

The Stress Response

Same human brain. Different responses.

Your brain is not overreacting.
It's trying to keep you safe.

UNDERSTAND
YOUR BRAIN
BE KIND TO
YOURSELF

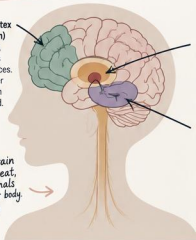
What is the stress response?

The stress response is your body's natural alarm system. It helps you survive when it senses danger. This can be a real threat (like a car coming toward you) or a perceived threat (like a tough conversation, a big test, or feeling rejected).

Your brain and body work together to keep you safe by preparing you to fight, run, freeze or please.

Prefrontal Cortex (Thinking Brain)
Helps you plan, solve problems and make choices. It can be harder to access when you're stressed.

When the brain senses a threat, it sends signals throughout your body.



It makes sense.

Amygdala (Alarm System)
Detects danger and triggers the stress response. It reacts quickly to keep you safe.

Hippocampus (Memory Keeper)
Helps you remember what happened. Stress can affect how memories are stored, which is why stressful events can feel different or more intense.

The 4 Stress Responses

FIGHT

Defend or protect



Your body gets ready to face the threat. You may feel angry, irritable or overwhelmed and want to push back.

- Feeling angry or frustrated
- Snapping or yelling
- Arguing or being defensive
- Feeling impatient
- A need to be in control

"I need to fight this."

FLIGHT

Run or escape



Your body gets ready to run from the threat. You may feel anxious, restless or like you just need to get out.

- Feeling anxious or on edge
- Trouble sitting still
- Overthinking
- Avoiding situations
- Always busy or distracted

"I need to get out."

FREEZE

Shut down or pause



Your body goes into a state of shutdown. You may feel numb, stuck or unable to move or think clearly.

- Feeling numb or disconnected
- Trouble thinking or making decisions
- Feeling stuck or unable to act
- Shutting down
- Zoning out or dissociating

"I just need to get through it."

FAWN

Please or keep the peace



Your body focuses on pleasing others to stay safe and avoid conflict. You may put other people's needs before your own.

- People pleasing
- Difficulty saying no
- Worrying about what others think
- Ignoring your own needs
- Feeling responsible for other people's feelings

"I need to keep everyone happy."

It's not just in your head

The stress response is a whole body experience. It can affect your thoughts, emotions, behaviour and physical health.



Thoughts
(overthinking, negative thoughts)



Emotions
(anxiety, anger, numbness)



Behaviour
(reacting, avoiding, shutting down, people pleasing)



Physical
(fast heart rate, upset stomach, tense muscles, trouble sleeping)

You can help your nervous system

- ✓ Slow, steady breathing
- ✓ Movement (walk, stretch, shake it out)
- ✓ Time in nature
- ✓ Water and nourishing food
- ✓ Rest and sleep
- ✓ Supportive people
- ✓ Do things that feel good
- ✓ Practice grounding in the present moment

Small steps make a big difference.

A few things to remember

- ♥ Your brain is doing its best to keep you safe.
- ♥ All of the stress responses are normal and can be helpful.
- ♥ Sometimes the stress response gets activated even when there is no real danger.
- ♥ You can learn to notice your signs and support yourself.
- ♥ You are not broken. You are human.
- ♥ With awareness and support, your nervous system can find more calm.

A calmer you. A brighter tomorrow.