

# What is Anxiety?



Anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry or dread, and the thought that something bad is likely to happen. Everybody feels anxiety sometimes and this is completely normal. When we get anxious, we may notice feelings in our bodies, get difficult thoughts pop into our head's, and we may behave differently because of this.

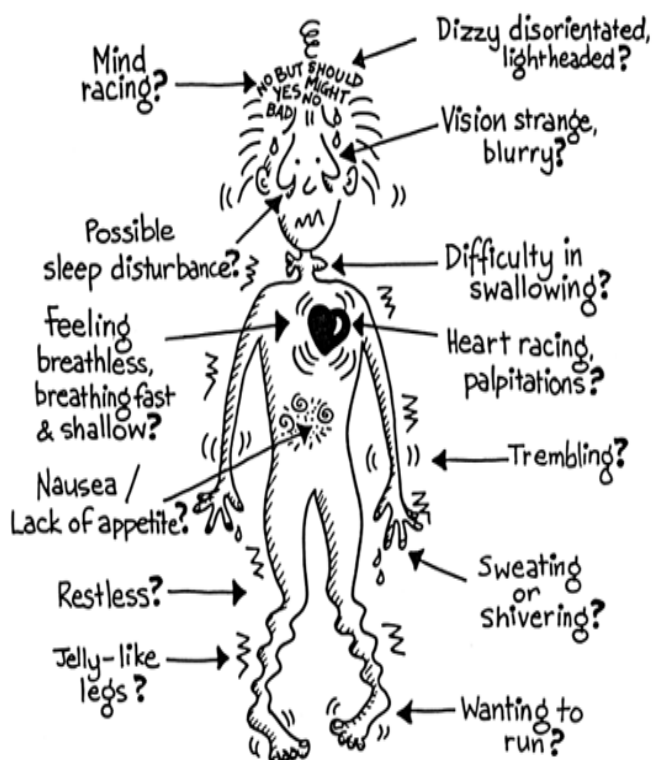
Surprisingly, anxiety is not always a bad thing! as this can help us to react super quickly if in danger. Anxiety only becomes a problem if this starts to effect our lives and stop us from enjoying ourselves.



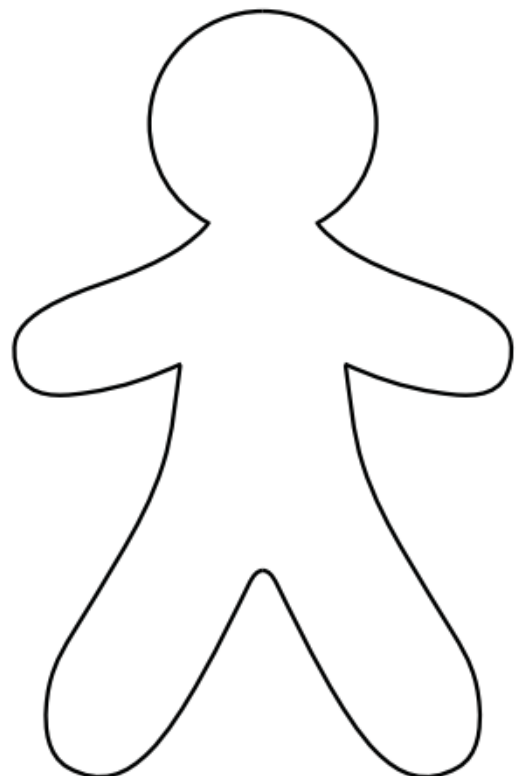
We'd like to introduce you to Zee, our zebra who lives in the wilderness and loves exploring. Zee is scared of anything that can hurt her, so when she sees a snake or lion, she thinks she will get hurt if they spot her. Because of her anxiety, Zee avoids going anywhere near the river, where she knows there are a lot off snakes.

## How does it feel

Some people with anxiety notice:



Write or draw what you notice:

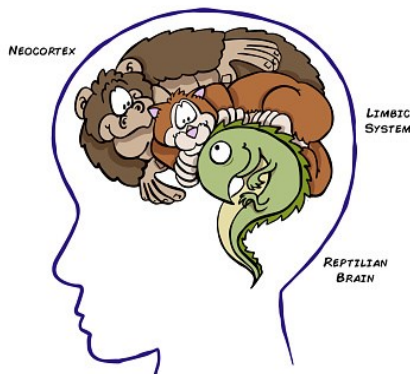


# Fight, Flight and Freeze

The “Fight, Flight or Freeze response” (FFF) explains the feelings we have in our bodies when we sense danger.

Freeze can feel like numbness, fight can feel like anger, flight can feel like anxiety.

This happens automatically, and is a normal response from our brains when sensing danger. Although we cannot stop the FFF response, we can learn to regulate our sensitivity to danger by using helpful thoughts and behaviours, which can help us feel less anxious.



When our brain senses danger, there are three main automatic responses to get feeling safe again:

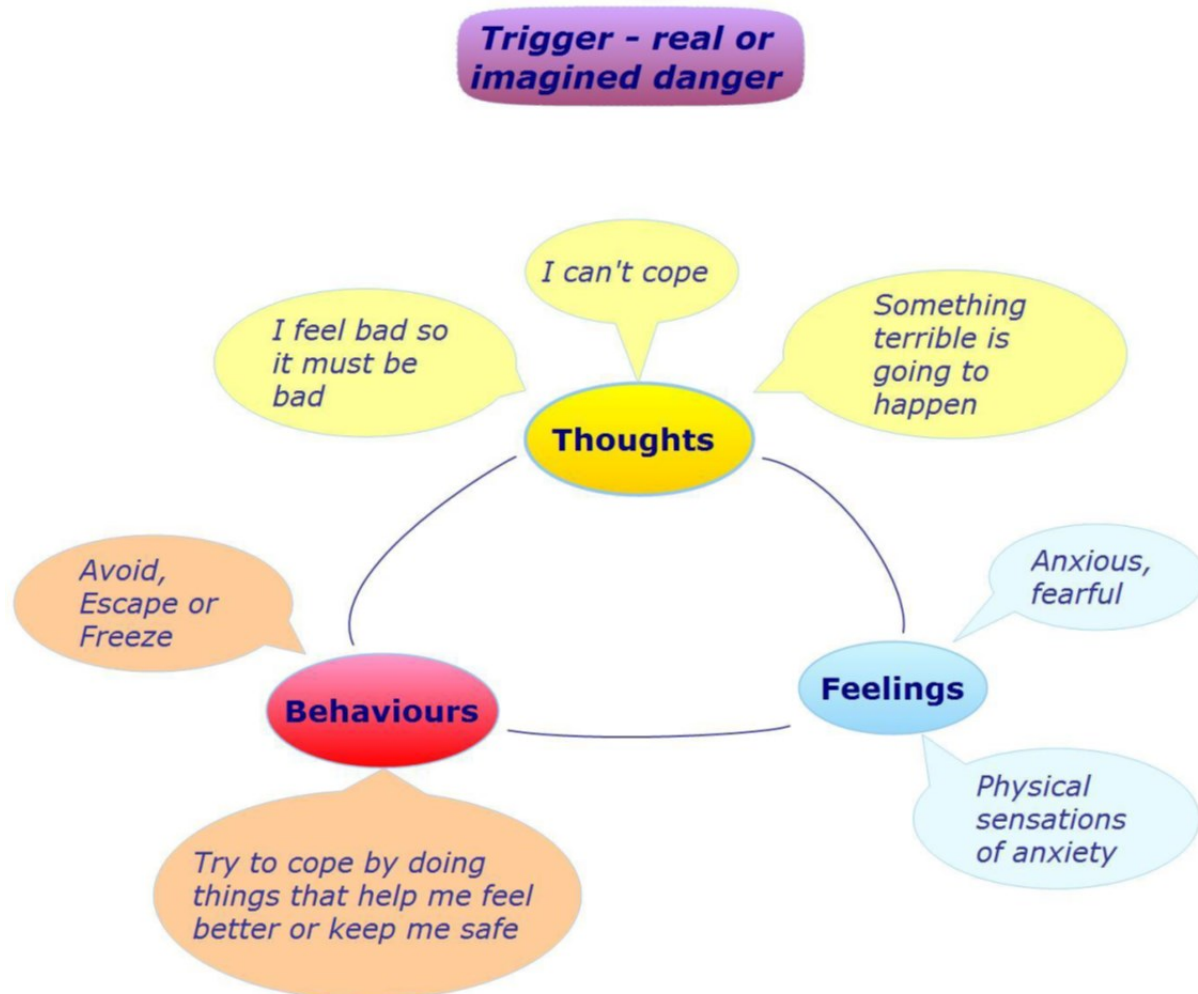
- 1) Freeze (like a lizard, hoping the danger will pass us by).
- 2) Fight (like a bull, hoping to combat danger to stop it).
- 3) Flight (like a cheetah, hoping to get away from danger).

As humans, there is another response we learn—

Thinking and reasoning (this is the smart gorilla in the picture above).

Our thoughts and behaviours can help us tell the difference between real danger and other things. This can help our brain learn how to sense danger better. Then, over time we will find less things immediately dangerous which will mean our bodies go into the automatic FFF responses less often.

# Thoughts feelings behaviours



When something happens which triggers our anxiety (a thought, a situation, or anything really) our body and brain gets involved.

There can be lots of thoughts in our heads about all the things that might happen or go wrong.

We can also get lots of funny feelings in our bodies, which can make us feel unwell. Our tummy can feel like its spinning, we might feel really hot and sweaty and our arms and legs might go all shakey. Anxiety can give us lots of feelings and they are different for every person!

Because these thoughts and feelings don't make us feel good, we might try not to do the things which make us feel this way (like Zee not going near the river) or we might have learnt strategies to make us feel more protected from the danger (like Zee might head towards the river but covering herself in the bushes and trees).

By doing these things, our anxiety might start to disappear, but then pop up again next time the trigger happens! This might feel like its going round and round.

# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Since lockdown came into effect, there's been lots of big changes for us all. This is a new situation for everyone. There is a lot of information on social media, but still no certainty about what will happen, which can make us feel anxious and feel like we have COVID-19 symptoms such as feeling hot or having difficulty breathing.

Because this is a very unsettling time, we might start doing things that are unhelpful for our anxiety, such as:

- Avoiding things
- Spending more time alone
- Checking social media for updates
- Looking out for signs of danger
- Thinking and talking about the virus a lot
- Washing hands more than necessary

## Helpful links

### **Anxiety, Wellbeing and Covid 19**

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**- anxiety information, strategies for anxiety and wellbeing during Covid 19

**[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**- information, advice and where to get help

**[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)**- information, advice and where to get help

**[www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)**- up to date information on Covid 19



If your child is struggling with sleep difficulties, healthy eating, anxiety or worry during this time, our 'Trainee Education Mental Health Practitioners' can offer one to one or group interventions for children and young people. To enquire into this support please contact the Schools Wellbeing Service Consultation Line on **01273-293481** or

Email [SWSConsultationLine@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:SWSConsultationLine@brighton-hove.gov.uk)