

How to manage ANXIETY

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SWEET
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Taking a Breathing Space






Not unusual

When we are facing a crisis of any sort, fear and anxiety are inevitable

Normal, natural responses to challenging situations infused with danger and uncertainty.



Common Stressors

- Hearing the news
- On going medical appointments, treatment etc
- Managing symptoms and treatment side effects
- Changes to career/job/finances
- Changes in relationships
- Living with uncertainty



Anxiety

We can think of anxiety as a CONTINUUM

- Mild, everyday stress that allows us to continue functioning, and might even be useful to get us motivated
- Moderate, a heightened feeling that is noticeable to others but is still manageable.
- Severe, it impacts how we live our lives and at times can leave us unable to cope with daily routines and living well.



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FIGHT

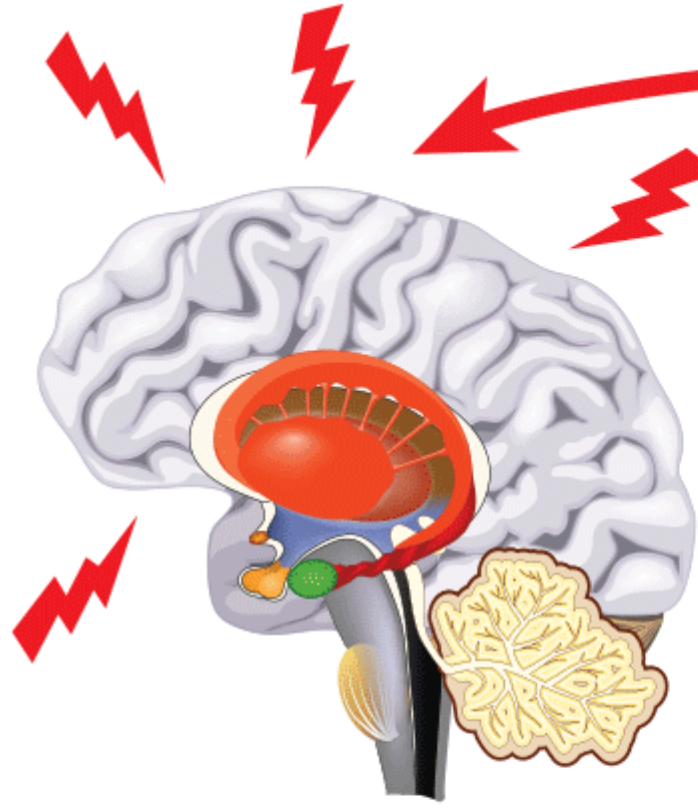
FLIGHT

FREEZE



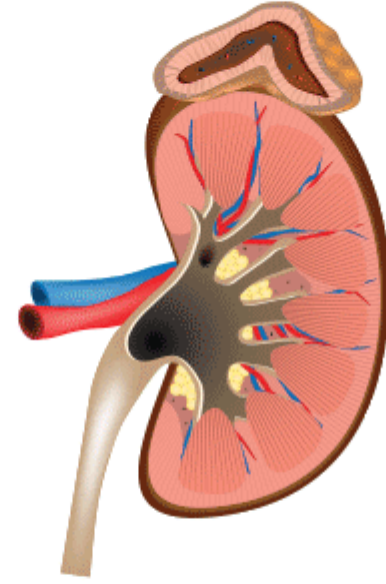
Threat response

- The **fight-flight-freeze** response is your body's natural reaction to danger. It's a type of stress response that helps you react to perceived threats, like an oncoming car or growling dog. The response instantly causes hormonal and physiological changes

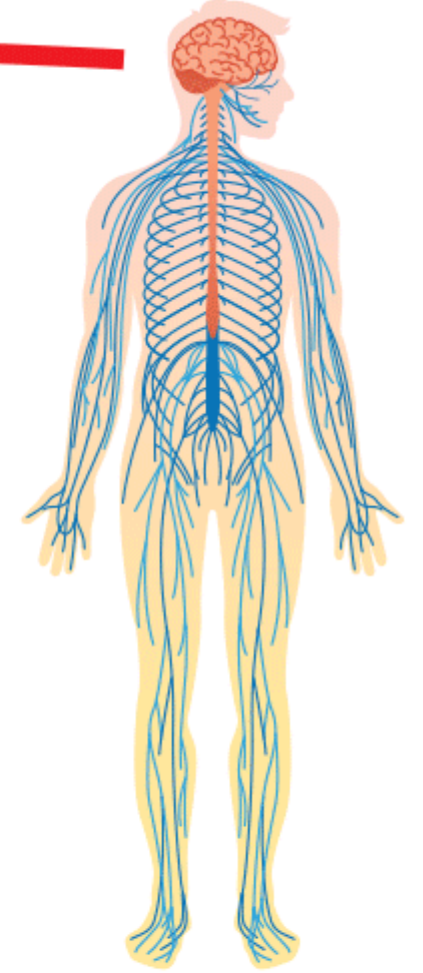


Alarm!

 anxietycentre.com



**Stress
hormones**



**Body-wide
changes**

Brain changes

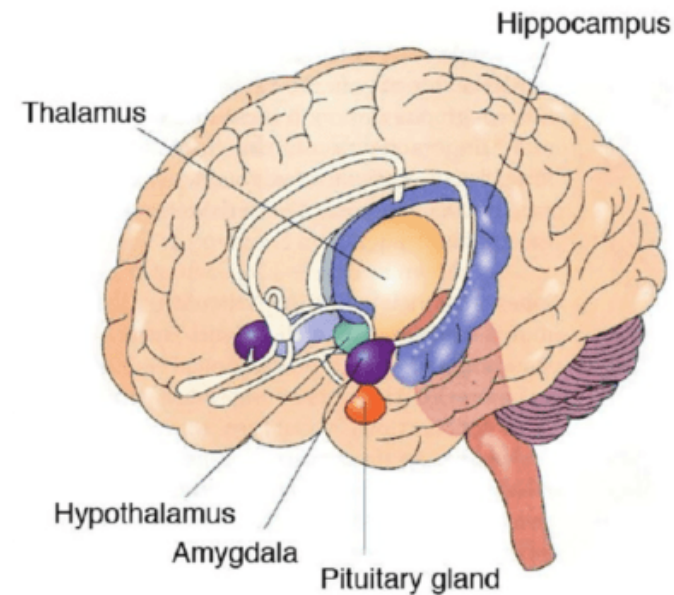
Two parts of the brain are key players in the experience of anxiety.

Amygdala is believed to be a communications hub between the parts of the brain that process incoming sensory signals and the parts that interpret these signals. It can alert the rest of the brain that a threat is present and trigger a fear or anxiety response.

Hippocampus is the part of the brain that encodes threatening events into memories.

Emotional memories stored in the central part of the amygdala may play a role in anxiety disorders involving very distinct fears, such as fears of dogs, spiders, or flying.

The Limbic System



Amygdala:
Emotions & Aggression

Hippocampus:
Learning & Memory

Thalamus:
Relay Centre for Sensory Information

Hypothalamus:
Hunger, Thirst, Temperature Control

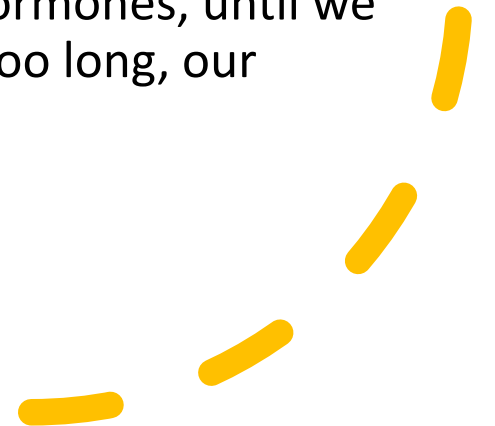
Stress Hormones

Adrenaline and **Cortisol** tell our bodies that there's something scary on the horizon, and we need to run away.

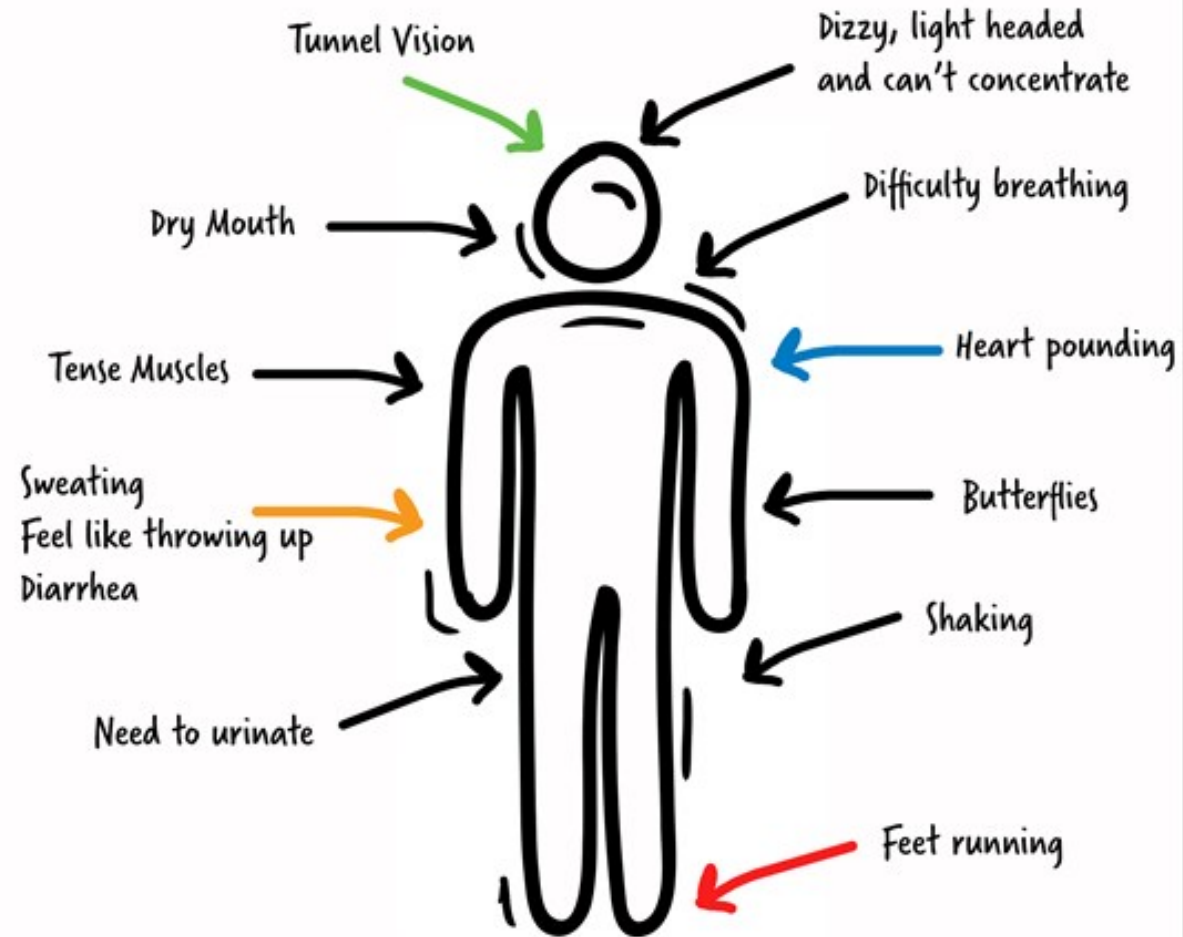
Designed to help our bodies cope with danger: they increase our awareness and improve our reflexes.

But when they flood through your brain in a normal, only slightly frightening, situation — like when preparing for a meeting, stressful airplane ride, or a thunderstorm — they create anxiety.

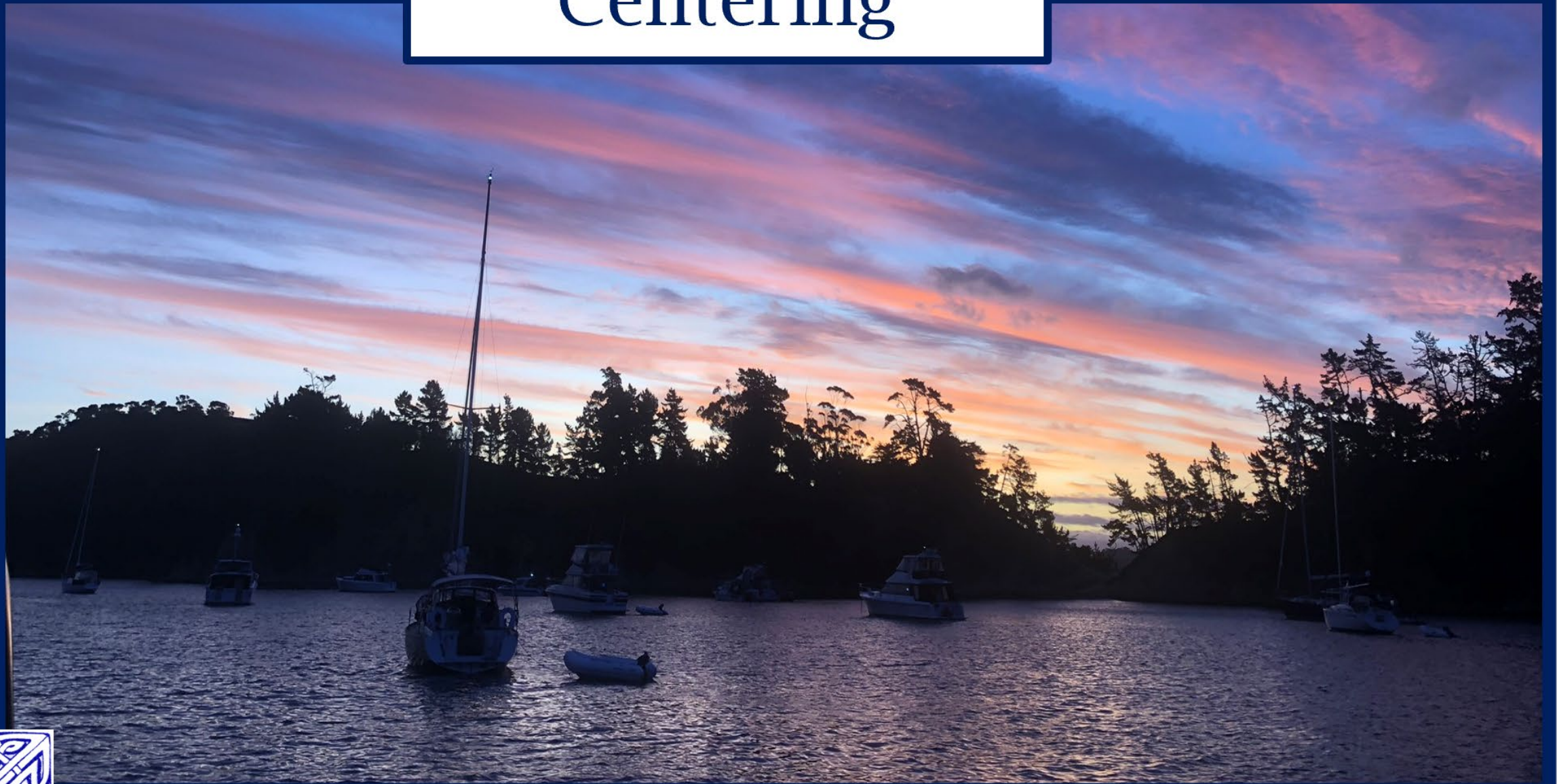
To make matters worse, an increase in stress hormones can cause our bodies to release even more stress hormones, until we have a cavalcade of worries. If this goes on for too long, our baseline anxiety is likely to increase

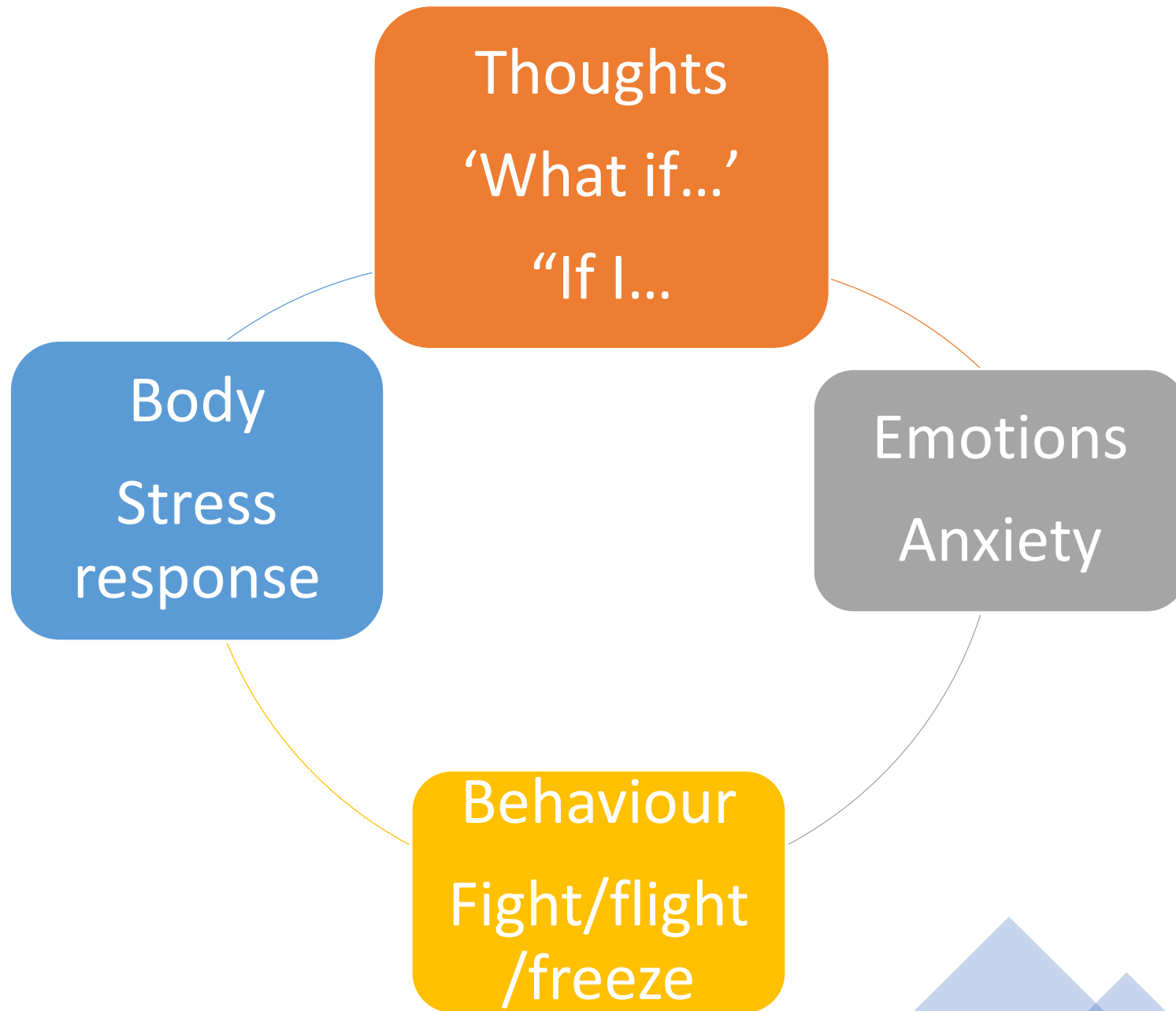


What happens during freeze, fight or flight?



Centering





Unhelpful Thinking Styles

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

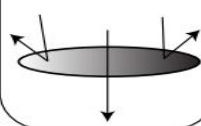
Over-generalising

"everything is always rubbish"

"nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

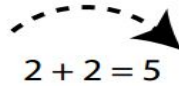
Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot*

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

What to do when anxiety flares

When we experience emotional storms, unhelpful thoughts and painful feelings let's not get caught up in the storm but focus on staying anchored.

Focus on what you can control

Acknowledge thoughts and feelings

Coming back into our body

Engage in what you are doing



Acknowledging thoughts

C
E

Thoughts: believe them, struggle with them, or simply notice them?

The diagram illustrates three ways to handle the thought "I'm Stupid":

- Believing it:** A sad face with a speech bubble saying "I'm Stupid". Below it, the text reads "I am Stupid".
- Struggling with it:** A sad face with a thought bubble containing "I'm Stupid". Below it, the text reads "I'm having the thought 'I'm Stupid'".
- Noticing it:** A happy face with an arrow pointing to a thought bubble containing "I'm Stupid". Below it, the text reads "I'm noticing I'm having the thought 'I'm Stupid'".

Defusion

Notice your thoughts while holding them lightly.

Coming back into your body

Coming back into our body

Slowly pushing your feet hard into the floor.

Slowly straightening up your back and spine; if sitting, sitting upright and forward in your chair.

Slowly pressing your fingertips together

Slowly stretching your arms or neck, shrugging your shoulders.

Slowly breathing



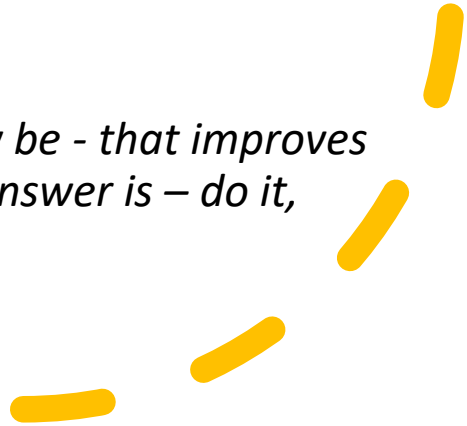
Engage

Engage in what you are doing

Get a sense of where you are and refocus your attention on the activity you are doing.

- Look around the room and notice 5 things you can see.
- Notice 3 or 4 things you can hear.
- Notice what you can smell or taste or sense in your nose and mouth
- Notice what you are doing

What can I do right now - no matter how small it may be - that improves life for myself or others I live with and whatever the answer is – do it, and engage in it fully



F = Focus on what's in your control

A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings

C = Come back into your body

E = Engage in what you're doing





Self compassion

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Soften, Soothe and Allow



“Within you, there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself.”

Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha

If you need someone to talk to,
please contact your Sweet Louise Support Coordinator
Angela, Jenny, Kendra, Lesley, Nadine, Nicki, Tracy
or call us on 0800 11 22 77

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