

Fight, Flight, Freeze and Fawn



SUPPORT • NAVIGATE • THRIVE

Parenting
PANDAS

Understanding the Nervous System



When children feel safe, their thinking brain stays online.

When they feel threatened, overwhelmed or overloaded,
their survival brain takes over.

This isn't a choice.

It's biology.



The nervous system has one job:



Keep us safe.

Sometimes it gets it right.

Sometimes it sounds the alarm even when there isn't real
danger.



For many autistic and PDA children, this alarm system is
much more sensitive.



Fight

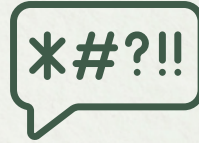


Fight isn't always physical aggression.

It can look like:



- Arguing
- Shouting
- Swearing
- Throwing things
- Hitting
- Controlling others
- Saying "No!"
- Becoming explosive



Underneath:

"I'm overwhelmed."

"I don't feel safe."





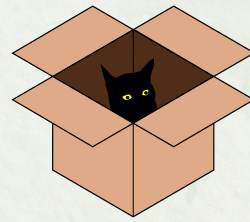
Flight



Children may:



- Run away
- Hide
- Leave the room



- Refuse
- Avoid tasks



- Change the subject
- Escape demands



Underneath:

"I need to get away."



Freeze



Children may:



- Go silent
- Be unable to answer
- Look blank
- Shut down
- Stop moving

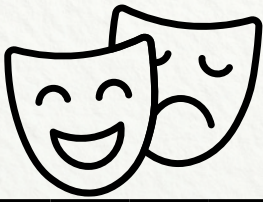


- Seem to ignore you



Underneath:

"My brain has
stopped working."



Fawn



Often misunderstood.

Looks like:



- Constant people pleasing
- Agreeing to everything
- Masking
- Never saying no
- Trying to keep everyone



happy



Underneath:

"If everyone is
happy, maybe I'll
stay safe."

What Helps?



Rather than asking children to "calm down"...

Help them feel safe enough to calm.

Examples include:

- ✓ Lowering your voice
- ✓ Reducing demands
- ✓ Giving space
- ✓ Offering choices
- ✓ Validating feelings
- ✓ Reducing sensory input
- ✓ Staying alongside them

Remember

A dysregulated child is not giving you a
hard time.

They're having a hard time.



Key Takeaways



Survival responses are automatic.



Behaviour isn't a choice in moments of overwhelm.



Safety comes before learning.



Regulation comes before reasoning.

Remember...

You know your child best.

Trust your instincts.

You are doing an
incredible job.



With Love and Support,

Becky

Parenting Pandas UK

