

# Triggers

## What Are Some Common Triggers?

- Unexpected change
- Feelings of vulnerability or fear
- Feeling threatened or attacked
- Too much stimulation from the environment

## What Does a Triggered Child Look Like?

- Behaviors resulting from a stress response typically fall into one of three **flight, fight or freeze**.
  - **What does flight look like?**
    - Behaviors in which children move away from a person/situation they feel is a threat
  - **What does fight look like?**
    - Behaviors in which children move toward a person/situation they feel is a threat
  - **What does freeze look like?**
    - Behaviors in which children use their minds to move away from a person/situation they feel is a threat (holding still while “checking out”)
- Children who have experienced trauma may:
  - Appear nervous or jumpy.
  - Avoid physical contact.
  - Have difficulty sleeping/have nightmares.
  - Be confused about what is dangerous and who to go to for protection, especially if the trauma was caused by a caregiver.
  - Have mood swings, for example, shifting quickly between being quiet and withdrawn to being aggressive.
  - Demand lots of attention.
  - Have trouble paying attention to teachers at school and to parents at home.
  - Lose their appetite.
  - Go back to “younger” behaviors such as baby talk or wanting adults to feed or dress them.
  - Re-enact the scary things they have experienced during play.
  - Withdraw from friends or activities they have enjoyed previously.
  - Get into fights at school or fight with siblings at home.
  - Older children may engage in self-destructive behaviors such as drug or alcohol abuse, cutting themselves or having unprotected sex.

