

6 Most Common Trauma Responses

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FIGHT

FLIGHT

FREEZE

FAWN

SHUT-DOWN/COLLAPSE

ATTACHMENT CRY

Our Nervous System Is Primed
To quickly and efficiently respond to
2 PRIMARY Things for survival:

THREAT/Perceived Danger

OR

CONNECTION

Porges SW (2017). The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory: The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe. WW Norton.

Porges, S & Porges S.(2023). Our Polyvagal World: How Safety and Trauma Changes Us. WW Norton.

Fight

We are PROTECTING ourselves through ACTION, forcing things/environment/people to be just right, in order to experience real or perceived sense of safety.

Neuroscientist Stephen Porges coined the term NEUROCEPTION, which refers to:
The automatic unconscious way the brain and nervous system and body evaluate and determine RISK in our environment.

This is determined by what HAS ACTUALLY been THREATENING in the PAST.

Adapted from: Fisher, 2017 & Porges, 2017

Check all of the experiences that you notice within you(s)

- Defiance
- Aggression
- Defensiveness
- Hypervigilance
- Anger
- Explosiveness
- Rage
- Hostility
- Rigidity
- Self-Harming Behaviors
- Judgment and Criticism of Self and Others
- Controlling of things/others/circumstances
- Suicidal Thoughts

Now Identify top 3-5 TRIGGERS

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Flight

Seeking Safety

Can be experienced as stuck in the ON position; obsessively and compulsively driven by the unconscious belief that perfection and achievement will bring safety and make one lovable (Walker, 2013).

Walker, P. (2013). Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving. Azure Coyote Books

The following behaviors, feelings, and experiences can be present:

Check all of the experiences that you notice within you(s)

- Avoidance
- Denial
- Escapism
- Substance Abuse
- Disordered Eating
- Self-Harming Behaviors
- Perfectionism
- Over-Doing
- Over-Working
- Over-Planning
- Over-Cleaning/Organizing
- Over-Thinking
- Over-Worrying/Ruminating
- Over-Analyzing
- Intellectualizing
- Foggyness
- Lost in Fantasy
- Numbing Behaviors
- Spacing Out
- Urge to Escape
- Mindlessly scrolling social media
- Mindlessly scrolling through your phone/internet

Now Identify top 3-5 TRIGGERS

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Freeze

Panicked, Terrified, and Immobilized

Although Freeze and Shut-Down/Collapse may appear similar, they are not. Freeze is a BLENDED state of Sympathetic activation and Dorsal Shut-Down/Immobilization. We are flooded with energy, but are unable to move/act.

The following behaviors, feelings, and experiences can be present:

- Anxious Avoidance
- Anxious Overwhelm
- Panicked
- Frozen
- Unable to Speak
- Paralyzed
- Phobic
- Unable to access your thinking brain and therefore, your behavior is also compromised

Now Identify top 3-5 TRIGGERS

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Collapse/Shut-down

Seeking Invisibility

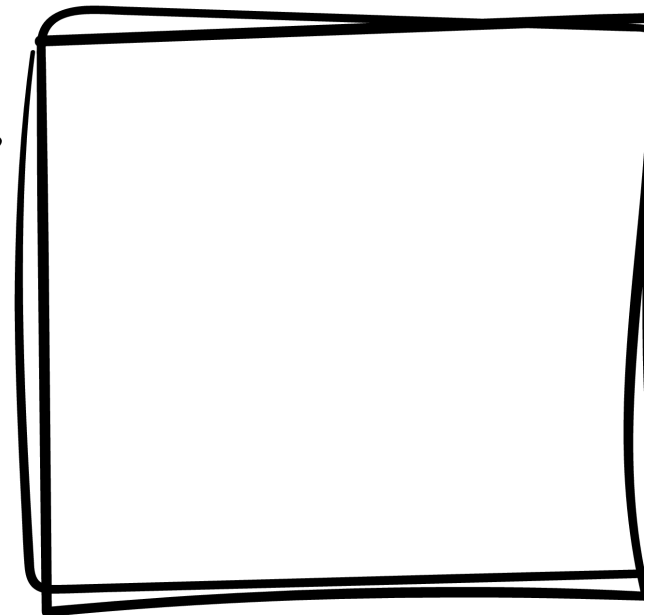
This is a state of Hypo-Arousal. This is the "oldest pathway of response, the dorsal vagal pathway of the parasympathetic branch; the path of last resort. When all else fails, when we are trapped and action taking doesn't work, the primitive vagus takes us into shutdown, collapse, and dissociation (Dana, 2018, pp.11-12). "

Dana, D. (2018). The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation. New York: W. W. Norton & Co Inc.

The following behaviors, feelings, and experiences can be Present:

- Chronically Exhausted
- Disconnected
- Dissociation
- Feeling Numb
- Foggy
- Disengaged
- Lethargy
- Indifference
- Ashamed
- Depression
- Difficulty making decisions
- Isolation
- Avoidance
- Emptiness

Now Identify top 3-5 TRIGGERS



Fawn

"An attempt to please...through compliance...with the expectation that such compliance will diminish aggression and reduce threat (Porges & Porges, 2023, p.42)."

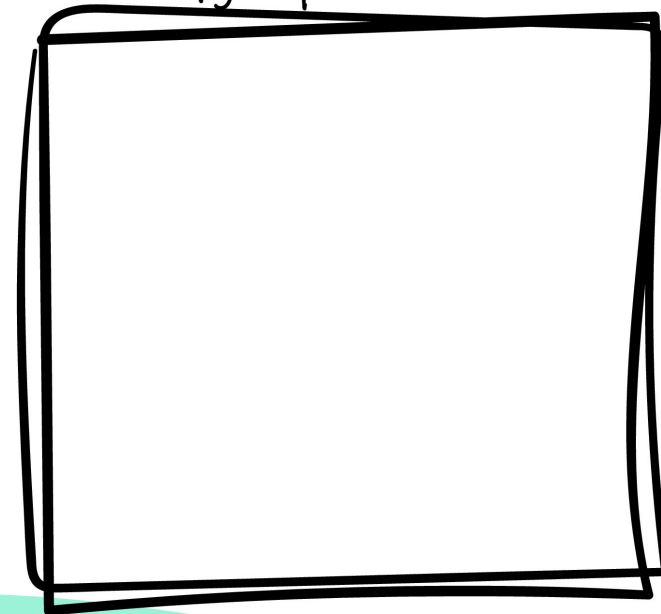
Fawn is triggered when a person responds to threat by trying to be pleasing or helpful in order to appease or anticipate caregivers needs or demands. Safety is sought by merging with the wishes, needs, and demands of others. The belief "I must forfeit all of my needs, rights, preferences, and boundaries" in order to be loved or to be in a relationship with you is often experienced in the family of origin. This belief may be unknown to the individual, unless mindful observation of the self and others is engaged in (Walker, 2013, p.122).

Walker, P. (2013). Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving. Azure Coyote Books

The following behaviors, feelings, and experiences can be Present:

- People Pleasing
- Doing Things you don't want to do
- Difficulty Saying No
- Not setting boundaries, often for fear of hurting others' feelings
- Not putting your needs or yourself first
- Over-Giving
- Apologizing when it's not your fault

Now Identify top 3-5 TRIGGERS



- Over-Apologizing
- Excessive Caretaking
- Passivity

Attachment Seeking

"Please Don't Leave Me"

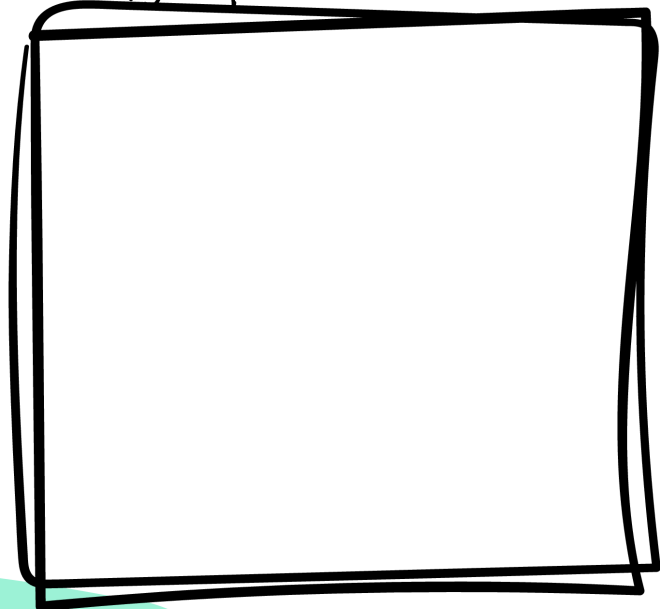
This is essentially related to panic and grief circuits in the brain, studied by neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp. Panksepp highlights that we respond intensely to uncaring emotional gestures directed toward us; anything that hints at shunning or even milder forms of social exclusion is experienced as psychologically painful. We are intersubjective creatures who care deeply about the quality of our social networks (Panksepp, 2012, p.314).

Panksepp, J. (2012) The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions. W.W. Norton and Company, NY.

The following behaviors, feelings, and experiences can be Present:

- Crying out for help
- Longing
- Waiting by the phone
- Constantly checking social media/texts/emails for validation or connection to desired others
- Neediness
- Clinging
- Loneliness
- Terrified of being abandoned
- Emotional Neediness

Now Identify top 3-5 TRIGGERS



What we need as humans to have a strong sense of self

TO FEEL SAFE (EMOTIONALLY/PHYSICALLY/IN ALL WAYS)

A SENSE OF BEING SEEN AND KNOWN

RELIABLE AND CONSISTENT FELT COMFORT PROVIDED SO IN A TIMELY MANNER

SOOTHING AND REASSURANCE

A CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE SENSE OF BEING VALUED, AND FOR PARENTS TO CLEARLY EXPRESS DELIGHT IN YOU

SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO BECOMING UNIQUELY YOU THROUGH CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, SUPPORT, AND EXPLORATION (EXPLORING WITH YOU, ENCOURAGING YOU TO SELF-EXPLORE)

GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION

Brown, D. P., & Elliott, D. S. (2016). *Attachment disturbances in adults: Treatment for comprehensive repair*. W W Norton & Co.

**It's important to identify what needs are not being met in our life CURRENTLY
As adults, we must meet our needs. It is ok if we are still learning how to do this.**

It is OK to ask for support and guidance from trusted, reliable, knowledgeable, safe, and emotionally healthy resources

COMMON BASIC NEEDS TO BE MINDFUL OF:

To Belong
To be valued
To be seen
To be heard
To feel loved, cared
for
Connection
Authenticity
Mastery

Autonomy
Agency
Self Trust
Community
Acceptance
Peace

Support
Self-Expression
Freedom
Dignity
Hope
Discovery
Movement

Security
Self-Care
Mutuality
Nurturing
Compassion
Empathy
Stability
Safety

To matter
Purpose
meaning

Needs List

Physical Well Being	Autonomy	Peace	Meaning	Play
Clean Air	Choice	Acceptance	Awareness	Adventure
Care	Dignity	Balance	Celebration	Excitement
Food	Freedom	Beauty	Challenge	Fun
Movement/Exercise	Independence	Communion	Clarity	Humor
Rest/Sleep	Self-Expression	Ease	Competence	Joy
Safety/Protection from Harm	Space	Equanimity	Consciousness	Relaxation
Sexual Expression	Spontaneity	Faith	Contribution	Stimulation
Shelter		Harmony	Creativity	
Touch		Hope	Discovery	
Water		Order	Efficacy	
		Peace of Mind	Effectiveness	
		Relaxation	Growth	
		Space	Integration	
			Learning	
			Mourning	
			Movement	
			Participation	
			Presence	
			Progress	
			Purpose	
			Self-expression	
			Stimulation	
			Understanding	

Connection

Acceptance	Compassion	Inspiration	Partnership	Self-Acceptance
Affection	Consideration	Intimacy	Presence	Self-Care
Appreciation	Empathy	Love	Respect/Self-Respect	Self-Connection
Authenticity	Friendship	Mutuality	Security	Shared Reality
Belonging	Inclusion	Nurturing	Self-Acceptance	Stability
Care	Compassion	Inspiration	Self-Care	Support
Closeness	Consideration	Intimacy	Partnership	Self-Acceptance
Communication	Empathy	Love	Presence	Self-Care
Community	Friendship	Mutuality	Respect/Self-Respect	Self-Connection
Companionship	Inclusion	Nurturing	Security	Shared Reality
Stability	Support	To know and be known	To see and be seen	Trust
Understanding	Warmth			

We also may have never been taught that we have basic personal rights. I invite you to notice the rights you would like to make efforts to provide yourself/system the permission to practice on a daily basis.

Personal Bill of Rights

1. I have the right to ask for what I want
2. I have the right to say no to requests or demands I can't meet.
3. I have the right to express all of my feelings, positive or negative.
4. I have the right to change my mind.
5. I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
6. I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
7. I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
8. I have the right to determine my own priorities.
9. I have the right not to be responsible for others' behavior, actions, feelings, or problems.
10. I have the right to expect honesty from others.

Personal Bill of Rights

11. I have the right to be angry at someone I love.
12. I have the right to be uniquely myself.
13. I have the right to feel scared and say "I feel scared."
14. I have the right to say "I don't know."
15. I have the right to not give excuses or reasons for my behavior.
16. I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings, values, preferences, and logic.
17. I have the right to my own needs for personal space and time.
18. I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
19. I have the right to be healthier than those around me.

Adapted from author and psychologist, Dr. Edmund Bourne, in his book *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook* (Bourne, 2015, p.299)

Personal Bill of Rights

20. I have the right to be in a nonabusive environment.

21. I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.

22. I have the right to change and grow.

23. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.

24. I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

25. I have the right to be happy..

What do I/WE believe about ourselves/System, and where/who did we first hear it from?! It is likely that these things were told TO YOUs.

Now, when these negative beliefs about you or the world come up, you can ask internally: "Is this My voice? Who did I first hear it from?"

If you hear these messages enough, or experience these messages as a result of exposure to things you were never prepared for or given guidance about, it is easy to believe them

Adapted from Dr. Marich's/Jamie+/Unicorn System's Institute of Creative Mindfulness EMDR Basic Training Course: <https://www.instituteforcreativemindfulness.com/emdr-therapy-training/>

The "Greatest Hits" List of Problematic Beliefs (Negative Cognitions)

Developed by Jamie Marich, Ph.D. (May be duplicated for use in clinical settings)

NEGATIVE COGNITIONS

Responsibility

I should have known better
I should have done something
I did something wrong
I am to blame
I cannot be trusted
My best is not good enough

Safety

I cannot trust myself
I cannot trust anyone
I am in danger
I am not safe
I cannot show my emotions

Choice

I am not in control
I have to be perfect/please everyone
I am weak
I am trapped
I have no options

Power

I cannot get what I want
I cannot handle it/stand it
I cannot succeed
I cannot stand up for myself
I cannot let it out
I am powerless/helpless

Power

I cannot get what I want
I cannot handle it/stand it
I cannot succeed
I cannot stand up for myself
I cannot let it out
I am powerless/helpless

Value

I am not good enough
I am a bad person./ I am terrible
I am permanently damaged
I am defective
I am worthless/inadequate
I am insignificant/I am not important
I deserve to die
I deserve only bad things
I am stupid
I do not belong
I am different
I am a failure
I am ugly/My body is ugly
I am alone

We don't have to continue to believe
these messages

Now, you get to choose what you want
to believe.

What did the little you deserve and need
to believe about him/her/themselves?

I am safe

I can trust myself

I can trust others

I am valuable

I can make an impact on my life

I am competent

I am a good person

I can accept myself in all
stages and phases and moods.

I am lovable

I am human

I have choices

I am resilient and resourceful

I can succeed

I can get my needs met

It is safe and human to
experience all feelings, even
uncomfortable ones.

I will survive the storms of life.

I am authentically me(s)

Wherever I am, It is ok

I am allowed to have my own
pace, my own journey, and march
to the beat of my own drum.

It is safe to be me(s)

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