

SIX SURVIVAL RESPONSES

Automatic protective patterns when threat or overwhelm is detected

AT A GLANCE



Fight, flight, freeze, fawn, flop and friend describe common patterns of protection. Responses are shaped by context, learning and available support.

KEY IDEAS

FIGHT / FLIGHT

Confront, control, escape, avoid or stay constantly busy.

FREEZE / FLOP

Become still, numb, detached, heavy or unable to act.

FAWN

Appease, over-accommodate or abandon needs to reduce conflict.

FRIEND

Seek safety through connection, reassurance and belonging.

WHY IT MATTERS



Recognising a response can reduce shame and help identify what safety, regulation or choice is needed next.

PUTTING THE IDEA INTO PRACTICE

1

NAME

Which protective response seems active?

2

ORIENT

What is happening now, rather than then?

3

REGULATE

Use body-based grounding appropriate to the state.

4

SUPPORT CHOICE

Create enough safety for more than one possible response.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1

What does my system do under threat?

2

What helps me return to choice?

3

Who feels safe enough to contact?

Use this resource as a starting point for reflection, not as a test or diagnosis.

Different experiences, cultures and circumstances may require different understandings.