



TAMING YOUR BEAST

05

The Management of Emotions

Copyright (C) 2004 by Russell D. Fry

Imagine that you are sitting in a jeep on a muddy road. You are surrounded by a lush green jungle. There are plants and trees of all kinds. It is hot and steamy. Your friend is in the jungle and while you are waiting the only sounds you hear come from the birds as they busily call to each other. You feel a faint tremor and wonder if it is an earthquake, though it felt too mild. Another tremor shortly follows. The call of the birds is replaced by the rush of wings as they take flight and darken the sky. The tremors continue. They are too regular to be after-shocks. You hear a distant rustling sound and then a snap. The tremors feel stronger. You feel the snaps now as well as hear them. The noises grow louder. The cracking sounds vaguely remind you of something breaking. "My god", you think, "something is snapping the trees and it's coming this way."

Just then you hear your friend's voice screaming out in terror. "Get out of here. Get out of here." Over and over again, "Get out of here."

Your heart begins to pound out of your chest. "My god, what's going on? What should I do?"

"Get out of here. It's coming after me. Get out of here."

You start the jeep just as your friend jumps out onto the road behind you. Suddenly you hear a terrible screeching sound. It is so frightening that you freeze. "My god what was that?"

Your friend screams, "Help me, please help me."

You put the jeep in reverse and it jumps backward and dies. As you fumble with the keys, your friend leaps into the back of the jeep. "Get out of here. It's right behind me."

You look in the mirror only to see it filled with the huge head of some terrible beast sticking out from the tops of the trees. It is gray and savage looking. It turns its head sideways and aims a single eye at you. Another screech. Its mouth is full of dagger-like teeth. You restart the jeep and speed off. It Screeches again and comes after you.

What emotions do
you think they were feeling?

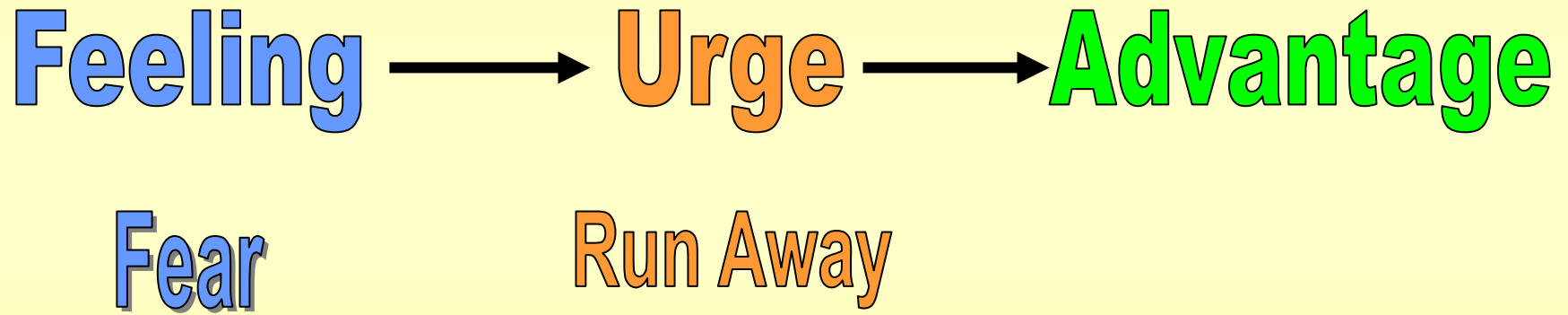
Feeling

What did that fear urge them to do?

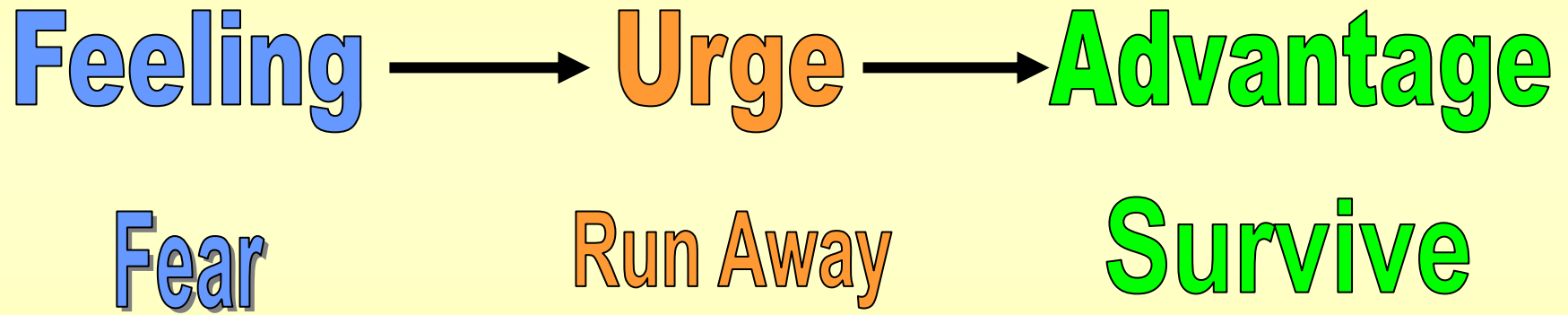
Feeling → Urge

Fear

What is the advantage of running away if a dinosaur is chasing you?



An emotion is a feeling inside of us that urges us to act in a way that nature has selected to be in our (immediate) best interest.





Write the number 1 on a piece of paper and then write down 25 emotions.



If it feels bad -- Avoid it

Pain and Frustration

Move Away From Pain



One idea that helps explain why people do what they do is that they tend to act in ways that they believe lead to pleasure and that avoid pain. They seek out and do things that they have found will make them feel good or seek out and do things that will free them from things that they have found will make them feel bad.



Move Toward Pleasure

Pleasure and Relief

If it feels good -- Try to do it again

If it feels bad -- Avoid it

Pain and Frustration

Move Away From Pain



On your piece of paper, write a plus sign (+) behind each emotion that makes you feel good and a minus sign (-) behind each emotion that makes you feel bad.



Move Toward Pleasure

Pleasure and Relief

If it feels good -- Try to do it again

Fight or Flight



Autonomic Nervous
System

Sympathetic System

Fight ← THREAT → Flight

When something happens or is about to happen that we believe is going to hurt us in some way, our bodies instinctively respond with what is called the "fight or flight" response.

Fight or Flight



The fight or flight response is a way nature helps us deal with threats. We either force the source of the threat to stop or we run away from from it.



Fight or Flight



The fight or flight response gears the body up to deal with threats.



Fight or Flight



1. Heart beats faster.

One of the first things that happen you you feel threatened is that your heart starts to beat faster. You muscles need fuel and oxygen to work and that is supplied by you blood. If you are going to run or fight, your muscles are going to have to work at their best, so your heart automatically beats faster to pump more blood to your muscles. It is all part of the fight or flight response.

Fight or Flight



1. Heart beats faster.
2. Breathing becomes faster.

If you are going to fight or run away, your muscles are going to need oxygen. Oxygen helps your muscles get more miles to the gallon, so to speak. So, your lungs begin to work faster so you have more endurance and don't poop out during a life and death struggle.

Fight or Flight



- 1. Heart beats faster.**
- 2. Breathing becomes faster.**
- 3. Begin to sweat.**

Another things that happens is that you begin to sweat. If you are going to fight, if you are going to run, your muscles will produce heat and sweat helps get rid of the extra heat. If you have ever been nervous, the palms of your hands get sweaty and sweat breaks out on your forehead. It's all happens automatically as part of the fight or flight response.

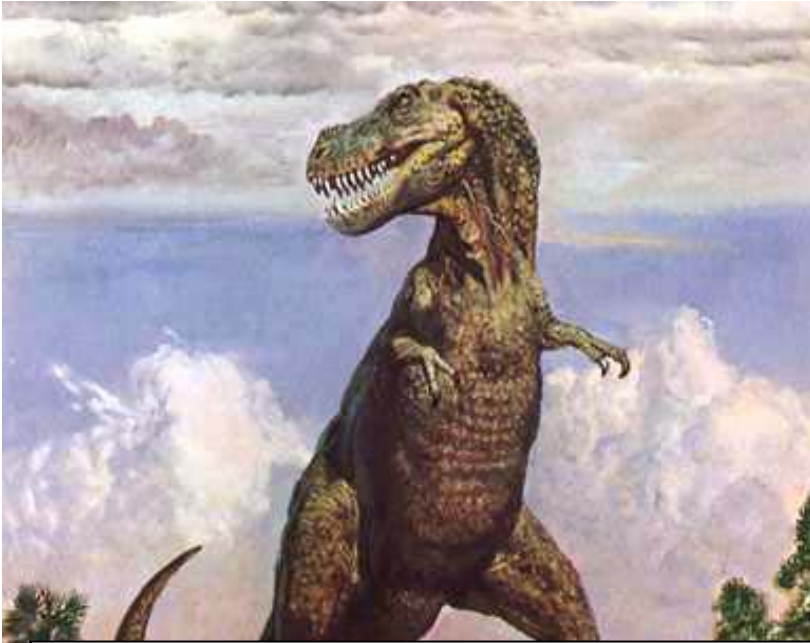
Fight or Flight



- 1. Heart beats faster.**
- 2. Breathing becomes faster.**
- 3. Begin to sweat.**
- 4. Blood is shunted to muscles.**

Blood is shunted to the muscles and away from parts of the body that are not crucial to running or fighting. You can digest your lunch later, but now you have to fight. The blood vessels to the muscles open bigger while they narrow to unnecessary organs, like the digestive system - directing the blood to where it will be needed. This is why we feel butterflies in our stomachs and our mouth becomes dry when we become excited.

Fight or Flight



- 1. Heart beats faster.**
- 2. Breathing becomes faster.**
- 3. Begin to sweat.**
- 4. Blood is shunted to muscles.**
- 5. Adrenaline is released.**

Adrenaline is nature's own methamphetamines. When it is released into the blood it stimulates the brain and senses so that we can respond keener to situations as they develop. Adrenalin also tells the liver to release sugar into the blood stream for extra fuel. It also tells fat cells to release fat as extra fuel. This is why we feel excited when something threatening is going on. It's all part of getting us ready to fight or take flight.

Fight or Flight



Endorphins are released into the body. Endorphins are nature's own morphine like pain killers. If you are going to run or fight, you are going to experience pain. Endorphins are released to kill the pain before it even occurs. It's nature's way of keeping you from giving up.

- 1. Heart beats faster.**
- 2. Breathing becomes faster.**
- 3. Begin to sweat.**
- 4. Blood is shunted to muscles.**
- 5. Adrenaline is released.**
- 6. Endorphins are released.**

Fight or Flight



Finally, our muscles tense. This is believe to happen for a few reasons. One is that it braces you for an attack. Another is that when your muscles are tense, you stand up straighter and as a result look bigger and more threatening to whatever is threatening you. And tight muscles make you muscles become armor to protect import stuff inside your body

- 1. Heart beats faster.**
- 2. Breathing becomes faster.**
- 3. Begin to sweat.**
- 4. Blood is shunted to muscles.**
- 5. Adrenaline is released.**
- 6. Endorphins are released.**
- 7. We tense up.**

We have already discussed that there are two main strategies associated with threatening situations.



In addition to taking flight or fighting, there are two other strategies for dealing with threatening situations

If we want to do something about a threat, but cannot decide what to do, we run it around in our head, ruminate on the problem. It's nature's way of keeping us on task until we decide to do something.

Indecision



If we want to do something about a threat, but cannot decide what to do, we run it around in our head, ruminate on the problem. It's nature's way of keeping us on task until we decide to do something.

Indecision

Fight

THREAT

Flight

Surrender

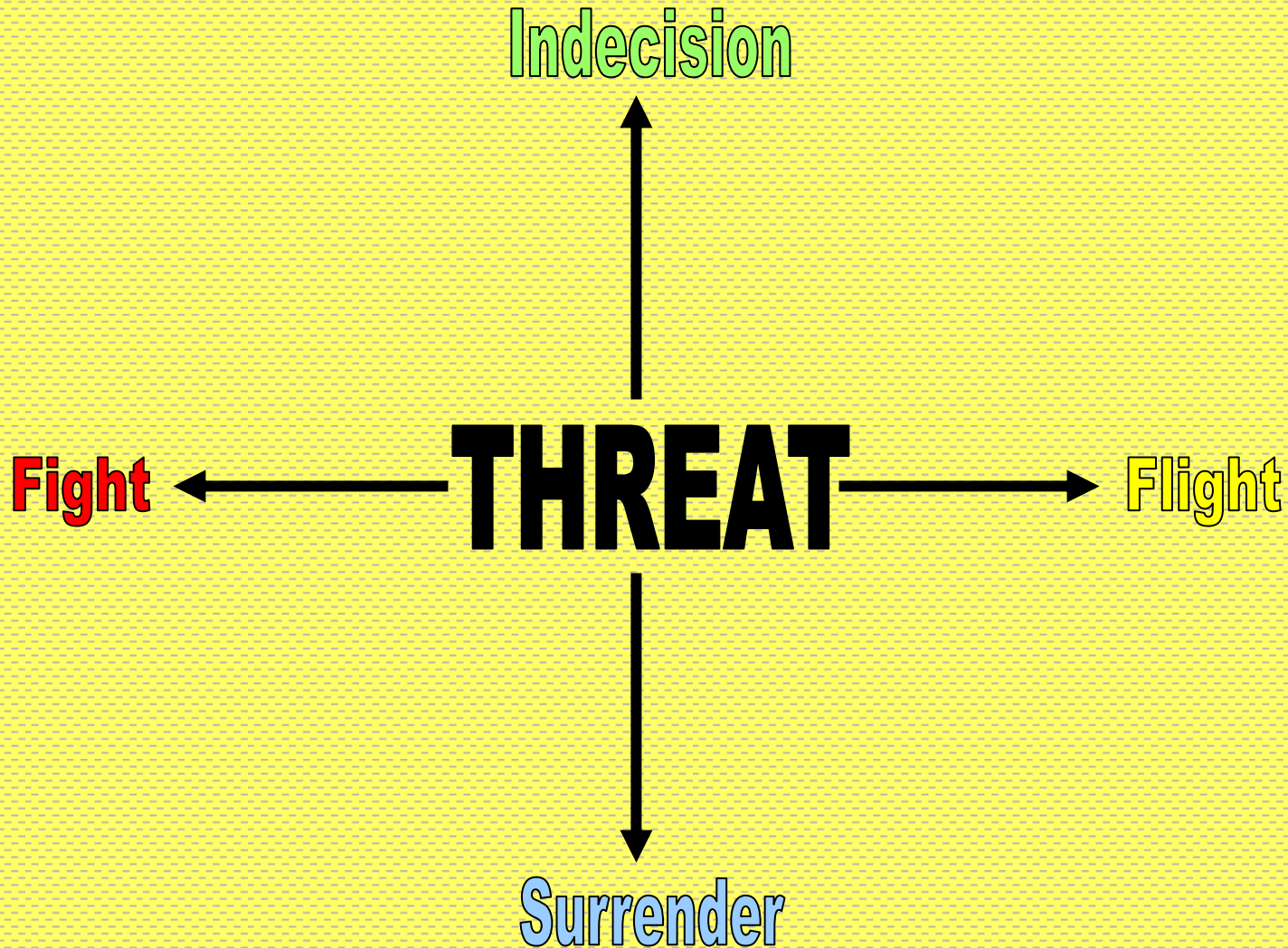
Also, if we think that nothing can eliminate the threat, we surrender and do nothing. Sometimes struggling makes things worse, so it is better to not fight back and to go off and lick our wounds. Our body language signals to our family and friends that we need help and they often to our aid.

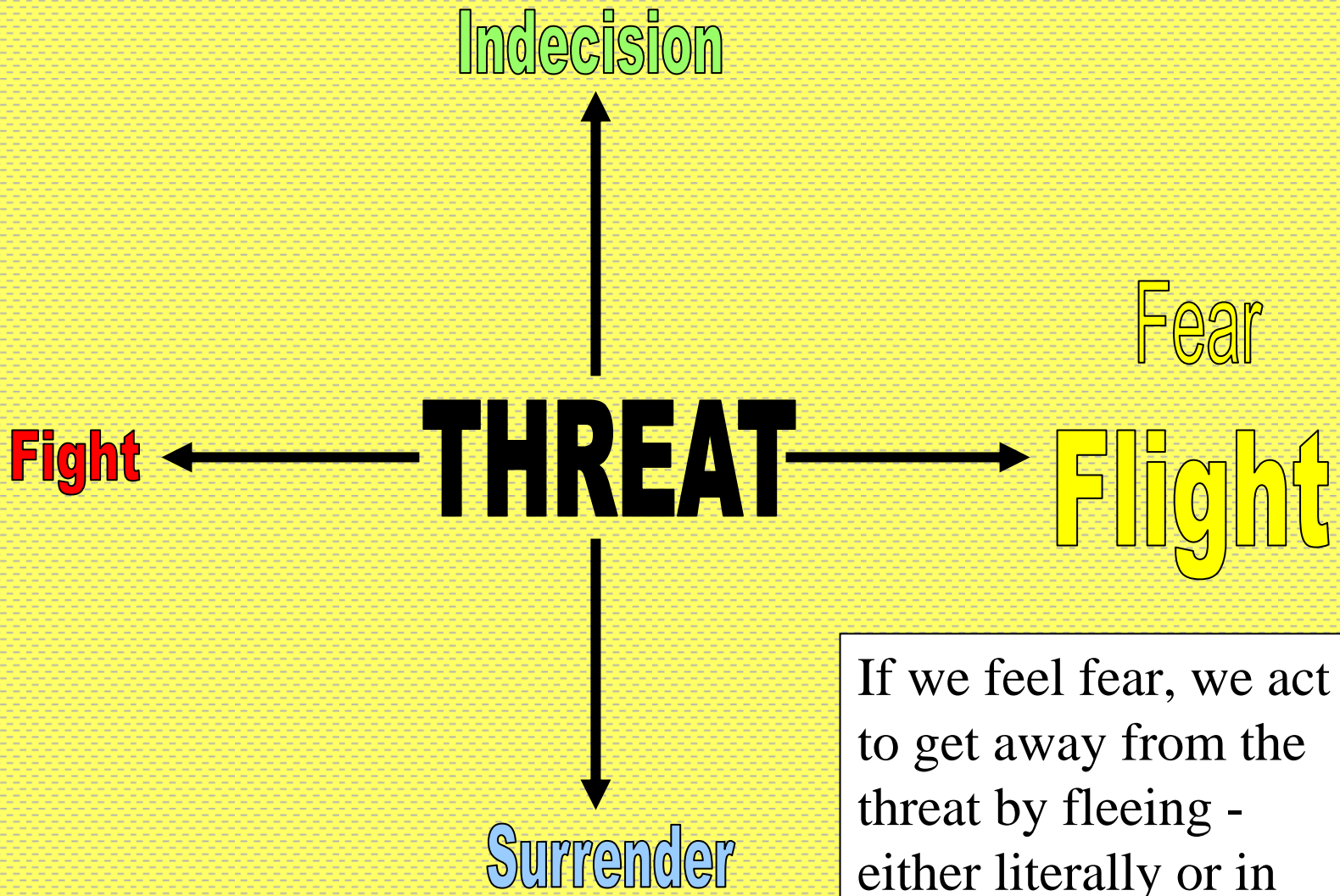
Disrespect, Rude or Frustration



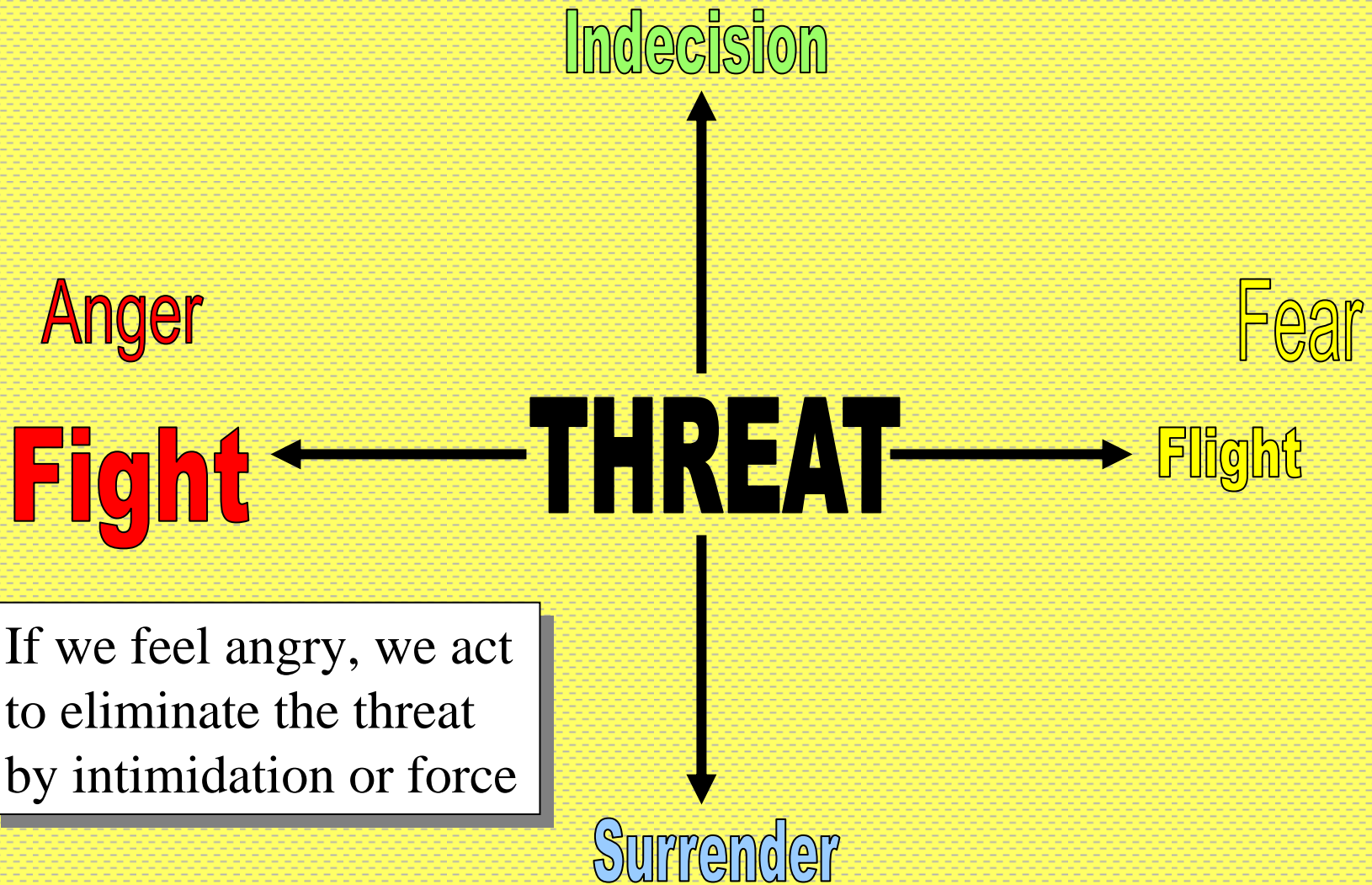
While there aren't any dinosaurs any more, anytime someone is rude, insults you, treats you unjustly, is demeaning or frustrates you (intentionally or unintentionally) all of the fight or flight responses are triggered. This is the cause of much of the stress we experience in every day life.

There are emotions associated with these behaviors





If we feel fear, we act to get away from the threat by fleeing - either literally or in our heads



When we don't know what to do about a threat, we feel worried and freeze.

Worry
Indecision

Worry urges us to figure out what to do. It bugs us to stay on task.

Anger

Fear

Fight

THREAT

Flight

Surrender

Worry
Indecision

Anger

Fear

Fight

THREAT

Flight

If we think that nothing can eliminate the threat, we feel sadness and do nothing.

Surrender
Sadness

Sadness urges us pull back, to reflect on our problems and it can sometimes get others to help us..

Now get another piece of paper and make a chart like this on it. Then go through your list of emotions, pick out all the negative emotions and write them on your chart next to emotions to which they are most closely related. For example, rage would probably go next to anger and grief would probably go next to sadness.





If nature selected our emotions to help us out in life – why do we need to think about managing them?

Consider the following exchange between a husband and his wife:

"Where have you been? You were supposed to be home an hour ago."

"They had a sale on kid's cloths and I was just looking for some stuff for the baby."

"Who did you talk to?"

"No one. I was just shopping. That's all."

"I know how you are. Give me your car keys."

"No Ron, I need them. Please."

"Don't talk back to me you bitch."

"Oh god, please Ron. You promised. Please don't...."

"Whore. Who do you think you're fooling."

"Please don't hit me Ron. I was just shopping."

"You dirty slut. Ain't I good enough for you?"

"Oh please Ron. It was.... Oh god, stop. Please stop."

"I'll teach you, you bitch."

"Stop it. Please stop it...."

When she woke up the next morning there were a dozen roses beside her on the bed.

Write the number 2 on another piece of paper and then answer these questions:

Why did he bring her the flowers?

What emotion do you think he was experiencing when he was hitting her?

If he was angry, what might he have thought was a threat to him?

What advantage might hitting her offer him?

What disadvantage might that behavior cause him?

Do you think his behavior got him what he wanted - in the short run? Explain your answer.

Do you think his behavior will get him what he wants - in the long run? Explain your answer.



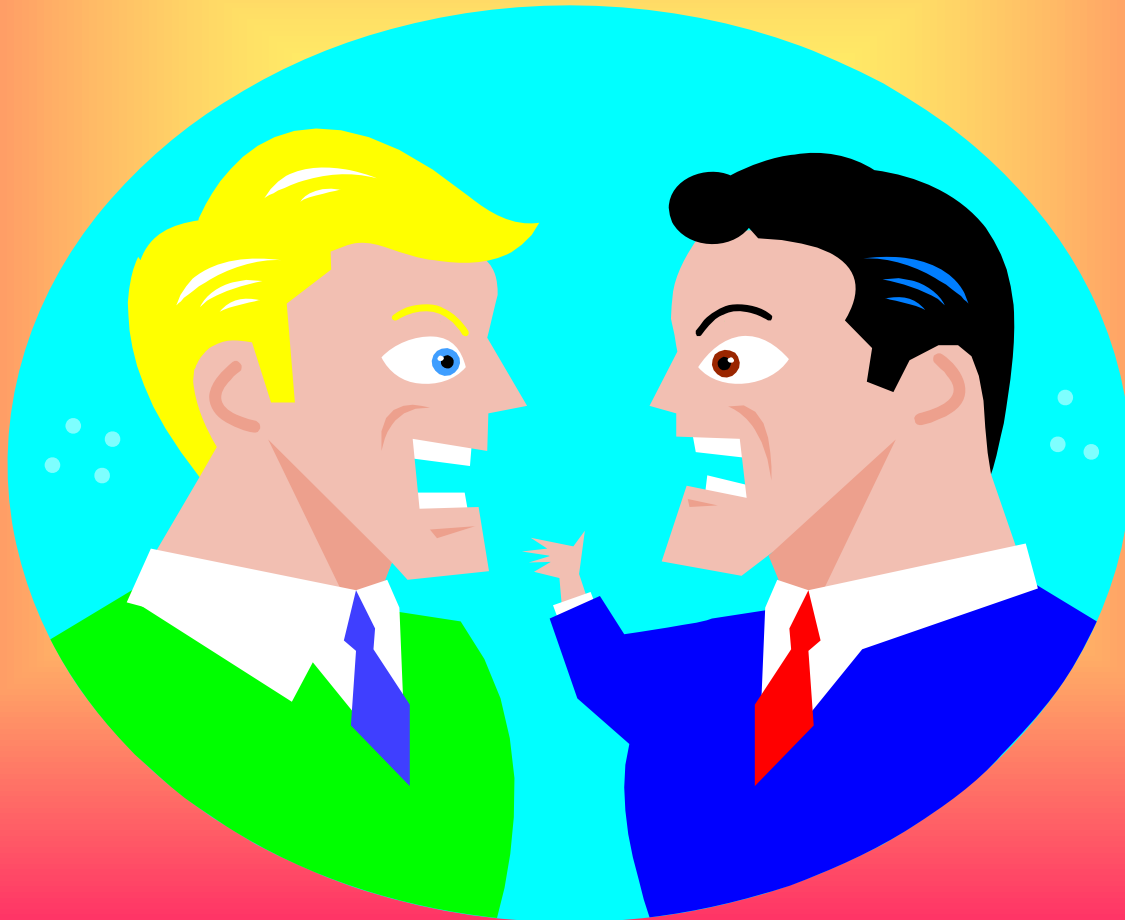
If you away from a dinosaur, you solved their problem. If you run away from a problem with your spouse, either literally by leaving the house or figuratively by not dealing with it, your problems are still there waiting for you.

If you killed the dinosaur, you solved their problem. If you hit your spouse, you've got more problems.



**Strong emotions (especially sadness,
anger, fear and anxiety) are not
very productive
in our modern world.**

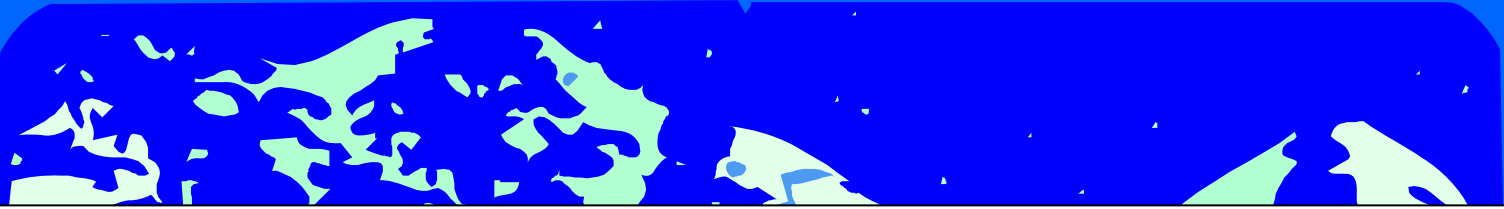
Think about a time when you experienced emotions so strong that you did something that you regretted later. Who were you with? What time was it? Was it day or night? Were you inside or out? Were you warm or cold? Were there any sounds in the background? Write the number 3 on your paper and then write a paragraph about that incident.



Emotions can cause us to do things we may regret. It would be better if we maintain some control over them. However, some people think that how you feel is how you feel and that emotions cannot be changed. Let me tell you a little story and we will see if we can answer that.



**I don't control
my emotions!**

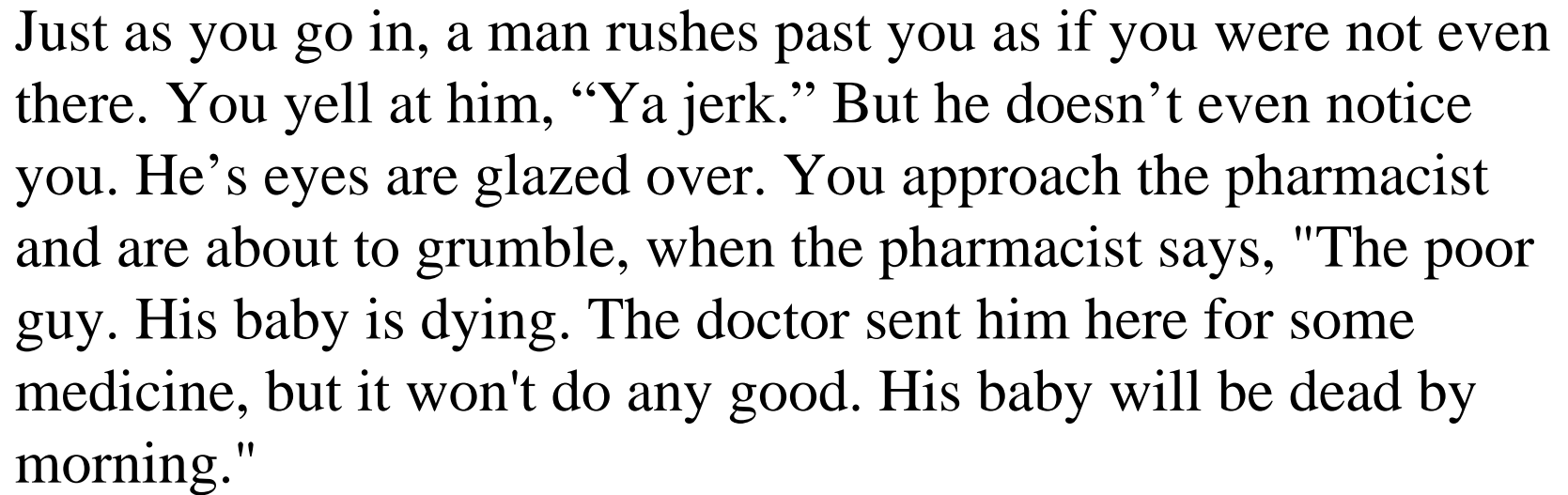


Imagine that it is a real cold winter's night. Well below zero. There was a huge snowstorm earlier in the day and much of the city is not yet dug out. You have already gotten in bed and are nice and warm. Your spouse tells you that one of the children is not feeling well and asks you to go to the pharmacy to get some medicine. You gripe a little, but you are a good parent and agree to go. You get up, put on your winter coat, gloves and stocking cap. As you go out the front door a blast of bitterly cold air hits you in the face. The car is very cold too, especially the seat.

When you arrive at the pharmacy, you see that only two parking places have been plowed out and that a single car is taking up both of them. You get out of your car and have to walk through knee high snowdrifts to get inside. Quickly, what are your thoughts about the guy who took up two parking places?



**I don't control
my emotions!**



Just as you go in, a man rushes past you as if you were not even there. You yell at him, “Ya jerk.” But he doesn’t even notice you. He’s eyes are glazed over. You approach the pharmacist and are about to grumble, when the pharmacist says, “The poor guy. His baby is dying. The doctor sent him here for some medicine, but it won't do any good. His baby will be dead by morning.”

What are your thoughts now? “Boy I’m a jerk. I wish I hadn’t said that.”

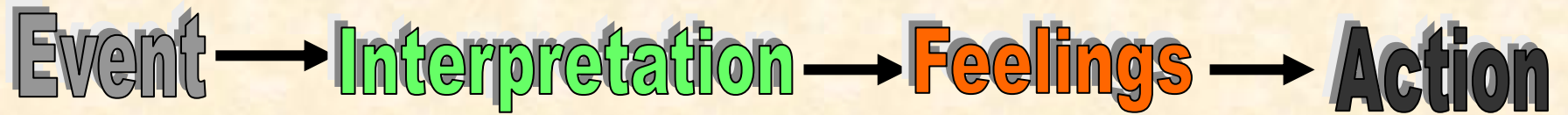
What will you likely think if you pull into a pharmacy at some later date and someone is hogging the parking spaces? “I’m keeping my mouth shut. I’m not making that mistake again.”

**I don't control
my emotions!**

When something happens we first tell ourselves what is going on, which in turn determines our emotions, which in turn directs our behavior. What you think, determines how you feel, which directs how you act.

When you thought that the guy who was hogging the parking spaces was a jerk, you had angry thoughts and did angry things. After you found out it was a terrible emergency, you felt overwhelming sorry for him and would have comforted him if you could have. The next time it happened you didn't jump to conclusions and felt calmer and more cautious.

Regardless of the response, it never the less was the same event each time. What made a difference in how you felt and acted was what you told yourself was going on.



**It was the same event each time.
What made a difference in how you
felt and what you did, was
what you told yourself.**



If you manage this

You will be
in control of
this

And this

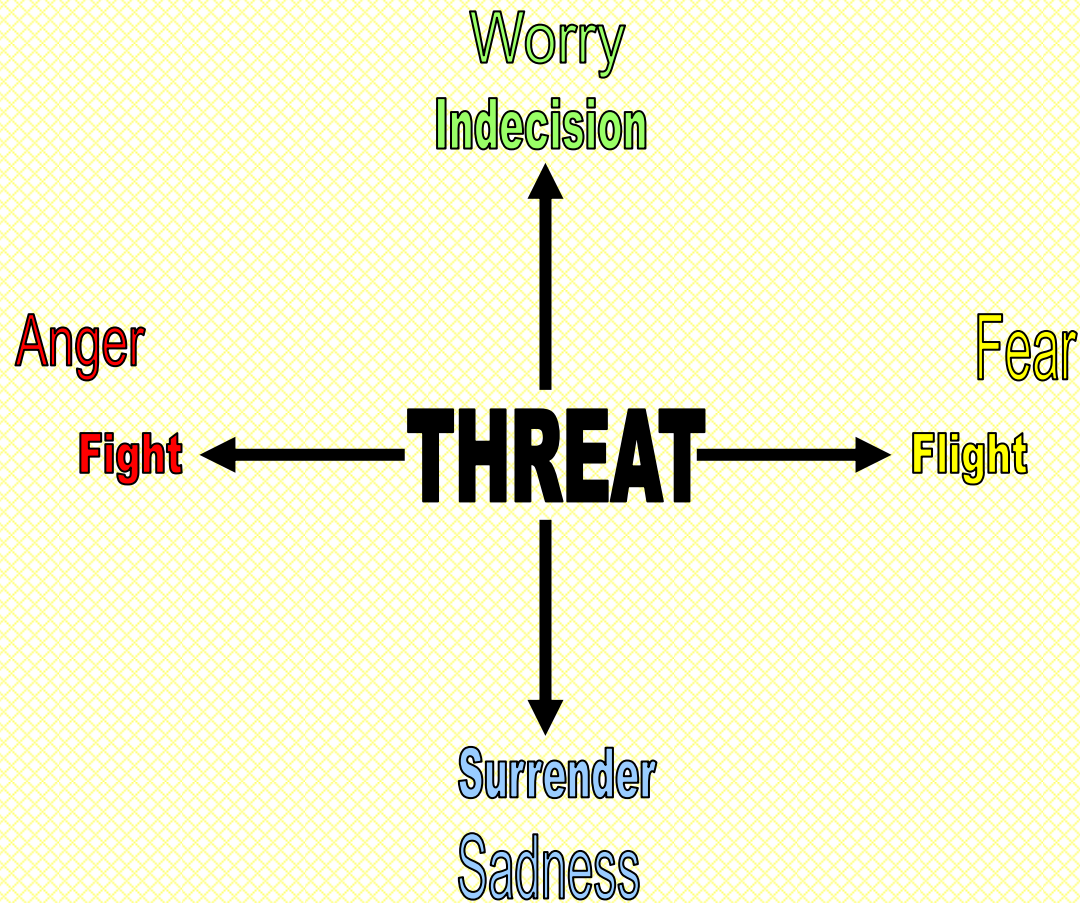
Is your INTERPRETATION:

Valid?

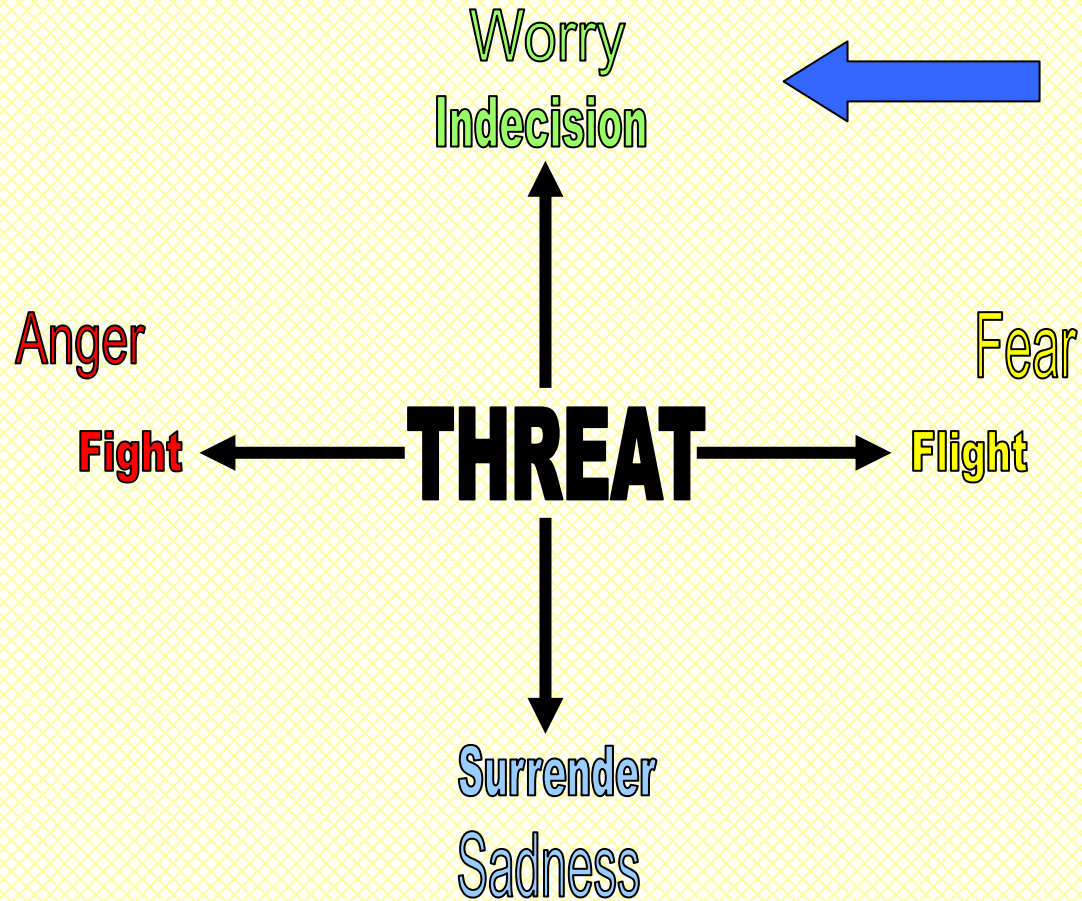
Useful?

It is our thoughts about events that determine how we feel and what we do, not the event. If you are in control of your thoughts, you will be in control of your feelings and what you do. We need to ask our selves “is what I am thinking valid? Do I really know what is going on?” And, “is it useful for me to feel and act the way I feel?” If it is not useful, then you should not act that way. We do not have to act the way we feel.

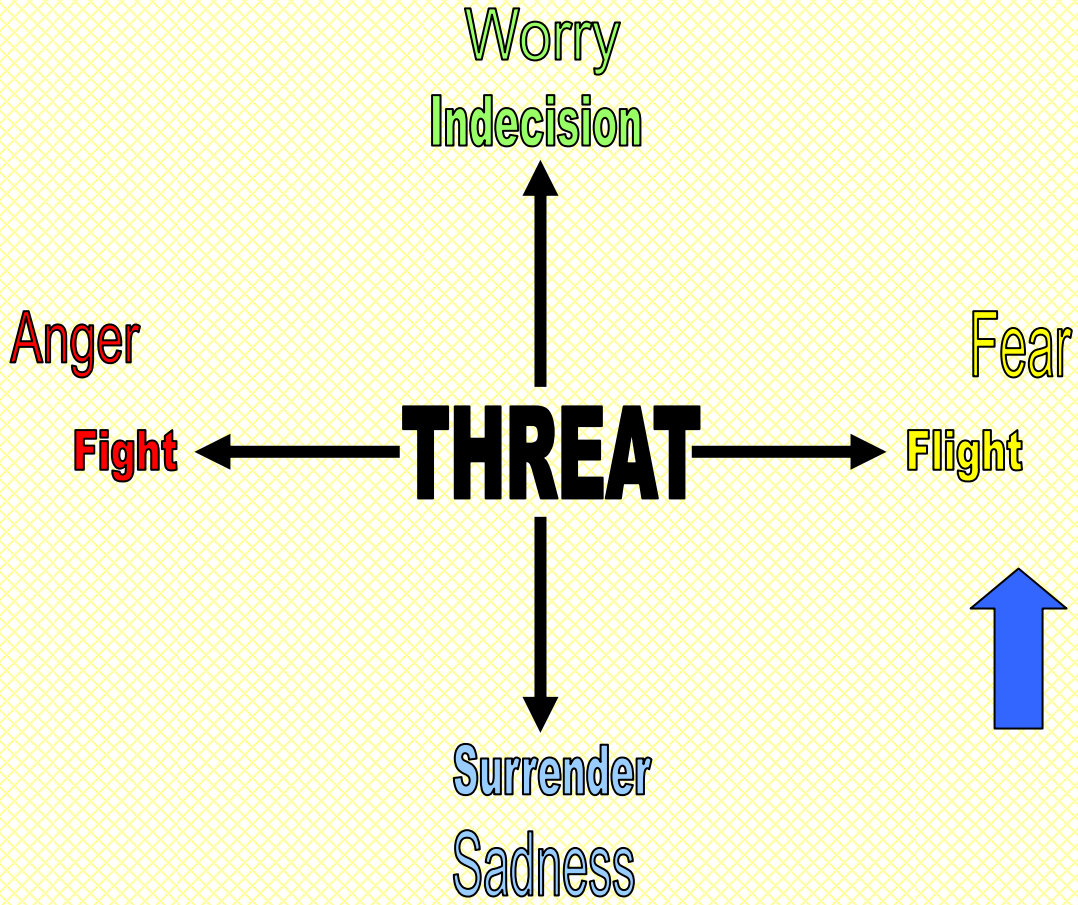
There are thoughts associated with these emotions.



“I can’t stand this. Oh!
What should I do?”



*“I can’t stand this. Oh!
What should I do?”*



*“I can’t take
this. I’ve got
to get away.”*

“I can’t stand this. Oh!
What should I do?”



“This is awful and there’s
nothing I can do about it.”

“I can’t stand this. Oh!
What should I do?”

Worry
Indecision

Anger

Fight

THREAT

Flight

Fear

“I can’t take
this. I’ve got
to get away.”

Surrender

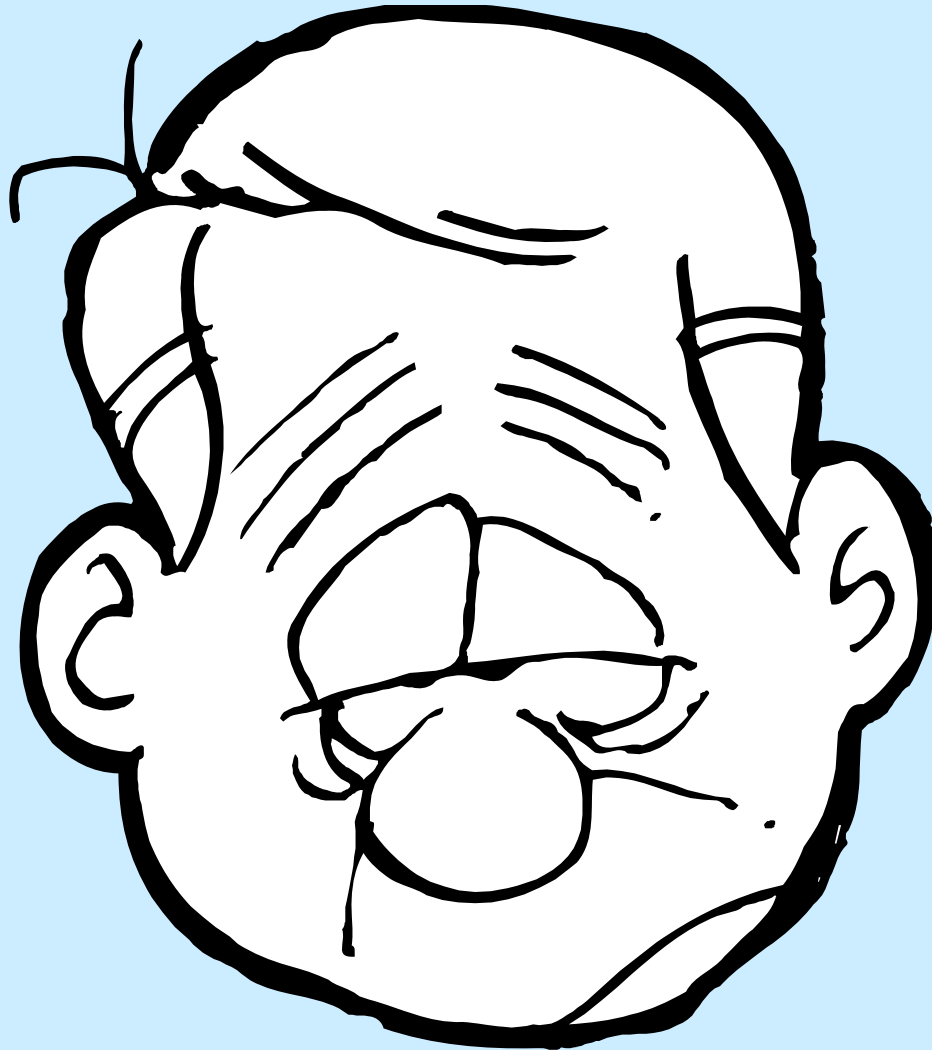
Sadness



“This is awful and there’s
nothing I can do about it.”

“He’s not
gonna
get away
with
that.”

AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS



These thoughts are often called automatic thoughts because they just flow. Often our actions just flow along with them, which may not always be in our best interest.



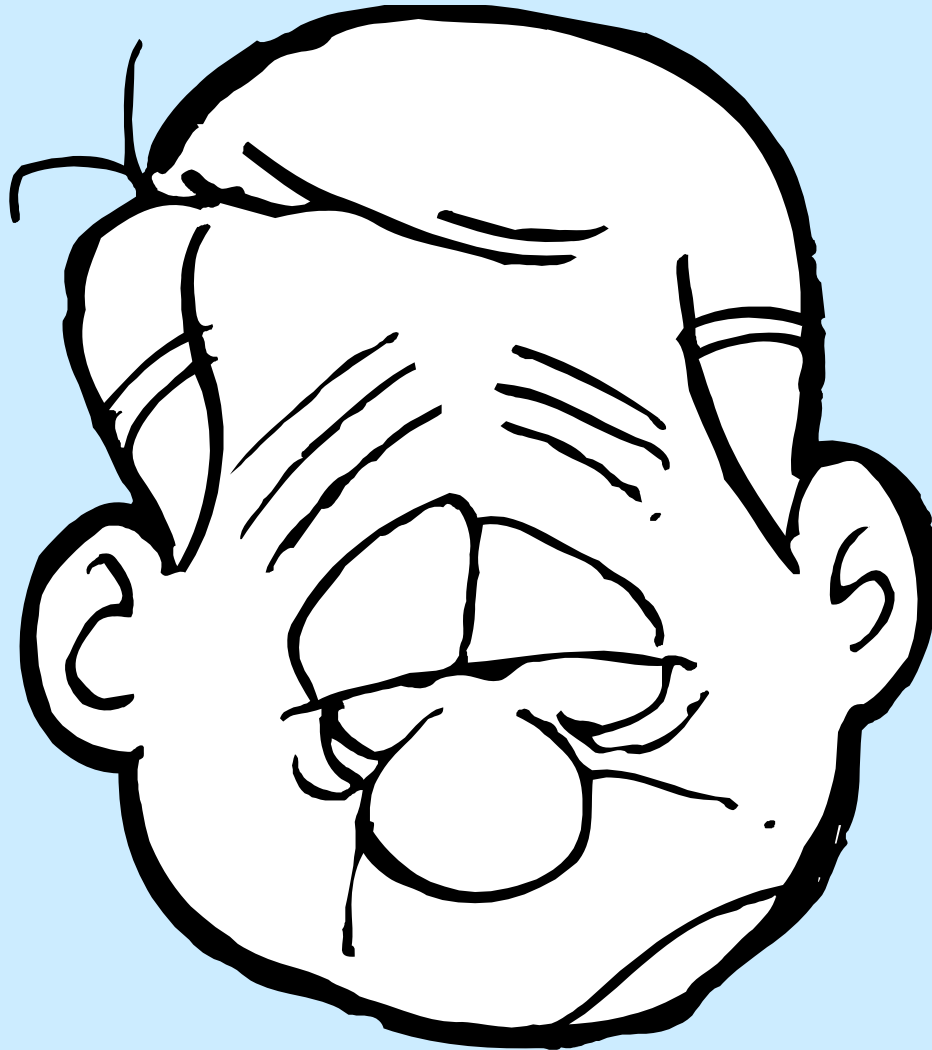
AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS



Sometimes these automatic thoughts are beliefs, sort of habits in the way we think. Imagine you were told from little on that **"YOU'RE STUPID. YOU'LL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY YOU TRY."**



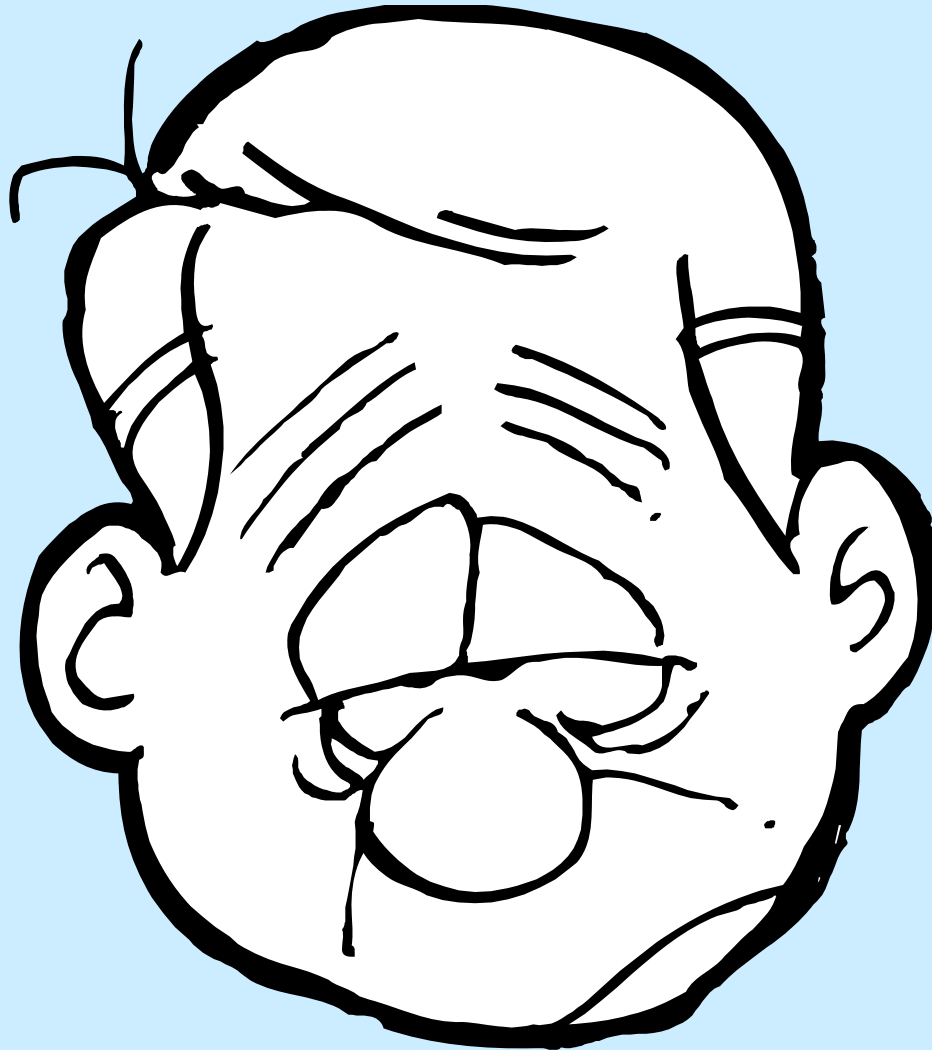
AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS



If you are constantly being told something, either by others or yourself, that message will pop into your head and guide trigger your emotions. Since it is a habit, it occurs without thoughts and you are seldom aware of it having occurred.



AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS



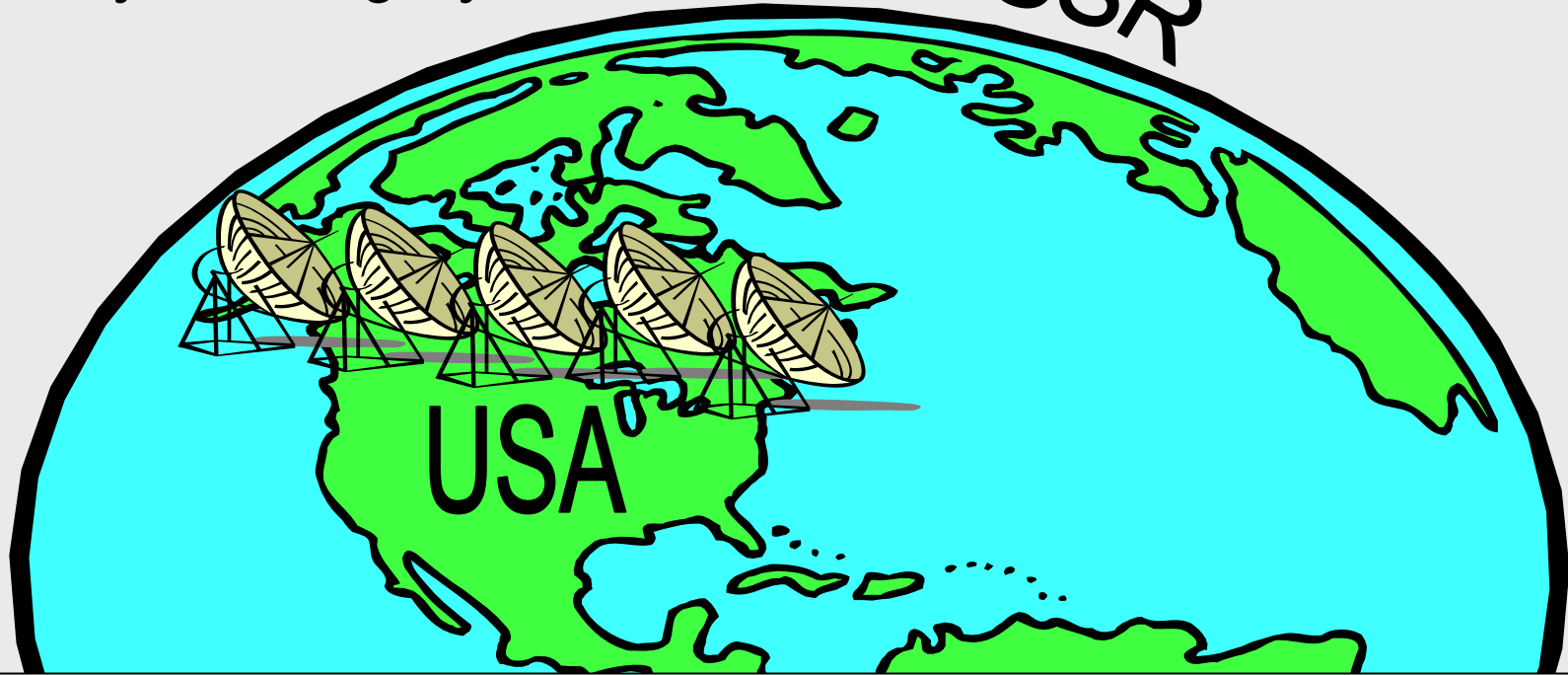
Imagine if the automatic thoughts were, **“I’m not taking any crap off of anyone anymore.”**

These people will be angry a lot and do angry stuff and get into lots of trouble.



Early Warning System

USSR



Now switching gears for a second. During the cold war with the former Soviet Union, we built a series of radar stations along Alaska and northern Canada. They looked over the North Pole. If the Russians launched their bombers, our radar would pick that up. We would send up our bombers. Their radar would pick up our bombers and they would signal their planes to return to base. Then we would do the same. This early warning system averted many a near dangerous situation.

The reason that I am mentioning this is that we all have an early warning radar system in us that lets us know that a dangerous system is just over the horizon.



You feel sad, afraid, worried or angry. You will feel these emotions before you act on their urges.





When you feel these emotions you need to take action.



1. Shut up

The first thing you do is shut up. When things are not going right, either our mouths are going a mile a minute or our minds are. And you can't slow things down if you can't think.

1. Shut up

2. Take a step back

Then you take a step back. The closer you are to the threatening situation, the stronger the fight or flight response. If you take a step back, it automatically, slows down the feeling of threat and urgency.

1. Shut up
2. Take a step back
3. Take a deep breath

Then take a deep breath. This too automatically slows down the fight or flight response.

1. Shut up
2. Take a step back
3. Take a deep breath
- 4. Problem-Solve or Cope**

Then you start problem solving. Fix the problem. If it can't be fixed, then prepare yourself to accept what you cannot change.

Take Cover



Also during the cold war, we had air raid sirens ever where. If the Russians did not turn around and an attack was imminent, the sirens would go off and we were all to go to our shelters until things were safe. The reason I bring that up is because we all have air raid sirens inside of that lets us know that an attack is imminent and things are about to get out of hand.

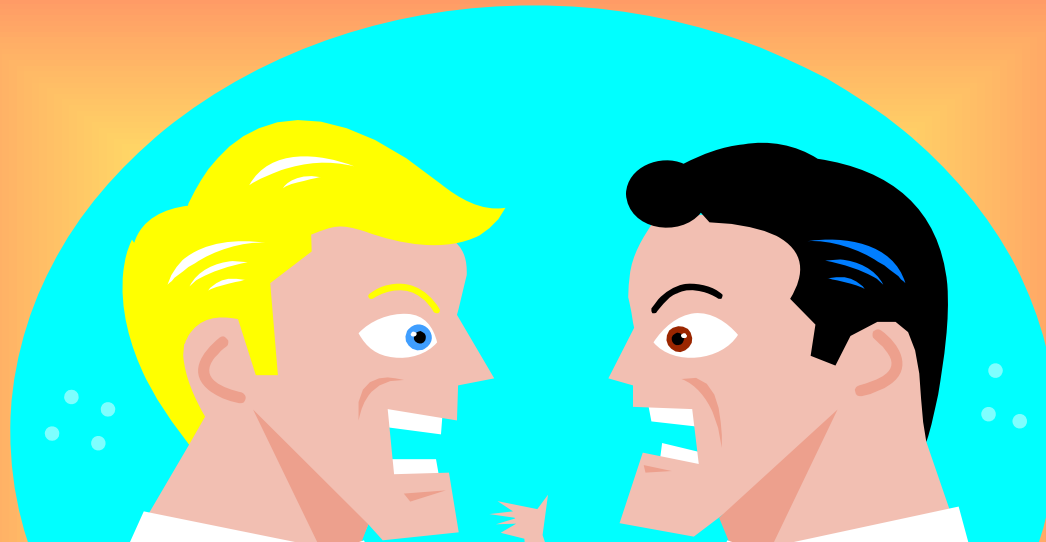
Fight or Flight



We feel our hearts beat faster. We begin to breathe faster. We become tense. If you feel these sensations, you need to give yourself a time out. Get away until you calm down. Then return to problem solve in a calm manner.

- 1. Heart beats faster.**
- 2. Breathing becomes faster.**
- 3. Begin to sweat.**
- 4. Blood is shunted to muscles.**
- 5. Adrenaline is released.**
- 6. Endorphines are released.**
- 7. Muscles tense.**

WOULD THIS HAVE TURNED OUT DIFFERENT



Now on the piece of paper that you wrote your bad experience on. Read it and imagine how it might have turned out had you approached it with positive thoughts and positive emotions. Rewrite the story how it would have happened if you had slowed down and problem solved before you acted.

IF YOU HAD PROBLEM SOLVED OR COPED?



**THE
END**