



Four Phases of the Nervous System

In this infographic, you will learn the four phases of the nervous system response under stress and in safety, and practice a brief movement / breath exercise to engage with each one.

I am grateful to my teachers Peter Levine & Kimberly Ann Johnson for this framework.

FLIGHT

In Safety

- I know where I am.
- I know what my options are.
- I feel confident I could leave.

Under Threat

- Fear
- Claustrophobia
- Anxiety
- Speediness
- Fidgeting
- Darting Eyes
- Overthinking

Breath / Movement

- Breathe 3x in a slight gasp (try breathing into chest through closed teeth).
- Pump calves, alternating feet.
- Notice how you feel afterwards.



FIGHT

In Safety

- I feel assertive.
- I know what I want.
- I am confident I can get what I want.

Under Threat

- Irritability
- Anger
- Aggression
- Judgment / Criticism (Including Self-Criticism)
- Clenched Jaw

Breath / Movement

- Strongly exhale, pumping belly inward, while saying "hu."
- Put one hand in a fist and the other on top, push to engage pectoral muscles & breathe.
- Notice how you feel afterwards.



FREEZE

In Safety

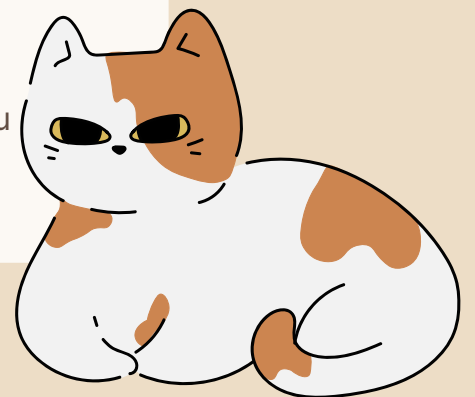
- I feel safe.
- I feel nourished.
- It is easy to relax.

Under Threat

- Fogginess
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Forgetfulness
- Indecisiveness
- Sense of Impending Doom

Breath / Movement

- Make a long deep voo sound, trying to allow it to resonate it in your low belly.
- Do this 2-3 times & then notice how you feel.



FAWN

In Safety

- I feel like I belong.
- I feel comfortable and welcome here.
- I feel understood & seen.

Under Threat

- Please & Appease
- Fitting In
- Camouflaging
- Unable to find one's own desires or boundaries

Breath / Movement

- Bring your hands in front of you and wiggle your fingers. Slowly separate your hands until they are just barely in your peripheral vision. Allow your eyes & breath to relax while watching the wiggles. Notice how you feel.

