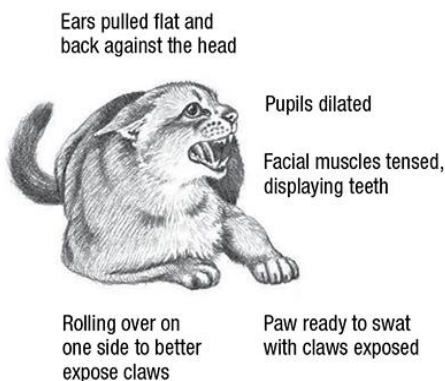


## “Fight-Flight”

- Stress/anxiety involves escalation of what’s popularly called ‘fight-flight’. Almost everyone knows something about this dimension of our autonomic nervous system (ANS).
- The stress hormone cortisol flows. Heart rate, blood pressure and respiration increase.
- We may feel scared, angry, aggressive or vigilant—usually there is some blending of these basic reactions.



- “Fight-Flight” reflects the ‘**sympathetic**’ side of the ANS. This kicks as one dog gets aggressive towards a second dog, AND as the second dog works out how to respond.
- A milder version of the same takes place when someone is purposefully rude to us – in them – an us when we “feel attacked”.
- **Fear** is the dominant emotion in flight, and **anger** is the dominant emotion in fight.



- Fear and anger are often interwoven. Most people who refer to having **anxiety** also feel some degree of anger. The anger maybe very general inspiring thoughts like, ‘why does this keep happening to me’, ‘it’s so unfair’.
- In animals, the unstable, volatile mix of anger and fear occurs in a state of behavior referred to as **defensive aggression**.

- The fight-flight side is balanced by the opposing ‘rest-digest’, **parasympathetic** ANS response. Think “para” chute (for parasympathetic). With this, the ANS threat-response system gently floats back to a stable ground or homeostasis. The general notion is to survive threats without injury, but also without expending excessive energy.

- **Bluffing**, aggressive displays and versions of the same – of finger pointing, calling someone out, puffing up one’s chest, etc., are distinctive behavioral patterns designed to resolve a dominance challenge or any sort of conflict without drawing blood (or the like). In other



words, it’s more efficient for an animal to look and act like it’s eager to fight while not actually doing so. Some percentage of the time, this works to avoid an actual fight. Fights are not only expensive in terms of calories but risky. An animal too eager to fight might win several in a row, then get badly injured because they are too reliant on aggression to mediate threat and conflict situations.

- Some people hot-headed and adept at bluffing. They escalate easily. This works for them and helps them to maintain some **control over** those in their lives and whom they encounter.

- Not-fighting strategies are generally superior from an ultimate survival perspective. But extreme conflict avoidance and submissiveness is psychologically problematic. In theory, nature has provided us multiple options. What’s best depends on the threat situation.



- The issue with psychological issues is us humans get stuck. We develop a personality which is too hot-headed or too passive and frightened, etc. We lose the elasticity to flexibly respond to changing situations.
- The simplistic words, ‘fight-flight’ barely scratch the surface of this fundamental, rich, innate human inheritance. This mind-body system is much farther reaching than simple phrases can possibly explain. Fortunately, researchers have shed light deeper into this innate capacity.
- Expansions of **fight-flight** include **freeze, fold and face** (see my other documents please). In particular, fold and face involve threat response systems articulated beautifully by polyvagal theory (PVT) and modern attachment theory. PVT is an amazing, exciting, accessible, important, expanded understanding of the human response to threat. It’s fight-flight in 3D.
- Polyvagal theory along with other dimensions of the ‘new paradigm’ in mental health research and practice have dramatically disrupted the fight-flight paradigm. Thankfully, this new understanding is very approachable.
- Higher levels of psychospiritual integration correlate with an appreciation of the soma, its CNS, ANS, as the neurological substrate of what manifests in incredible sensitivity, perception, emotion and sentience. An ever-expanding bottom-up view is more consistent with the depth and range of experience of being which, perhaps, in its highest form achieves the blossoming often called love.
- See [vincentschroder.com](http://vincentschroder.com) for other pdfs, for example, on **body-mind-spirit** and **interoception**.