

## FOPPI

**Attachment Related Threat** refers to the strength and reliability of our relationships with those who we are close to such as parents, children, some friends, and colleagues.

**The FOPPI acronym** offers a memorable way for us to think about what happens as we become increasingly triggered into fight/flight and/or hide/freeze behavioural patterns.

**Being more aware** of what to look out for in terms of how we change when we trigger, improves our capacity to activate resources that will help reduce the intensity and duration of the discomfort that we experience.

**The Ancient Environment:** To gain a better understanding of how we react to physical, trauma, and/or attachment related threat it helps to think about the ancient environment and the type of threats that it posed to our survival as individuals and as a species. Our survival system was evolved for that world where all humans faced a continuous threat from predators, other humans, and natural disasters such as flood, fire, and famine.

Imagine you are by yourself away from the village gathering fruit. You come to a clearing and on the other side there are bushes bearing fruit. One of the bushes is moving from side to side even

though there is no wind. Your Reactive Brain immediately notices this movement and your Reflective Mind and Reactive Brain/Body system triggers in a sequence and a manner described by the acronym FOPPI:

**Focus:** Your Reflective Mind starts to shut down and you no longer pay attention to the fruit on the bush but instead your Reactive Brain focuses on the movement and whether you can sense any sign of danger within, or in the vicinity of the bush. Your field of vision and hearing narrows onto the bush.

**Overreact:** Your survival chances are reduced by delaying preparations such as charging your muscles up for fight/flight or deactivating them for hide/freeze until the danger has been 100% confirmed i.e., the predator exists and has come out from behind the bush and is charging towards you. Reacting to potential threat immediately causes your Reflective Mind to start to shut down and your Reactive Brain to generate electrical and chemical signals that prepare the body to fight, flee, hide, or freeze.

**Pessimism:** While we know that there are far more prey animals (deer, antelope etc) than predators (wolves, lions etc) in the wild our triggering Reactive Brain predicts that a dangerous predator is causing the bush to move. Not only that but it is probably large and very hungry, having not eaten for weeks. It is no use preparing for a moderately

bad threat: we are evolved to predict and equip ourselves to deal with the worst possible threat. In that way we are more likely to survive and pass our DNA onto the following generations. In the ancient world overreaction increased survival chances.

**Package:** It is of no use focusing on the threat and being pessimistic about it unless your body is prepared to react rapidly to what comes out. Therefore, when we trigger in response to a threat our survival chances are increased if we Focus, Overreact and are Pessimistic all at the same time.

**Inaccurate:** Waiting to be certain that there is a genuine threat is not a winning strategy as it means we have less time to prepare for a potential attack. We can prepare to fight, run away, hide, or freeze many times but only be eaten once. In the modern world this drives reactions that appear, in hindsight, to be disproportionate to what was happening.

**Summary:** The Rainbow Map exercise helps clients learn about and recognise their own style of FOPPI-like behaviour especially in response to trauma and attachment related threat which is the most common ancient world threat that we have in our relatively safe world today.