



## What is anxiety?

### The Threat System (Fight or Flight)

The threat systems gets our mind and body ready to fight or run away (and sometimes freeze) in a risky situation. Once a threat is detected (actual or thoughts), your brain and body responds automatically.

All of the changes happen to get you out of a risky situation. The responses can feel uncomfortable when they happen in a 'safe' situation.

Your anxious thoughts can trigger your brain and body to respond. If you can work through your anxious thoughts with a professional, you can decrease the anxious response.

**Thoughts racing** - helps us to evaluate a threat quickly and make rapid decisions. This can make it hard to focus on anything other than the anxious thoughts (perceived threat)

**Changes to vision** - tunnel vision can help us see in more detail so that we can focus on our escape/fight response.

**Breathing becomes quicker and shallower** - this is to make more oxygen so that we can fuel our body to fight/flight.

**Dizzy or lightheaded** - this is because our breathing has become quicker and shallower.

**Dry mouth** - due to breath

**Heart beats faster** - breathing increases heart rate and enhances ability to fight/flight

**Adrenaline rush** - Adrenal glands release adrenaline which signals other organs to get ready to responds

**Sweat** - Body becomes sweaty to keep cool so that the body is more efficient

**Cold hands/feet** - Blood vessels in the skin contract to force blood towards major muscle groups

**Muscles tense** - ready to fight or run away, this may cause shaking or trembling