

HUMAN WAYS OF BEING

Humans show up in the world (e.g., feel, think, react, respond, regulate) in two very broad ways - by being “*just right*” with a situation or experiencing a “flooding” within their bodies and brains. These broad ways of being are generally termed behavioral states, where the brain and body’s systems respond to sensory input and determine the most adaptive response. These two broad states can be further explained as, the Ready State, the Fight or Flight State (Reactive State), and the Freeze or Faint State (Reactive State).

These behavioral states are determined below the threshold of awareness. Meaning, rarely does a human consciously decide which *state* to be in. Humans automatically respond based upon input from the world around them, paired with their previous experiences and their general temperament.

The good news is we can influence the state we show up in and the state the staff, families, and students we support show up in. Specifically, we can work to extend time spent in the ready state, positive emotional attractor. Lastly, we can aim to bring folks back into the ready state by offering lifelines.

Each of the general behavior states are briefly described next.



THE READY STATE GENERALLY MEANS THE PERSON IS OPEN AND PREPARED TO LEARN NEW THINGS, TO ADAPT TO THE SITUATION AT HAND, TO INTERACT WELL WITH OTHERS, AND TO TAKE ACTION. IT IS A WAY OF BEING THAT FEELS BALANCED AND COMFORTABLE - IT’S “JUST RIGHT” FOR THE INDIVIDUAL.

WHEN SOMEONE IS IN THE “READY STATE” WE SEE:

Assertiveness
Body awareness
Calm
Collected
Comfortable
Compassionate

Connected
Cool
Creative
Curious
Empathetic
Engaged

Excited
Flexible Thinking
Happy
In the Present
Joy
Learning

Open
Peaceful
Regulated
Safe
Willing

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THE REACTIVE “FIGHT OR FLIGHT” STATE MEANS WHATEVER IS HAPPENING IS OVER-WHELMING TO THE SYSTEM. THE PERSON IS FLOODED WITH FEAR AND THEIR BODY/BRAIN RESPONDS BY TRYING TO ESCAPE OR BECOMING DEFIANT. IT IS A WAY OF BEING THAT OFTEN LOOKS LIKE “TOO MUCH” OF A REACTION.

WHEN SOMEONE IS IN THE REACTIVE “FIGHT OR FLIGHT STATE” WE SEE:

Aggression
Anger
Anxiety
Chaos
Compulsive

Concern
Fear
Frustration
Highly restricted
Hyper vigilant

Impulsive
Irritation
Obsessive
Out of control
Over the top

Overwhelmed
Panic
Rigid
Worry



THE REACTIVE “FREEZE OR FAINT” STATE MEANS WHATEVER IS HAPPENING IS SHUTTING DOWN THE SYSTEM. THE PERSON BECOMES UNABLE TO TAKE ACTION, IS UNSURE OF WHAT TO DO, AND THEIR BODY/BRAIN IS RESPONDING BY SLOWING DOWN OR DISASSOCIATING. IT IS A WAY OF BEING THAT OFTEN LOOKS LIKE “TOO LITTLE” OF A REACTION.

WHAT SOMEONE IS IN THE REACTIVE “FREEZE OR FAINT STATE” WE SEE:

Confusion
Depression
Despair
Disconnected
Dissociation

Exhaustion
Flat emotions
Helpless
Hopeless
Memory loss

Not present
Numb
Trapped
Shameful
Shut down

Spacy
Stuck
Withdrawn
Zoned out