What survival looks like...

IN SCHOOL

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The fight-or-flight response (also called hyperarousal, or the acute stress response) is a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival.

Do you know where I learnt to be brave? In School, it's a really scary place.
When I was little, some wires got connected to the wrong places in my brain. Often I think and feel like I'm under attack even when I'm actually very safe. My brain activates survival mode to protect me.

I don't even know that I have gone into survival mode, I can't even tell you what feels wrong. It happens so often that this part of my brain is really strong and rules over the calm part of my brain. I can't turn it off by myself.
Why is it so important that you know this?
The part of my brain activated to help me survive, is different from the part of my brain activated when I'm calm.

I can only learn properly when the calm part of my brain is activated. When I'm in a survival state it takes over from my calm brain and I struggle to learn. If I don't feel safe, you won't be able to teach me.
The problem is, it's really hard to see when I'm in survival mode.

I look very different to how I feel inside and often I can remain in survival mode for so long, that it seems like part of my personality.

I would love your help to feel safe so I can learn. For you to see that I am in a survival state and it's not a personality trait. I really want to learn, I really want to feel ok.
Freeze
What I look like in Freeze...

- Not interested, bored
- Confused, forgetful
- Talking about something else
- Hard to move through the task
- Not listening
- Staring into space, daydreaming
- Clumsy

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What I am aware of...

- My brain is slowing down
- Trying to think of something safe
- I can't do this
- Feeling deeply anxious
- I can hear you're getting frustrated
- Starting to shut down
- I feel under attack
How my body feels ...

✗ Frozen brain
✗ If I don't move, you can't see me
✗ Everything feels like a dream
✗ Under attack
✗ In a fog
✗ Disconnected
✗ Numb
What's happening in my Inner World...

- I can't bear your rejection
- I need to feel safe
- Shame, I hate myself
- I'm scared I don't know what's going to happen
- When I fail at this you'll send me away
- When you realise I can't do this, you won't want me in your class anymore
You can help me feel safe with the following ...

- Do the task with me
- Deep breathing
- Tell me I'm ok & that I'm safe
- Ask me to push my hands down under my seat & lift myself up off the chair
- Gently wonder where I've gone & welcome me back to the room
- Make the task smaller & more predictable
- Tell me kindly who I am & what I'm doing
- Tell me what you want me to do 1:1 without showing frustration

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Flight
What I look like in Flight …

- Run away
- Keeping SUPER busy
- Not coping in free time
- Need to be first or at the front
- Bumping into people
- Avoiding tasks and activities
- Baby talk or silly voices
- Hyperactive, giddy & silly
- Hiding under tables
What I am aware of ...

- Unable to focus
- Lonely
- Panic
- Feeling bad, movement is distracting
- Shame
- Overwhelmed
- Worried about what happening next
- Anxious, apprehensive
How my body feels

- Escape, run & hide
- Painful joints
- Numb
- Vibrating
- Ready for action
- Jumpy & tense
- Sick
Whats happening in my Inner World

- I want to escape from this scary moment but I can't
- I don't want you to see my real feelings, you can't handle them
- I am really worried I can't do what's going to happen next
You can help me feel safe with the following ...

- Keep me close by
- Deep breathing
- Give me a easy & familiar task
- Make things predictable
- Tell me I'm safe, show me a safe place or person I can go to
- Kindly talk though what might be tricky
Fight
What I look like in Fight ...

- Hot & bothered
- Angry & aggressive
- Controlling
- Lie or blaming
- Shouty & argumentative
- Pushing away friends
- Demanding
- Inflexible

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What I am aware of...

- I'm in danger
- Really scared
- I am all alone
- I feel bad
- Frightened
- Unimportant
- Invisible
Whats happening in my Inner World ...

- I can't be cross at the people
  I really want to be cross at
- I'm going to push you away
  before you get rid of me
- Unsafe
- I hate myself, I am
  unloveable, I want to die
- Why wasn't I good enough?
- I need to be in control &
  make things predictable
You can help me feel safe with the following …

- Give me a role
- Support me socially
- Match my energy
- Make things predictable
- Deep breathing
- Connect & show empathy before exploring the consequences of my behaviour
Submit
What I look like in Submit ...

- Socially withdrawn
- Compliant
- Quiet
- Unable to think, just yes
  or no answers
- Passive
- Resigned
- Neutral expression
- Low mood
What I am aware of...

- I can't think
- Tummy aches
- Tired
- Sad
- Lonely
How my body feels ...

- Worn out, no energy
- Guilty
- It's given up
- Slow
- Tearful
- Poorly
What's happening in my Inner World ...

- Why couldn't I be better, I'm completely useless
- I hate myself, I am unlovable
- It's all my fault
- Nothing will ever feel ok
- I can't keep myself safe
- I want to die
You can help me feel safe with the following ...

- Repetitive simple tasks
- Weighted blanket
- Building with lego or play-dough
- Tell me I'm safe
- Deep breathing
- Spending time with a trusted adult
- Do the task with me
- Tell me what to do without showing frustration
Spending just a small amount of time making me feel safe, activates the calm part of my brain and I am ready for you to teach me again.

I might need you to do this a few times throughout the task but the more my brain knows how to stay in the calm zone, the less likely I am to go into survival mode.

Thank you for helping me every day to make safe and life changing differences to my brain.

It's an amazing thing you're doing for me.