

A GENTLE SELF-DISCOVERY QUIZ

What's Your Emotional Trigger Response?

Discover whether you tend to fight, flee, freeze, or fawn
when emotions feel unsafe - and learn what helps your body come back.

A NOTE FOR THE WOMAN WHO HOLDS EVERYTHING TOGETHER

You are not 'too much,' weak, or broken. Sometimes your body pulls a fire alarm because an old part of you remembers smoke. This quiz helps you notice the alarm without becoming afraid of yourself.

Includes your matched grounding practice + 72-hour next step

Created for education and self-reflection - not diagnosis

Your reaction is a messenger, not your identity

Let's make this simple enough to use in real life - especially on the hard days.

Imagine your nervous system is a smoke detector. Its job is not to decide whether you are a good person. Its job is to notice possible danger and act fast. Sometimes it detects a real fire. Sometimes burnt toast sets it off because today feels a little like yesterday.

THE FOUR FAST PROTECTORS:

Fight pushes back. **Flight** gets away. **Freeze** goes still. **Fawn** keeps the peace. None is a personality flaw. Each is a fast attempt to create safety.

The part most people miss

The trigger is not always the event. It can be the meaning your body gives the event. A delayed text might mean 'they are busy' to your thinking brain, while an older protective part hears, 'I am being left.' That gap - event versus meaning - is where self-compassion becomes useful.

Three promises to make yourself

- ☐ I will answer as I really react, not as I wish I reacted.
- ☐ I will treat my result like a clue, not a label.
- ☐ If I become overwhelmed, I may pause, look around the room, and return later.

FRIEND-TO-FRIEND REMINDER

You do not have to tell your whole life story to learn from this. We are simply noticing what your body does when it thinks connection, control, belonging, or safety may be at risk.

Choose the answer your body picks first

Think about conflict, criticism, rejection, pressure, or moments when you feel unseen.

For each question, choose one answer:

A

FIGHT

push, control, defend

B

FLIGHT

escape, avoid, stay busy

C

FREEZE

go blank, still, numb

D

FAWN

please, agree, smooth things over

DON'T OVERTHINK IT

Your first honest answer is usually more useful than the 'best' answer. Think of it like noticing which door you run toward when the alarm sounds.

Your result may be blended

Many people have a primary response and a backup response. You might fight at home but freeze at work. You might flee until someone follows you, then fight. A tie does not mean you did it wrong; it means your protection changes with the situation.

Use this sentence while answering:

“When I feel emotionally unsafe, my first impulse is to...”

Questions 1-4

Choose one response for each question. Your answers are private.

1. Someone criticizes me. I usually...

- ☐ A. Defend myself or point out their mistake.
- ☐ B. Leave, avoid them, or get very busy.
- ☐ C. Go blank and struggle to answer.
- ☐ D. Apologize fast, even if I am unsure I did wrong.

2. A conversation starts feeling tense. I...

- ☐ A. Get louder, firmer, or more controlling.
- ☐ B. Try to end it or find a reason to leave.
- ☐ C. Shut down and lose my words.
- ☐ D. Agree so everyone can feel okay again.

3. I feel overwhelmed. I tend to...

- ☐ A. Become irritable or argumentative.
- ☐ B. Clean, work, scroll, plan, or keep moving.
- ☐ C. Feel numb, heavy, tired, or far away.
- ☐ D. Focus on what everyone else needs.

4. Someone seems upset with me. I...

- ☐ A. Feel defensive or challenge them.
- ☐ B. Avoid interacting until it blows over.
- ☐ C. Feel stuck and unable to act.
- ☐ D. Try to fix their mood immediately.

Questions 5-8

Choose one response for each question. Your answers are private.

5. Under stress, my body often feels...

- ☐ A. Hot, tight, charged, or ready to push.
- ☐ B. Restless, buzzy, or unable to slow down.
- ☐ C. Heavy, foggy, numb, or sleepy.
- ☐ D. Alert to every change in someone else's mood.

6. When my needs are missed, I...

- ☐ A. Demand attention or build resentment.
- ☐ B. Pull away and handle it alone.
- ☐ C. Tell myself my needs do not matter.
- ☐ D. Keep giving and hope someone notices.

7. If I fear rejection, I may...

- ☐ A. Push the person away first.
- ☐ B. Create distance before I can be hurt.
- ☐ C. Withdraw inside myself.
- ☐ D. Work harder to earn their approval.

8. After a mistake, I am likely to...

- ☐ A. Explain why it was not all my fault.
- ☐ B. Avoid thinking or talking about it.
- ☐ C. Feel ashamed and unable to act.
- ☐ D. Over-apologize and try to make up for it.

Questions 9-12

Choose one response for each question. Your answers are private.

9. Plans change suddenly. I...

- ☐ A. Get frustrated and try to regain control.
- ☐ B. Feel anxious and search for an escape route.
- ☐ C. Become confused or mentally stuck.
- ☐ D. Go along with whatever others want.

10. Someone crosses a boundary. I...

- ☐ A. React strongly, often after holding it in.
- ☐ B. Distance myself without explaining.
- ☐ C. Say nothing because I cannot find the words.
- ☐ D. Allow it because disappointing them feels worse.

11. During emotional conversations, I...

- ☐ A. Interrupt, argue, or prove my point.
- ☐ B. Change the subject or leave.
- ☐ C. Lose track of what I want to say.
- ☐ D. Focus on calming the other person.

12. When a relationship feels unsafe, I...

- ☐ A. Become critical, controlling, or suspicious.
- ☐ B. Become unavailable or avoid closeness.
- ☐ C. Disconnect from my feelings.
- ☐ D. Become extra helpful or agreeable.

Questions 13-16

Choose one response for each question. Your answers are private.

13. My usual response to emotional pain is...

- ☐ A. Turn it into anger.
- ☐ B. Outrun it with activity.
- ☐ C. Numb it or disappear inside.
- ☐ D. Hide it and care for others.

14. When I need help, I...

- ☐ A. Feel angry nobody noticed.
- ☐ B. Insist I can do it alone.
- ☐ C. Struggle to know what I need.
- ☐ D. Worry asking will burden someone.

15. After a hard interaction, I...

- ☐ A. Replay what I should have said.
- ☐ B. Avoid the person or the subject.
- ☐ C. Feel foggy, drained, or absent.
- ☐ D. Worry most about whether they are okay.

16. Safety often feels like...

- ☐ A. Staying strong and in control.
- ☐ B. Staying ahead or getting away.
- ☐ C. Becoming invisible until it passes.
- ☐ D. Keeping everyone pleased with me.

YOUR PATTERN

Score without putting yourself in a box

Count your A, B, C, and D answers. Enter each total below.

A	B	C	D
FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE	FAWN

Highest score = your most common response

Second-highest = your likely backup response

IF YOU TIED

Ask: Which response appears when the relationship matters most? Which one happens before the others? Example: you may freeze first, then fawn once you can speak. That sequence is more useful than forcing one label.

Your one-line pattern map

When I notice...

my body tends to...

because it may be trying to protect me from...

What your score cannot tell you

It cannot diagnose trauma, explain every reaction, or decide who you are. It can give you a starting point: a pattern to notice one beat earlier next time.

Fight and Flight

Read your highest result first, then your second-highest if you have one.

Mostly A: Fight

THE GUARDIAN

Your system tries to create safety by adding power: stronger words, tighter control, faster correction. Anger may be the armor; underneath it may be hurt, fear, shame, or powerlessness.

EARLY BODY CLUES

Jaw or fists tighten; heat rises; voice speeds up; chest leans forward.

PROTECTIVE JOB

Protect dignity, choice, respect, or control.

60-SECOND BRIDGE

Press both feet down. Exhale as if cooling soup. Say: 'I can pause without giving up my voice.' Ask for ten minutes before continuing.

NEXT 72 HOURS

Notice the first body clue once. Practice one calm boundary sentence before you need it.

Mostly B: Flight

THE ESCAPE ARTIST

Your system creates safety through distance or motion. You may leave physically, disappear emotionally, or stay so busy that feelings cannot catch you. Productivity can become a very polite hiding place.

EARLY BODY CLUES

Restless legs; shallow breath; racing thoughts; urge to clean, scroll, plan, or leave.

PROTECTIVE JOB

Protect freedom, space, competence, or escape from conflict.

60-SECOND BRIDGE

Stop moving for one minute. Name five blue or green things. Say: 'I do not have to solve everything while activated.' Choose one small next step.

NEXT 72 HOURS

Schedule one five-minute "no fixing" pause. Let one feeling exist without turning it into a task.

Freeze and Fawn

These responses can be quiet, but quiet does not mean weak or unimportant.

Mostly C: Freeze

THE HIDER

Your system protects you by turning down movement, words, or feeling. It is like a computer entering power-save mode when too many programs are open. You are not choosing laziness; your capacity may feel temporarily offline.

EARLY BODY CLUES	Heavy limbs; blank mind; faraway feeling; collapsed posture; sudden sleepiness.
PROTECTIVE JOB	Protect from overwhelm, exposure, helplessness, or making the “wrong” move.
60-SECOND BRIDGE	Look around and name the date and place. Press palms together. Wiggle toes. Say: 'I am here, and slow movement still counts.' Take one tiny physical action.
NEXT 72 HOURS	Prepare a sentence for conflict: “I care about this, and I need time to find my words.”

Mostly D: Fawn

THE PEACEKEEPER

Your system tries to stay connected by becoming easy to approve of. You may read the room so closely that you stop reading yourself. Kindness is a strength; self-erasure is the cost we want to reduce.

EARLY BODY CLUES	Automatic smile; quick apology; tight stomach; checking faces; instant “yes.”
PROTECTIVE JOB	Protect belonging, approval, connection, or freedom from someone’s disappointment.
60-SECOND BRIDGE	Do not answer yet. Ask: 'What do I feel, need, and have capacity for?' Say: 'Let me check and get back to you.' A pause is a boundary with training wheels.
NEXT 72 HOURS	Delay one non-urgent yes by ten minutes. Write your true preference before replying.

Your Trigger-to-Truth reflection

Use one recent moment. Choose something uncomfortable, not the most painful event of your life.

1. What happened - only what a camera could record?

2. What meaning did my alarm system add?

3. What happened in my body before I reacted?

4. What was my response trying to protect?

5. What did I actually need: space, reassurance, respect, choice, rest, clarity, or support?

6. What is one response that protects me without abandoning me?

THE TWO-TRUTH PRACTICE

Try holding both: 'My reaction makes sense in light of what I learned' AND 'I am allowed to practice a response that fits my life now.' Compassion explains the pattern; it does not excuse harm or remove responsibility.

YOUR NEXT STEP

A personal 72-hour grounding plan

Tiny practice beats perfect understanding. Pick one action small enough to repeat.

My primary response:

My backup response:

My earliest body clue:

The phrase I will use:

The person/place that helps me feel steady:

☐ Practice my matched 60-second bridge once while calm.

☐ Delay one automatic reaction by ten seconds.

☐ Complete one Trigger-to-Truth reflection.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO GO DEEPER

Knowing your response is the first step. The From Triggered to Grounded Toolkit helps you identify what activates it, regulate your body in the moment, and build a personalized plan for responding differently - before, during, and after a trigger.

You are not trying to become a person who never gets triggered.

You are becoming a person who can notice, support, and choose.

[CONTINUE WITH THE FULL TOOLKIT](#)

Expert-informed foundation

Original educational synthesis informed by Pete Walker's 4F framework; Peter Levine's body-based survival-response work; Janina Fisher's non-shaming trauma education; Stephen Porges and Deb Dana's nervous-system perspectives; and Marsha Linehan's mindfulness, distress-tolerance, and emotion-regulation skills. No endorsement is implied.

Educational only; not a validated assessment, diagnosis, or substitute for mental-health care. If reactions cause significant distress, feel unsafe, or interfere with daily life, contact a licensed professional or appropriate crisis support.