



FaithWorks Counseling
Dr. Debbie Harnois
2901 University Avenue, Suite 17
Columbus, GA 31907
706.366.9691
www.FaithWorksCounseling17.com

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA RESPONSES

A guide to help you recognize what your body and brain are trying to tell you.

What Is a Trauma Response?

When something frightening, overwhelming, or unsafe happens, your body and brain switch into survival mode to protect you. Sometimes, long after the event is over, your nervous system still acts as if the danger is happening right now. This is called a **trauma response** — your body’s way of saying, “I’m not sure I’m safe yet.”

FOUR COMMON TRAUMA RESPONSES

Response Type	What It Looks Like	What It’s Trying to Do
Fight 🌟	Arguing, yelling, needing control, frustration	Protect yourself by standing your ground
Flight 🏃	Avoiding, staying busy, withdrawing	Escape the situation to stay safe
Freeze ❄️	Feeling numb, stuck, spaced out, shutting down	Stay still to avoid harm
Fawn 🤝	People-pleasing, apologizing, putting others first	Keep the peace to stay safe

These are *survival skills*, not flaws. Your body learned them to help you cope.

How a Trauma Response Feels

- Heart racing, tight chest, or shaky hands
- Feeling on edge or easily startled
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Numbness, exhaustion, or emotional flooding
- Strong reactions to reminders of past events

Your body is saying: *“Something feels unsafe.”*

Your work in therapy is to help your body realize: *“I am safe now.”*

Grounding & Calming Tools

Try one or two of these when you notice your trauma response showing up:

- ☐ Take slow, deep breaths (in through your nose, out through your mouth)
- ☐ Look around and name 5 things you can see
- ☐ Feel your feet on the ground and notice the pressure
- ☐ Hold something soft or textured
- ☐ Say to yourself: *"This feeling will pass. I am safe right now."*
- ☐ Text or call a supportive person
- ☐ Practice a short prayer, verse, or affirmation

Reflection

When do I notice my body reacting this way?

What helps me feel calm and safe again?

Remember

You are not broken — your body is doing what it learned to do to survive.
Through therapy, you'll learn how to help your body and mind work together again.
You deserve to feel safe, calm and in control.