

# De-Escalation Workshop

***With Adriana Li & Mike Perry  
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# Many people have reported these changes to their perceptions while in “fight” or “flight.”

- **Time distortion:** Most report time slowing down, some report a speed up.
- **Visual distortion:** Objects and people appear much larger and closer than they actually are.
- **Tunnel vision:** Loss of peripheral vision, replaced by a hyper focus on the threat.
- **Auditory exclusion:** Temporary loss of hearing during high stress.

# Signs that someone may be in fight or flight response

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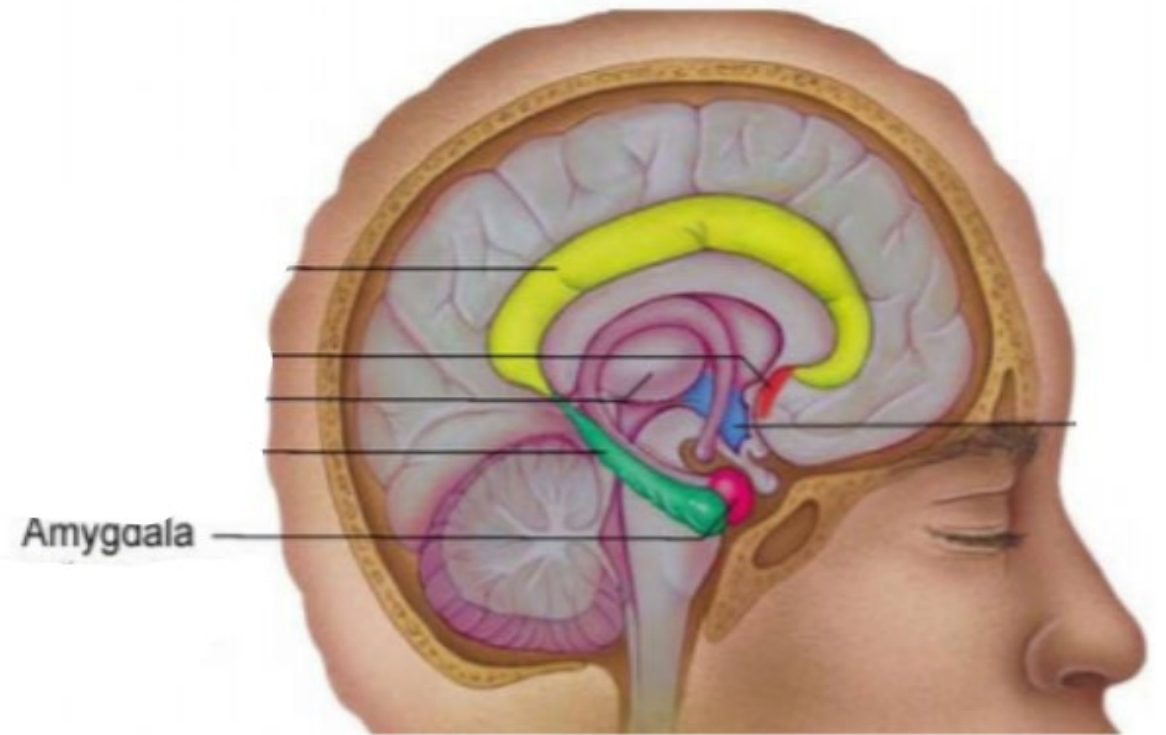
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- Dilated pupils
- Pale or flushed skin
- Rapid breathing
- Trembling

After the threat is gone, it typically takes between 20-60 minutes for the body to return to its normal state.

# “Amygdala hijack” — *Emotional Intelligence, 1995*

- ▶ Amygdala: part of the brain that senses threat
- ▶ Responds to threats faster than the cerebral cortex.
- ▶ In “fight” or “flight” -- *the instinctive part of the brain is running the show until the rational part of the brain catches up.*



# Othering

- Reframing the person we are in conflict with as less than us
- Makes it easier to say or do things that we would not do to a respected equal
- When we start thinking this way, we are moving closer to inappropriate violence or hostility

# Acting scary when feeling scared

- Showing willingness to be violent and not afraid of the other person.
- Intended to *stop* violence, and it works sometimes
- If the other person is using the same strategy, a situation could escalate to serious violence
- Other person may use self-defense because they feel threatened, resulting in serious violence
- If the situation goes violent it will be hard to claim self-defense in a legal proceeding



# Replacing Fear with Anger

- Fear often makes us feel powerless
- Overriding fear with anger can give us a sense of power
- Anger can give us a sense of false justification to cause harm

When anger is driving the car, it leads us down the road to greater calamity.

# De-escalation Mindset

**Think** *“I am interacting with a scared, aggravated, or confused person who is having a bad day.”*

**...instead of** *“Now I have to deal with this jerk!”*



# Strategic Positioning & Body Language

- ▶ Safe distance & angle
- ▶ Use obstacles and barriers
- ▶ Clear escape route
- ▶ Avoid body language that could be read as aggressive, threatening, disrespectful or submissive



# Emotional Warning Signs for Escalating Violence

- ▶ Othering Language
- ▶ Threatening tone of voice
- ▶ Threatening body posture: chin thrust out, puffed up chest
- ▶ Hitting or throwing objects
- ▶ Striking their own body
- ▶ Verbal threats



# Physical Warning Signs for Escalating Violence

- ▶ Repositioning or taking off hat, glasses or jacket, moving hair, moving valuables
- ▶ Reaching in pockets or lifting shirt (reaching for weapon)
- ▶ Getting close enough so they can strike the other person without taking a step
- ▶ Tucked chin, muscle tension
- ▶ More protected body position, waiting for opportunity to strike the other person
- ▶ Decrease in talking or not talking
- ▶ Hyper-focus on the other person



# Common threat posturing vs. Attack positioning

Threat posturing vs. Threat posturing



Threat posturing vs. Attack positioning



## QUESTIONS? CONNECT WITH US!

To inquire about more classes & private workshops, please contact

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<http://impactboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Support-Resources-Services.pdf>

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