

# THE TRUNCATED RESPONSE

WHAT IF THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT BEHAVIOURS YOU SEE ARE ACTUALLY A RESPONSE 'STUCK' IN THE NERVOUS SYSTEM?

"A PERSON WHO ENCOUNTERS DANGER AND IS ABLE TO FULLY EXPRESS APPROPRIATE DEFENCE RESPONSES MAY HAVE NO LONG-TERM CLINICAL EFFECTS.

HOWEVER, A PERSON WHO HAS HAD HIS OR HER RESPONSES OBSTRUCTED WILL FIND THAT THE ENERGETIC RESIDUES OF THESE LATER BECOME UNWELCOME INTRUDERS ON HIS OR HER AWARENESS."

(CARRIGAN, 2014)

## THE COMPLETED FIGHT/FLIGHT RESPONSE



IMAGINE A TEEN WHO IS WALKING ALONE LATE AT NIGHT, HE IS APPROACHED BY TWO OLDER TEENS WHO TRY TO ATTACK HIM.

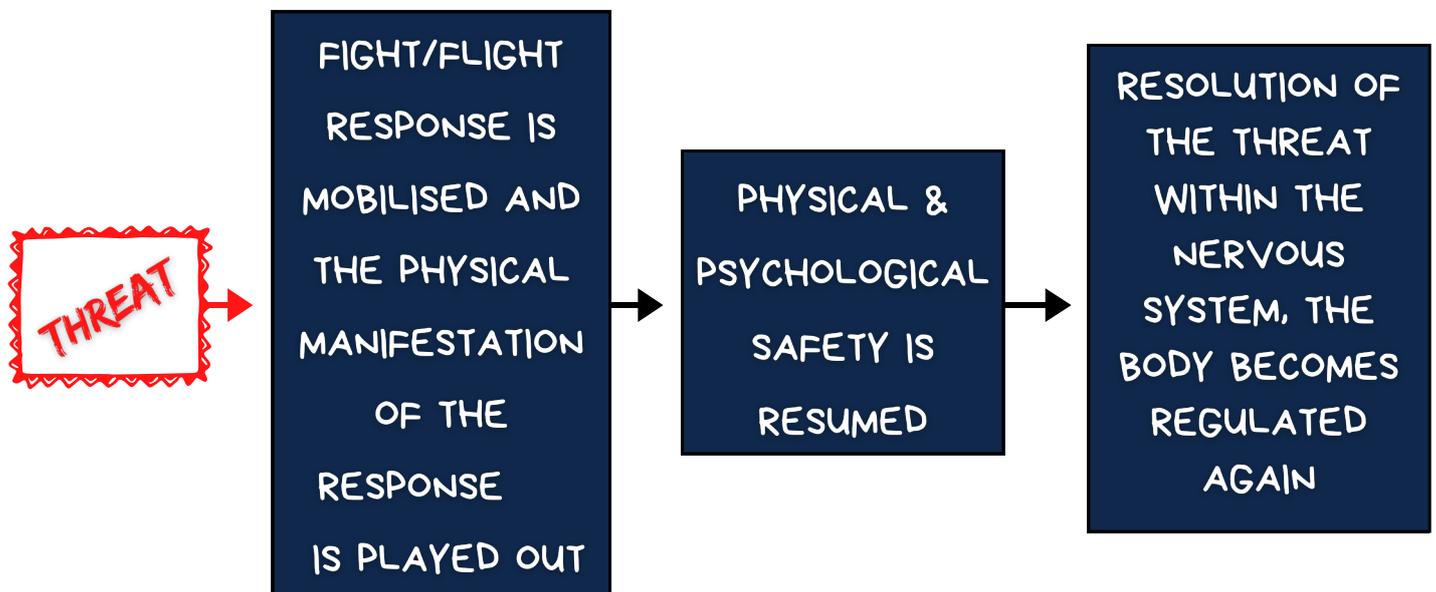


THE TEEN GOES INTO FIGHT MODE AND IS ABLE TO FIGHT OFF HIS ASSAILANTS WELL ENOUGH THAT HIS FLIGHT RESPONSE IS ABLE TO KICK INTO ACTION AND HE IS ABLE TO RUN AWAY.

HERE HIS SURVIVAL RESPONSES WERE ACTIVATED AND EFFECTIVE. HIS NERVOUS SYSTEM WAS ABLE TO COMPLETE THE FIGHT AND FLIGHT SURVIVAL RESPONSE.



THE TEEN IN THE EXAMPLE HERE WILL OF COURSE NEED SOME SUPPORT AFTER THE ATTACK, HOWEVER, HIS SURVIVAL RESPONSES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND THEREFORE DO NOT GET STUCK IN HIS NERVOUS SYSTEM. THE COMPLETED RESPONSE IS AS FOLLOWS:



# THE TRUNCATED FIGHT/FLIGHT RESPONSE



NOW IMAGINE A YOUNG CHILD WHO IS REGULARLY PHYSICALLY HIT AND KICKED BY A PARENT.



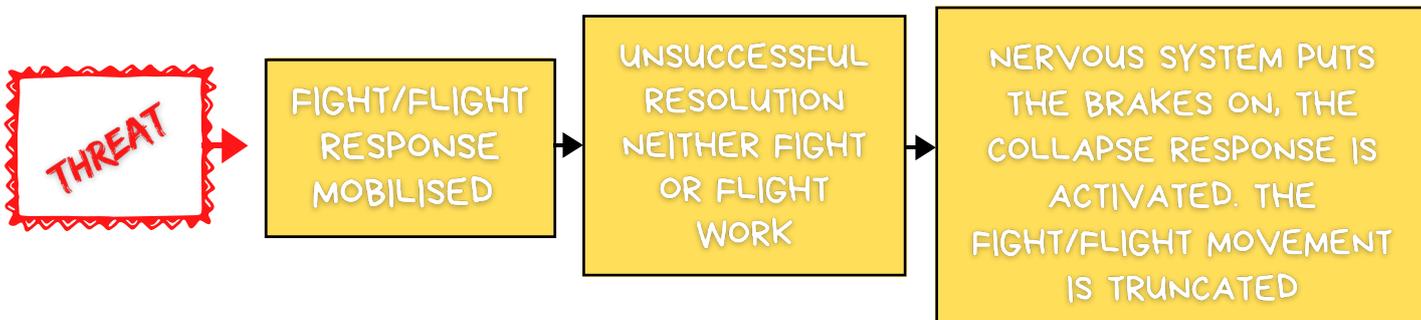
THE CHILD'S FIGHT MODE KICKS IN BUT THE URGE TO FIGHT IS NOT SAFE OR EFFECTIVE, THE PARENT IS TOO BIG AND STRONG. THE FIGHT MODE IS TRUNCATED - IT IS STOPPED.

THE FLIGHT RESPONSE IS ALSO ACTIVATED BUT SHE CANNOT FLEE, SHE IS TRAPPED. THE FLIGHT RESPONSE IS ALSO STOPPED.



FOR THIS CHILD, THE ONLY SURVIVAL MODE THEY NOW HAVE AVAILABLE TO THEM IS TO SHUT DOWN INSIDE - TO GO INTO COLLAPSE. THE TRUNCATED FIGHT AND FLIGHT RESPONSES ARE STUCK, UNFINISHED, IN THE CHILD'S NERVOUS SYSTEM.

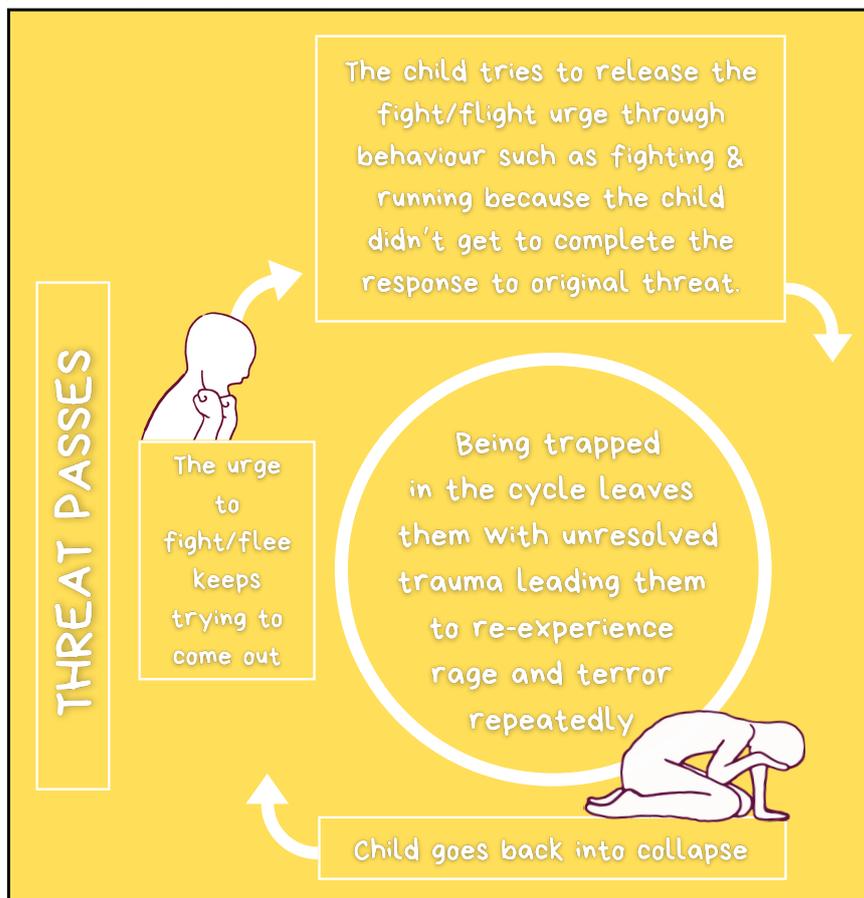
## THE INCOMPLETE RESPONSE IS AS FOLLOWS:



## THE URGE TO COMPLETE THE TRUNCATED RESPONSE

STUCK ON A LOOP, CHILDREN WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIGHT OR RUN AWAY FROM DANGER MAY FIND THEMSELVES WITH AN OVERWHELMING BODY URGE TO COMPLETE THE TRUNCATED RESPONSE. AS THEY GROW OLDER, THEY MAY CONTINUALLY HAVE THE URGE TO FIGHT OR RUN AWAY. THEIR NERVOUS SYSTEM IS CONSTANTLY TRYING TO REPAIR THE EARLY EXPERIENCE BY COMPLETING THEIR TRUNCATED RESPONSES.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IS ONE OF MANY EXPERIENCES WHICH MAY CREATE A SITUATION WHERE A CHILD'S SURVIVAL RESPONSE IS TRUNCATED. THE TRUNCATED RESPONSE MIGHT ALSO COME ABOUT FOR CHILDREN WHOSE EMOTIONAL NEEDS ARE NOT MET OR WHO ARE FACING ANY OTHER TYPE OF THREAT.



## HOW CAN WE HELP A CHILD TO SAFELY COMPLETE THEIR TRUNCATED RESPONSE?

AS ADULTS WE ARE UNDERSTANDABLY DRIVEN TO PREVENT CHILDREN FROM SEEING THROUGH THEIR URGES TO FIGHT OR FLEE – AFTER ALL IT CAN LOOK LIKE 'PROBLEMATIC, DANGEROUS BEHAVIOUR', SO WHAT CAN WE OFFER TO SUPPORT A CHILD TO SAFELY COMPLETE THEIR TRUNCATED RESPONSE? YOU COULD TRY REGULAR:

- RUNNING
- GO KARTING
- MARTIAL ARTS
- BOXING/WRESTLING
- SKATEBOARDING
- DRUMMING
- SWIMMING
- CYCLING
- RUGBY
- DANCING



PROVIDING REPETITIVE, REGULAR MOVEMENTS THAT SAFELY SEE THROUGH THE FIGHT/FLIGHT URGE THAT IS STUCK IN THEIR NERVOUS SYSTEM CAN, OVER TIME, HELP TO COMPLETE THE TRUNCATED RESPONSE.

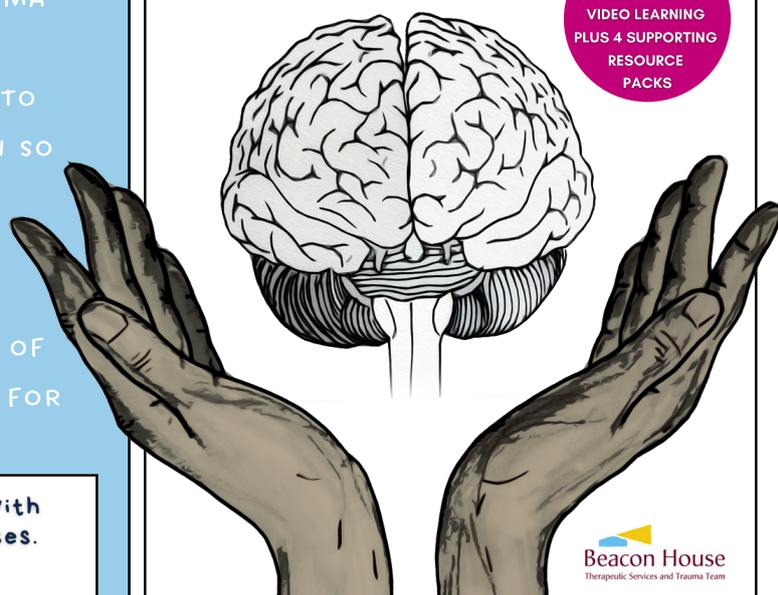
### OTHER TOP TIPS INCLUDE:

- IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT OF FIGHT OR FLIGHT, OFFER THE CHILD A SAFER ALTERNATIVE (E.G. TAKE THEM FOR A WALK AROUND THE PLAYGROUND OR GARDEN)
- SHOW EMPATHY FOR THE PART OF THE CHILD THAT WANTS TO FIGHT OR FLEE ("I CAN SEE YOUR BODY REALLY FEELS THE NEED TO PUSH OTHERS AWAY, THAT MUST BE HARD FOR YOU")
- STAY IN CONNECTION ("I'M HERE, I'M WITH YOU")
- DELIVER CONSEQUENCES WITHOUT SHAME OR ANGER ("IT'S TOUGH TO BE MISSING OUT BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED, I CAN SEE THAT. HOW ARE YOU WITH THAT?")
- NORMALISE THE URGE ("LOTS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE HAD STRESSFUL THINGS HAPPEN TO THEM FEEL THAT THEIR BODY WANTS TO FIGHT OR RUN AWAY")

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