

Stress – ‘Fight or Flight’

Understanding the ‘Fight or Flight’ response...

Common concerns about ‘Fight or Flight’:

- Q.** What is the ‘Fight or Flight’ response for?
- A.** It helps you get away from danger – for example, if you step into the road when a car is coming.
- Q.** What happens to my body?
- A.** Your body releases adrenaline – so you might get sensations like a racing heart, jelly legs, trembling, ‘butterflies’, sweating, churning stomach, feeling sick, dry mouth, urgent need to go to the toilet, and so on.
- Q.** When is ‘Fight or Flight’ not useful?
- A.** It’s not useful if your body reacts like this to imagined or exaggerated dangers – for example, anxious thoughts or bad memories. The fight/flight response will kick in whether the danger is real or not.
- Q.** What could happen if the ‘Fight or Flight’ response goes on too long?
- A.** You could over breathe (hyperventilation) or have a panic attack. There are separate leaflets on relaxed breathing and panic attacks – ask your guide about them.
- Q.** Is this harmful?
- A.** No. The feelings can be frightening and unpleasant, but they will go away without your having to do anything.
- Q.** How can I stop triggering the ‘Fight or Flight’ response when I don’t need to?
- A.** You could start by keeping a diary to record what events or feelings set the response off. Talk to your guide about what you can do to help yourself.

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