

What To Do When Feeling Distressed:

Young Person's Guide

Why do I feel this way?

When we feel distressed, our bodies alarm system is triggered and it goes into **FIGHT** or **FLIGHT**



It's because of science!

Human beings have evolved to protect themselves from danger. When we feel **threatened** by something, our brains react by releasing **hormones** so that we are able to fight or run away (flight) in order keep ourselves safe.

In the Stone Age, humans lived in much more dangerous environments, so the **Fight** or **Flight** response acted as a way to keep them safe. This is so they could run away or challenge the threat (think saber tooth tigers and hunting).

However, even though we are faced with different dangers today, the **Fight** or **Flight** response is still activated and these **hormones** are still released whenever we feel **threatened**. This makes our heart beat faster (which we can't control) and this can make us feel **DISTRESSED**.

This happens automatically and is **NORMAL!**

What can I do to feel better?



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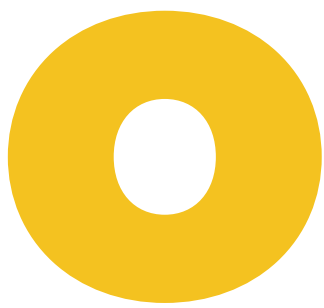
stop:

Stop what you are doing now.

T

take a breath:

Focus on your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice the feeling of breathing into your belly.



observe:

Notice what you are thinking and feeling.



I'm feeling:



I'm noticing physical feelings like:



My mind/thoughts are saying:

**I'm feeling: upset
I'm noticing physical feelings
like: my heart is racing
My mind/thoughts are saying:
"I can't cope with this" "I don't
want to feel like this"**




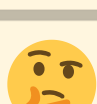
**Remember, your flight or fight
response has been activated and
these feelings are normal!**



P pull back:

Take a step back and think about the bigger picture.

Ask yourself the following questions...

-  What advice would I give to someone else?
-  Is it really true or does it just feel that way?
-  Is this fact or opinion?
-  What would a friend say about this?

! Tell yourself... even though it feels really bad, this is a normal body (Fight or Flight) response and it **WILL PASS.**

P practise what works:

What will help and be the best for me right now?

Here are some helpful techniques you can try which can help you to relax and feel better when you are distressed.

Everyone is different, so choose the most helpful strategies that work for **YOU!**



Positive self-talk

For example, tell yourself:

"I can get through this, I've done it before."

"I'm stronger than I think I am."

"This will pass."

"I can do this."



Visualise

Imagine breathing in blue or green and breathing out red or black.

Picture yourself in an imaginary outdoor peaceful place.



Distract

Distract yourself by putting all of your focus of attention onto an engaging activity. Do what you'd be doing if you weren't distressed.

Or try some of these ideas:

- Go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Watch a movie
- Phone a friend
- Do something active
- Draw something
- Play with a pet
- Read a book

When feeling distressed, remember...

S Stop!

T Take a breath.

O Observe.

P Pull back.

P Practise what works.



References:

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>