Anxiety triggers something called the “fight-flight-freeze” response (F3). This automatic response affects our thoughts, body, and behaviors. When faced with a potential threat, your thoughts focus on the danger, your body revs up to help protect you, and you take action (fight, flight, or freeze).  For example, imagine that you’re out walking your dog and a skunk pops out of the bushes. You have thoughts about the skunk such as “What if it sprays us?” which helps you identify the potential danger. Your body also reacts (heart beats faster, muscle tense up) to help you get prepared to protect yourself.  And, you take action, such as remaining very still and hoping the skunk doesn’t notice you (freeze) or running away (flight).  As you can see, anxiety protects you.  In fact, without it, we’d be extinct!

The F3 system is critical to our survival from true threat or danger, but what happens when there is no real danger? Interestingly, anxiety can also trigger this system into action when we believe there is a threat or danger even if there isn’t. For example, you may yell at your mum for bugging you about taking your driving test when you don’t feel ready (fight). Or you may call your dad to pick you up early from a new activity because you don’t feel comfortable around unfamiliar people (flight). Or, you may feel as though your mind goes blank when the teacher asks you a question (freeze). These are examples of anxiety triggering the F3 alarm even though these situations are not really dangerous. We call this a “false alarm.”

Although anxiety protects us in the face of real danger, it can become a problem when it…

* Goes off when there is no **real** or immediate danger (e.g., like a smoke alarm that goes off when you’re just making toast)
* Happens a lot
* Feels pretty intense
* Is upsetting and causes you distress
* Stops you from doing fun and important things (e.g., like going to school dances or parties, making friends or dating, getting your homework done, or getting a job or your driver’s license)

FIGHT-FLIGHT-FREEZE – ANXIETY EXPLAINED FOR TEENS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\_continue=10&v=rpolpKTWrp4&feature=emb\_logo