

Fight, flight, or freeze cycle

(Section 1, Lecture 3)

You have probably heard of the fight, flight, or freeze cycle. This instinctual reaction is your body's way of protecting itself. It has served you well in the past and has probably saved you from some unsavory situations.

Fight, flight, or freeze is triggered just as strongly by a thought as it is by a physical confrontation. When you do not speak up in a meeting, it is most likely because you are experiencing the symptoms of fight, flight, or freeze, triggered by a thought you have or something that has happened in the room.

Our job in our work together is to disrupt this cycle before it has a chance to begin. In order to do this we must first understand what it is and how it works.

Here is how it works:

1. Perhaps you are in a meeting and you are triggered by seeing your boss. You know that he wants you to speak up at meetings in order to be considered for a promotion.
2. This trigger is followed by a story you tell yourself such as, "Last time I spoke up I panicked and fumbled through my points because I'm an introvert and speaking up isn't my strong suit."
3. Your body jumps to your protection to keep you from doing something again that previously ended badly. In this scenario most of us probably do not fight or run (though we would like to) we freeze, hold our breath, tighten our muscles, and consequently our mind goes blank.

You might also experience some of the following symptoms: You can't catch your breath, your throat and chest tighten, your voice cracks, you begin to sweat and your mouth becomes dry. You are not able to remember your sentence or come up with a word. You might even black out. You just want to get through this.

The problem is the more you experience these symptoms the higher your level of panic becomes and the more you are triggered into experiencing these symptoms.

Here is what we're going to do about it:

Together, we will be working to re-pattern both your body and your mind so that a trigger neither brings up a story nor causes a habitual reaction in your body.