

Feeling Safe

We usually don't think about feeling safe

- When we feel safe we are in a state of wellbeing.
- It is our right to feel like this.
- We need to understand the feelings we get when we feel safe and how they relate to how our body feels

What does 'safe' mean to you?

In Protective Behaviours we need to explore what feeling safe is.

What does it mean to have a good sense of wellbeing?

What feelings does that include?



What does feeling safe mean? What does it mean to have a good sense of wellbeing?

Create an imaginary safe space

- Sit comfortably
- Close your eyes
- Relax
- Crunch your muscles
- Imagine you are walking along a path. You turn a corner and walk through a gate ...
- Draw it

How do we help ourselves feel safe and help others feel safe as much as possible? What do we need to do?

What if you feel unsafe because ...

- Someone has called you a name or has been rude about you
- What if you feel unsafe because someone has taken your money or things that belong to you?
- What if you felt unsafe about returning school?
- What if you felt unsafe as you have to do a test at school?
- What if you felt unsafe as the fire alarm went off in school?
- What if you feel unsafe because you do not understand your homework?



Feeling unsafe

- Early warning signs when we don't feel safe are...
- Unsafe feelings: fear
- What about: sadness, worry, feeling unwell, tiredness and boredom
- Our bodies try to warn us before we have had time to think about it
- Fright, flight or freeze – the body responds naturally to threat

FIGHT



FLIGHT oohhala!



FREEZE



What is 'fight, flight or freeze'?

- Any book you read about stress will refer to 'fight or flight' or 'fight, flight or freeze' as a survival mechanism that prepares you to either fight for survival or run away when you're threatened.
- It's your body's automatic response to danger – a series of dramatic physical changes designed to give you a burst of energy and strength. Once the danger is over, systems return to normal and you become physiologically relaxed again.

The physiological changes



When your body goes into the fight or flight state, these are some of the changes which happen automatically:

- Heart: Your heart begins to beat faster and harder to pump blood. You may feel your heart beating as you breathe more rapidly.
- Lungs: Your breathing rate increases and your airways dilate. More oxygen enters your blood.
- Ears: Your hearing and all of your senses become more acute.
- Eyes: Your pupils dilate to help you see better. Your peripheral vision is also heightened.
- Brain: Mental activity and alertness increase for quick decision making.
- Blood: Your blood flow to muscles will increase to prepare for flight.
- Legs and arms: Sugars and fats are converted for use as energy and sent to your major muscles to help you to fight or run away.
- Skin and sweat glands: Sweating increases. Hands and feet often feel cold as blood supplies are diverted to the brain and muscles. Hairs stand on end as we experience goose pimples. Skin can turn pale.
- Salivary glands: There is a decreased flow of saliva. Your mouth can feel dry.
- Gut muscles: Gut activity slows as blood supply is reduced. This can affect digestion and cause digestion issues.

Recall: What are 5 changes that happen to your body when it goes into the fight or flight state?

1/

2/

3/

4/

5/



Physical threats

An ancient response to **physical** threats, fight or flight would have been very valuable to our prehistoric ancestors, as they faced physical danger many times throughout their short lives.

Fight or flight responses still help to protect us by heightening our awareness and helping us deal with emergencies. For example, it enables us to react very quickly and slam on the brakes when someone runs in front of the car. However, once the acute stress is over, our bodies quickly return to normal.

The problem is that these days most of us are more likely to have to cope with **psychological threats and stressors**:

- pressure of deadlines,
- traffic queues, delays,
- disagreements at work
- playground politics

They're not situations where physical aggression or running away are the best answers – and yet our bodies react as if we're facing physical danger: with the fight or flight response.

Psychological threats

Our psychological threats and stressors are different for each of us based on our:

- experiences,
- coping mechanisms,
- views of life,
- our rules and beliefs,
- values,
- boundaries
- measures of what's too much and out of balance.

As modern life becomes more pressured and complex, we add more and more psychological triggers to the list.

Chronic Stress

Fright, flight or freeze – the body responds naturally to threat

Feeling threatened by:

- being asked to do things you don't want to do
- being asked to do things you can't do
- working overtime
- exams
- unwanted change

Perceived threats or fears:

- not being accepted
- being embarrassed
- being laughed at
- being rejected

Some psychological threats and stressors:

- pressures of deadlines
- traffic queues
- disagreements at work
- school politics

Psychological threats can be the worst as there's no real enemy to fight or run away from, and yet your body is on the alert and keyed-up for action.



What are playground politics?
How does this affect our behaviour?

Perception: the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. We often interpret things in different ways.

Recall

- 1/ Give one example of something that makes people feel threatened.
- 2/ Give one example of a perceived threat or fear.
- 3/ Give one example of a psychological threat.



Stress

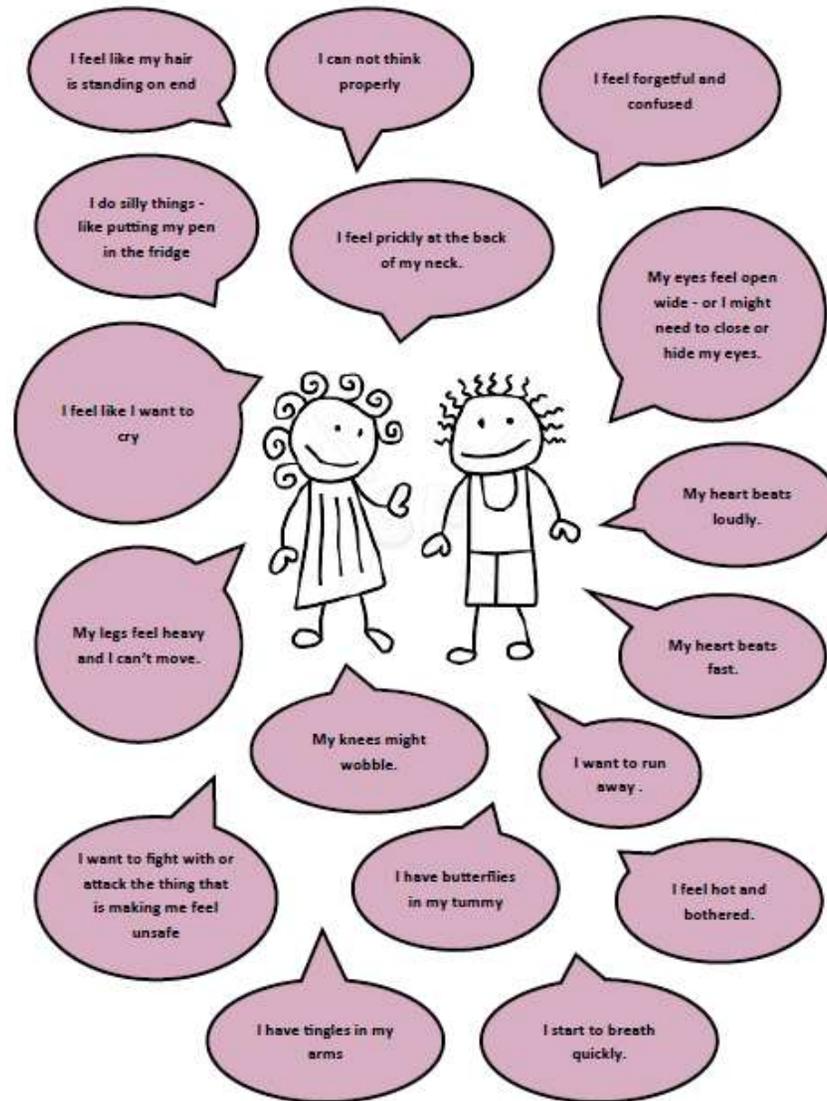
This drains your body and can cause:

- ineffective digestive and bowel functionality which can also lead to irritable bowel syndrome (IBS),
- constipation,
- diarrhoea,
- indigestion
- stomach ulcers

Stress also affects the immune system, making you more vulnerable to colds, flu, fatigue and infections.

If you feel you are suffering with the fight or flight state on a regular basis, it's important you get good nutrition, hydration, exercise and relaxation to help to combat the effect.

Early warning signs



When is it fun to feel scared?

- We can enjoy the physical 'adrenalin rush' of fun to feel scared activities such as being on a roller coaster, fast sports, scary movies etc.
- In this case our Early Warning Signs may appear but we know that we have made the choice to be there and are in control.
- We know that when we are feeling safe and when its ok to take risks or have adventurous fun when we can identify that we have;
- CHOICE + CONTROL + TIME LIMIT

Can I take risks on purpose?

We take risks on purpose when our internal feelings alert us to discomfort or danger and we make the choice to proceed anyway as we feel that things should be safe to do so despite our feelings. In this case we still need to recognise that there is still choice, control and a time limit.

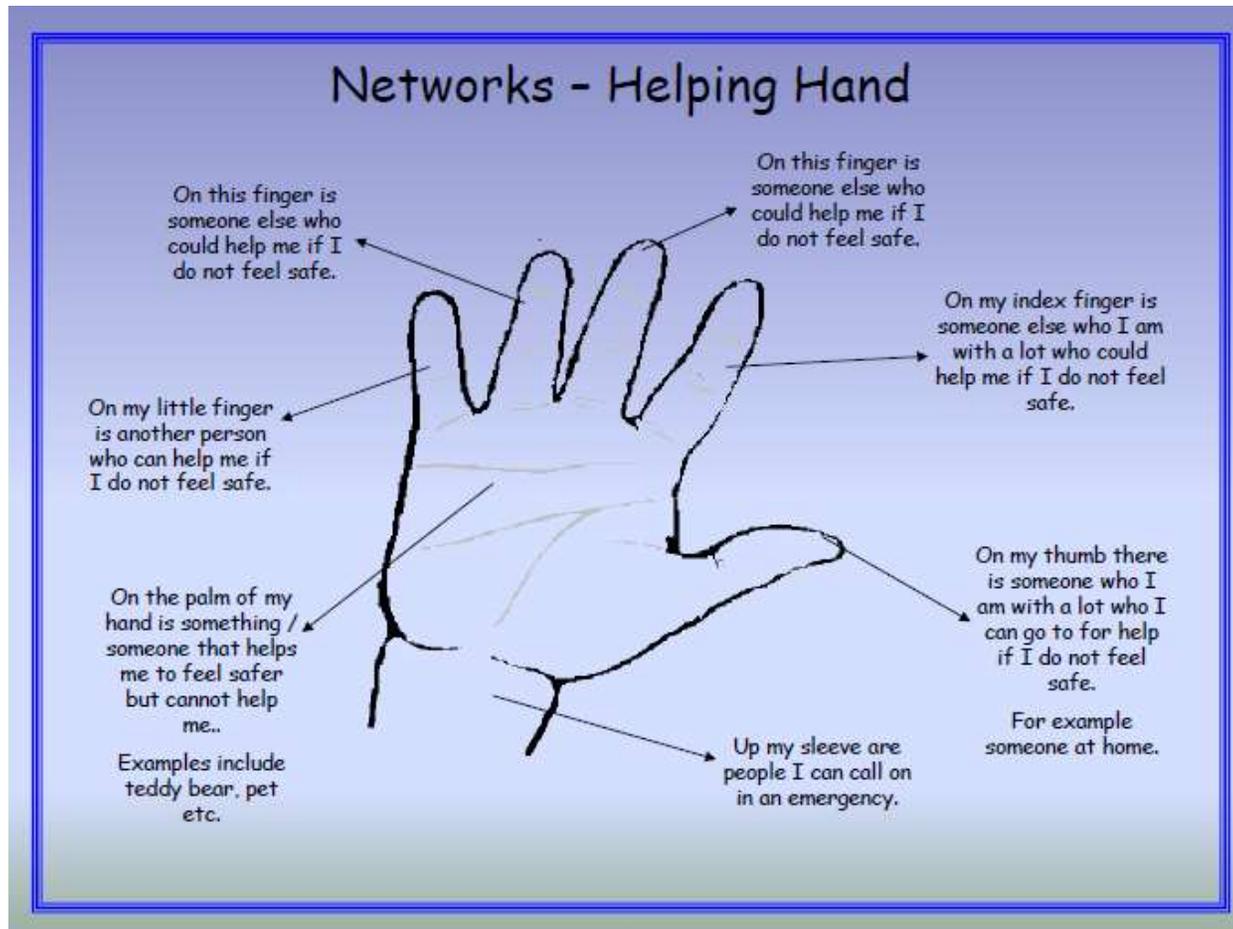
We can then think before we act:

What might be the possible effects of my actions?

What could I do if ...?

Am I aware of other people's safety?

Planning a network: the helping hand



1/ Be persistent – you have the right to feel safe.

2/ Review/update your network from time to time.

In summary...

- We have the right to feel safe all the time.
- When we do not feel safe we also have the right to do what we need until we feel safe again.
- When things are safe for us we have a choice, feel comfortable and are in control.
- When things are not safe for us our body automatically tells us – Early Warning Signs.
- The quicker we recognise and trust these feelings the more choices we have to either deal with or avoid the problem.
- We can use our body's feelings to help us to choose which option is the safest, whatever the problem.
- We can talk with someone about anything, even if it feels awful or small.
- Once we are out of immediate danger we can find someone in our network to talk to for help and should persevere until we feel safe again.
- We should use and review our network regularly.