYPOAROUSAL

- Feel physically numb and frozen.
- Feel disconnected and zoned out.
- Lethargic and no energy

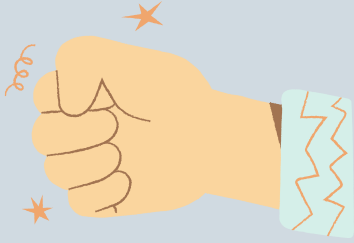


MY RESPONSE TO WORRY

HOW AM I FEELING?

WHAT CAN I DO?

FIGHT



Empty box for describing feelings related to the Fight response.

Empty box for describing actions related to the Fight response.

FLIGHT



Empty box for describing feelings related to the Flight response.

Empty box for describing actions related to the Flight response.

FREEZE



Empty box for describing feelings related to the Freeze response.

Empty box for describing actions related to the Freeze response.

FAWN

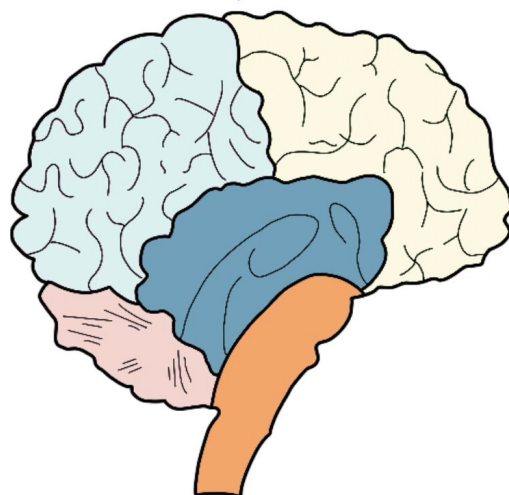


Empty box for describing feelings related to the Fawn response.

Empty box for describing actions related to the Fawn response.

CALMING CHECKLIST

- EAT 3 HEALTHY MEALS
- 7+ HOURS OF SLEEP
- DRINK FRESH WATER
- GET FRESH AIR
- PRACTICE MINDFULNESS
- WRITE DOWN 3 THINGS YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR
- BRUSH YOUR TEETH
- HAVE A WARM SHOWER
- MAKE YOUR BED
- READ A BOOK
- LISTEN TO MUSIC
- SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS
- DECLUTTER A SMALL SPACE
- HAVE A SOCIAL MEDIA DETOX
- ASK FOR A HUG
- SPEND TIME WITH FAMILY
- DO A HOBBY
- WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL
- SAY 5 THINGS YOU LOVE ABOUT YOURSELF
- DO SOME EXERCISE
- WASH YOUR HAIR



- HAVE A CUPPA
- DO NOTHING- ENJOY THE PEACE
- TRY SOMETHING NEW
- DO SOME COLOURING IN
- MAKE YOUR FAVOURITE FOOD
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE OR FAWN?

What is your response?

FIGHT

- Heart beats fast
- Clenched fists
- Hot and sweaty
- shouting
- Arguing
- Tense
- Clenched teeth
- Hitting or punching

FLIGHT

- Want to hide
- Feel trapped
- Want to run and escape
- Wide eyes
- Panic
- Tense
- Clenched teeth
- Fast breathing

FREEZE

- Feel frozen
- Confusion
- Feel numb
- Tremby
- Shaky
- Tense
- struggle to talk
- Heart pounds

FAWN

- Say 'yes' in stressful situations
- Ask lots of questions
- Over apologise
- scared about what to say
- Overwhelmed
- Confused
- Low confidence
- Lack self identity

FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE OR FAWN?

FIGHT

Irritability
Anger
Aggression
Demanding
Controlling



FLIGHT

Anxiety
Fear
Escape
Run away
Avoid



STRESS OR WORRY RESPONSE

FREEZE

Confused
Dissociation
Stuck/Numb
Spaced out
Shame
Depression



FAWN

People pleasing
Avoid conflict
Give in easily
Difficulty saying
'no'
No boundaries

