

# Our Bodies Valuable Fight or Flight Response

Our bodies are evolutionarily designed to maximize the physical resources we need to **fight or flee (run away)** when we are faced with a **life-threatening danger**. The part of our brain that senses danger is an automatic part that doesn't really think...it just reacts, assuming that all danger stems from a physical threat. So, initially, when our brain senses danger, our body's physical response is immediate, for the sake of safety and physical survival. However, this automatic part of *our brain responds the same way to physical AND emotional threats*. **All of the resulting body sensations are happening for good reasons** – to prepare your body to run away or fight.

## RACING THOUGHTS

When we are in danger, we need to take in information quickly and not dwell on decisions. For this reason, it's hard to concentrate on anything but the threat our body perceives and how to respond to it.

## RAPID HEART BEAT

A faster, stronger heart beat feeds more blood to the muscles, carrying extra oxygen and glucose, giving your muscles more energy to run away or fight.

## MUSCLE TENSION & SHAKINESS

Muscles in arms, legs, and torso are coursing with extra energy (glucose & oxygen) and ready to act.

## RAPID & SHALLOW BREATHING

Quicker breathing takes in more oxygen to power the muscles. This makes the body more able to fight or run away. See dizziness/lightheadedness above.

## COLD, CLAMMY HANDS & FEET

- Extremities are a low priority, so blood vessels in the skin contract to force blood towards major muscle groups.
- Additionally, preparing for exertion, the **BODY SWEATS** to keep cool.

## DIZZINESS/LIGHTHEADEDNESS

The body is hyperloading oxygen to supercharge our muscles. If we don't use our muscles to fight, run away, or otherwise exercise and use up the extra oxygen, our oxygen to carbon dioxide ratio becomes unbalanced and we can quickly start to feel dizzy or lightheaded.

## VISION CHANGES

Pupils dilate to allow more light in increase to vision clarity and the lens is set to focus on distance vision. Both are so that more attention can be paid to danger. You might notice "tunnel vision" or vision becoming "sharper."

## DRY MOUTH and NAUSEA/"BUTTERFLIES" in the STOMACH

The digestive system becomes low priority, so blood is diverted away to the muscles. The salivary glands, stomach, & small intestines tend to shut down.

## ADRENAL GLANDS

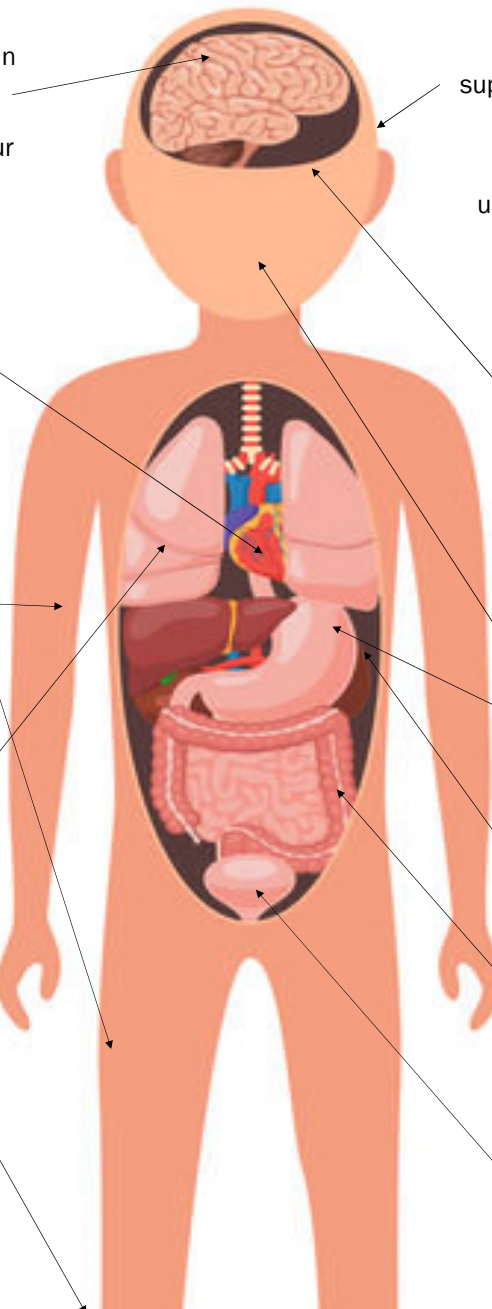
The adrenaline is released to tell other the body how to get ready to respond to the danger.

## DIARRHEA

Colon contractions may speed up, causing diarrhea.

## URGE TO URINATE

Muscles in the bladder sometimes relax in response to extreme stress.



When the threat is emotional, our bodies still initially go into physical superpower mode, but we don't actually burn off/use that power, and this can make our bodies feel pretty yucky. The good news is that, **when we are familiar with how this feels in our body, there are things we can do to recognize when this is happening, turn the thinking part of our brains back on, and calm our bodies back down.**