



Fight, Flight, Freeze

Your Alarm System Explained

What your body is doing when threat mode switches on, how each response feels from the inside, and what actually helps it switch back off.

1 SPOT THE BODY SIGNS

2 NAME WHICH MODE HAS THE WHEEL

3 HELP THE ALARM FINISH



Your threat system is a smoke alarm

It is built to go off for burnt toast, because missing a real fire costs far more than a false alarm. That makes it fast, sloppy, and proudly better safe than sorry. It cannot tell a deadline from a predator, an awkward email from an ambush. So a blaring alarm does not mean danger is real. It means the alarm works.

RESPONSE 01

Fight

The alarm says: push back, right now.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

- Jaw clenched, teeth pressed tight
- Hot face, heat rising up the neck
- Fists curling on their own
- Irritation spiking out of nowhere
- A strong urge to argue, snap, or slam



EARLIEST CLUE

Your jaw and hands tighten before your mood catches up.

WHAT HELPS

Burn it off. Hard exercise, a fast walk, push-ups against a wall. Cold water on your face and wrists. Take space before words: the sharp reply can wait ten minutes.

RESPONSE 02

Flight

The alarm says: get out of here.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

- Restless legs that will not sit still
- Racing heart, shallow quick breath
- Eyes scanning doors and exits
- An itch to leave, cancel, disappear
- Escaping sideways into endless scrolling



EARLIEST CLUE

Your legs go restless and your breath climbs into your chest.

WHAT HELPS

Ground and lengthen your exhales. Feet flat on the floor, breathe out slower than you breathe in. You cannot outrun an alarm that lives in your own body; you can talk it down.

RESPONSE 03

Freeze

The alarm says: go still, go small.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

- Foggy head, thoughts moving through mud
- Numb or far away from your own body
- Limbs heavy, glued to the couch
- Cannot start the task, cannot speak up
- Time goes weird: hours vanish or crawl



EARLIEST CLUE

The fog rolls in and easy tasks suddenly feel impossible.

WHAT HELPS

Gentle warmth and tiny movements. A blanket, a warm drink. Wiggle your toes, roll your shoulders, name 3 objects you can see. No forcing; thaw beats shove.

+1 FAWN

There is also fawn

Some people appease under threat: over-agreeing, apologizing for things that are not their fault, people-pleasing on autopilot until the tension passes. It is the same alarm running a different strategy - keep everyone happy and the danger cannot land on you. If that is your pattern, it counts too.



None of these are character flaws

All four responses are automatic. Your body picks one before you get a vote, which is why "just calm down" never works. The real skill has two steps: notice which response has the wheel, then help your body finish the alarm - move it out, breathe it down, or warm it up. The alarm always ends.