**The Fight or Flight Response**

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The Fight or Flight Response is an automatic brain response your body has to a ***perceived dangerous*** situation. The Fight or Flight Response’s purpose is to protect you from potential danger. The problem, is that it is a primitive response and often the world we live in now does not have the same dangerous situations as when this response first developed in our brains. We no longer have the threat of wild animals, however, the threat of writing a test or exam, or handing in an assignment, or speaking in front of a group of people still continues to illicit the same physical reaction in our brain for some people. When a person feels threatened, the fight-or-flight response is automatically triggered, and the body changes that occur still prepares us to either ‘fight’ the threat, or ‘flee’ the threat (even though it is impractical to ‘flee’ from an assignment) the brain response is the same as if it was a wild animal.

 **How the Fight or Flight Response Works**

When our body gets worried or anxious our brain triggers an organ called the Amygdala. The Amygdala sends out hormones into our body, called the *Stress Response* or *Fight, Flight or Freeze Response*. During this response our breathing becomes shallow and rapid, our heart rate increases, and our muscles become tense and ready for action. We may also experience butterflies in our stomach, lightheadedness, chills, or sweating and a variety of other body symptoms. Even threats to emotional wellbeing, such as the fear of embarrassment before giving a presentation or speech can trigger this response. In this case, the response does us more harm than good. Everyone will experience the fight-or-flight response at times in their life. Such as when we accidently drive through a stop sign, or are startled by someone surprising us, or we are up on a high balcony and we are afraid of heights. This response keeps us safe, by making sure we do not do things which could cause us harm, like run on the edge of a roof of a tall building. Or, if we get into a car accident we are able to have amazing strength and sometimes pull ourselves out of the wreckage before the car bursts into flames! However, this response can also lead to excessive anger, anxiety, prolonged stress and other problems. If this happens it is time to intervene and manage our response in a healthy way.

**Managing the Fight or Flight Response**

To manage the Fight or Flight Response it is important to become aware of the body sensations we experience and then learn ways to control them. Many of the symptoms of the response can be managed through deep breathing, relaxing our muscles and using mindfulness to examine the thing that threatens us. Becoming aware of our thoughts and feelings also goes a long way in helping us to manage this automatic body response.