



# The Stress Response in Children

Children's stress responses manifest as physical symptoms, emotional changes and behavioural shifts. Recognising these signs, which can be subtle, allows adults to offer support.

| <b>Fight</b>                                    | <b>Flight</b>                                   | <b>Freeze</b>                                  |
|---|---|--|
| Yelling, screaming, using mean words            | Wanting to escape, running away                 | Shutting down, mind goes blank,                |
| Hitting, kicking, biting, throwing, punching    | Unfocused, unable to pay attention              | Hides, isolates themselves                     |
| Blaming, deflecting responsibility, defensive   | Fidgeting, restless, hyperactive                | Verbally unresponsive, will say "I don't know" |
| Demanding, controlling                          | Preoccupied, busy with everything but the thing | Difficulty completing tasks                    |
| Oppositional, defiant, noncompliant             | Avoidant, ignores the situation                 | Zoned out, daydreaming                         |
| Moving towards what feels threatening           | Moving away from what feels threatening         | Unable to move, feeling stuck                  |
| Irritable, angry, furious, offended, aggressive | Anxious, panicked, scared, worried, overwhelmed | Depressed, numb, bored, helpless               |