

Let your thought clouds float by

With practice you'll find any stress or anxiousness you feel will affect you as much as you let it. Simply start noticing thoughts and letting them float by like clouds in the sky. You'll find the feeling will fade quickly, and you'll be more mindful of the people around you.

We all feel these feelings, so if you need help don't ever be afraid to talk to someone. Talk to a trusted friend, parent, teacher, or school counselor.

HIT PAUSE

Try hitting the "pause button" and stepping away from any situation where you feel yourself getting upset or scared. No, it's not a real "pause button," but you have the ability to take a step back and look at any situation where you feel yourself getting emotional from a different viewpoint. "Pausing" our out-of-control thoughts helps our friend the prefrontal cortex part of the brain to do its job of understanding how to react.

Imagine that you are a squirrel standing on the sidewalk. Draw a picture of what you see from the sidewalk view.

Now, pretend that you climb high to the top of a tree. Draw a picture of what you see as you perch in the top of that tree.



Much like being on the sidewalk versus up in a tree, your viewpoint can also change about a situation you may be experiencing. When you are one step removed (in the top of the tree), you can better control your own mind, thoughts, feelings and reactions.

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core life
BUILD YOURSELF STRONG

SURVIVAL!

Managing daily stress.

SUR•VIV•AL

(noun) the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances.

Have you ever been scared and felt a big rush of energy? Maybe you ran faster than you ever have, or you were more sensitive to the things you saw around you. These feelings are normal, and are just responses your body and mind give to help you survive.



Your body is built to survive!

When your mind senses danger, your body's built-in response may cause you to fight, run away, or maybe even freeze up. This is normal, and is all part of your Central Nervous System.

Here's how it works:

Your body's survival center is the brain. How you react is done in three main parts: the cerebral cortex, the amygdala, and the hypothalamus.

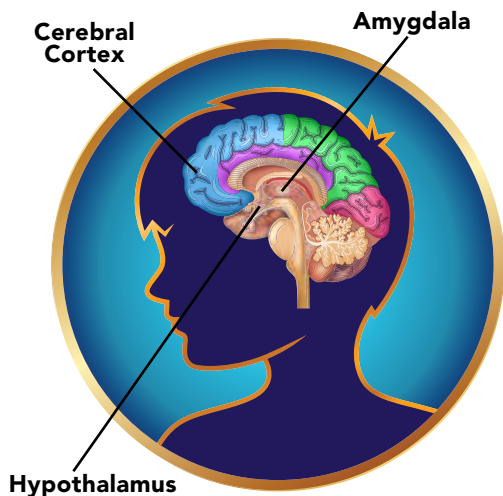
Cerebral Cortex: What you use to see and understand your surroundings. Sends signals to the amygdala.

Amygdala: Receives information from the cerebral cortex. If the amygdala thinks the info is harmful, it quickly sends a signal of danger to the hypothalamus.

Hypothalamus: Relays the message throughout the Central Nervous System and kicks your body into action! This is where you might fight, flee or freeze up.

A simpler way to think about it is this circle.

Part of the physical response you might feel is your heart to beating faster, your eyes constricting, and your breathing becoming short and quick. This is all normal, and due to a hormone called cortisol made in the body.



Write down a time when you experienced a flight or fight or freeze reaction?

This built-in system is great, and it's something that helped your caveman ancestors survive harsh conditions.

But...you typically aren't in danger (we hope), and it is not healthy for your mind or body to remain in a high level of stress response. If we don't learn how to manage our thoughts and calm our stress response, we can hurt our heart, lungs and brains!

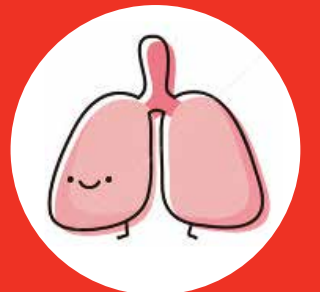


But how can we control this survival instinct?

Relax. Rest your face muscles, your neck muscles, your shoulders and all the way down to the tips of your toes.



Breathe deeply. Put your hand on your tummy just below the belly button. Take a deep breath. You'll feel your stomach lift your hand slightly as you breathe in and out.



Quiet your thinking. Focus on the sound of a fan, soothing music, or your own breathing. This is your time in your quiet space. Let the sounds come to you.

