

# WhitePaper: Gecko-Cheat-Sheet

Cheat sheet and explanation to recognize anxiety and stress patterns



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## OrgIQ Manifest: Passion for People builds Systems for Success

OrgIQ is a framework that changes how we see organizations. The core idea is to truly think from the perspective of the individual. Every person has their own reality, based on their *Network* of relationships. Each perception and perspective is unique. There is no right or wrong.

Any organization is simply the superposition of all these *Networks*. This is complexity. We can never fully model or understand it. But we can give direction and purpose to each individual element. Intelligent organizations embrace this complexity rather than simplify or ignore it.

When we focus on human complexity, the *Solution* space for common problems dramatically increases. We believe this harmonizes business practices and structures with the natural dynamics of human relationships, psychology, and social interactions.

Our manifesto reflects our lived experiences and successes. We've seen the transformative power of fostering genuine connections, embracing individuality, and leading with purpose. OrgIQ helps create smarter environments where empathy, understanding, and mutual respect thrive, allowing every individual to feel truly seen, heard, and appreciated. This creates a space of emotional safety, which is essential for individuals and groups to reach their full potential.

We believe in value over control. From OrgIQ's perspective, we understand that control limits the capability of the system by breaking the human perspective, creating overhead, and fostering mistrust. Relationships and trust unleash extraordinary *Productivity* and satisfaction. The achievement of the *Purpose* is measured by the *Results*.

Join us on this journey to redefine organizational excellence. Let's build intelligent systems, embrace complexity, and simplify happiness. Welcome to OrgIQ, where the true potential of your people thrives your organization.

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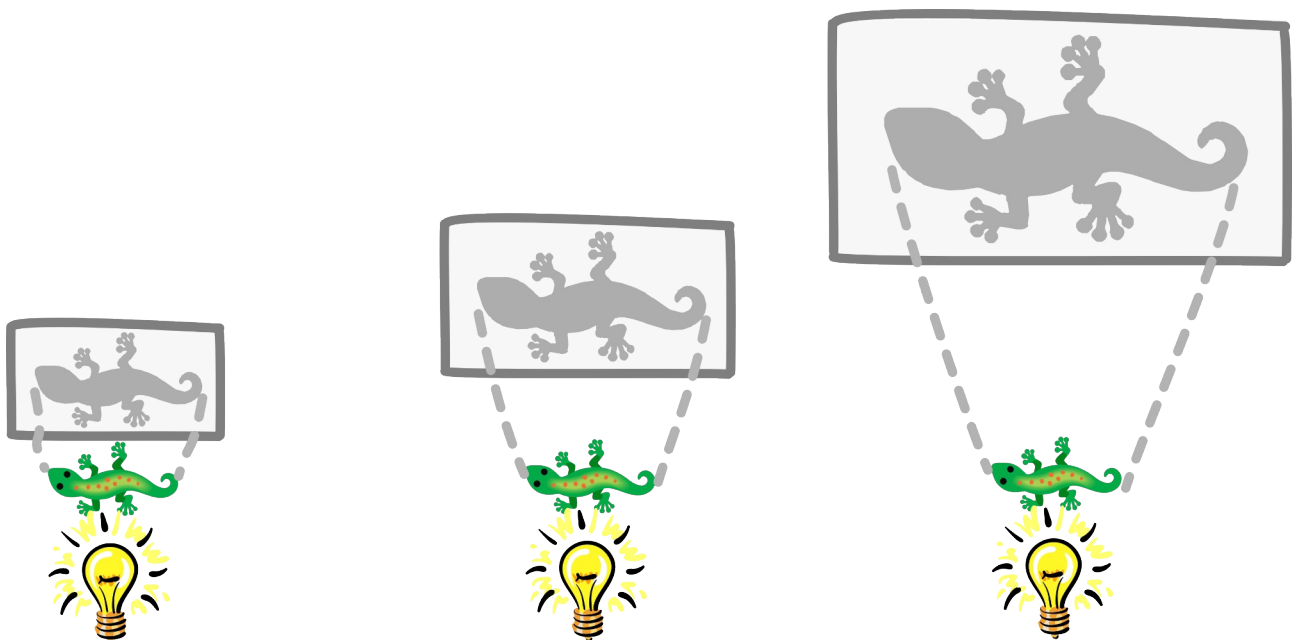
## Intro to the Gecko Cheat-Sheet

Imagine standing in front of a crowd, all eyes fixed on you, and it's your turn to give a speech. Suddenly, your heart starts racing, your palms get sweaty, and your mind feels blank. What's happening inside you?

This reaction is deeply ingrained in us and can be explained by the **Fight-Flight-Freeze** model. This framework describes how humans respond to stress and perceived threats. It helps us understand why we sometimes fight, flee, or freeze in certain situations. These responses affect not only our immediate behavior but also have far-reaching impacts on our physical reactions and even our worldview.

**Fight, Flight, and Freeze** are programs run by our “inner Gecko.” The Gecko represents our brainstem or reptilian brain—a term that feels a little easier to relate to when visualized as a cute little lizard. The “Gecko” is responsible for keeping us safe and ensuring our survival by reacting to perceived danger. This system is crucial and protective. However, it becomes problematic when fear turns into a chronic state.

Often, our Gecko overreacts, as existential threats are rare in modern life. But as social beings, our greatest fear is losing our tribe. For social creatures, being cast out of the group feels like a death sentence to the Gecko. This is why it often reacts so intensely in social contexts.

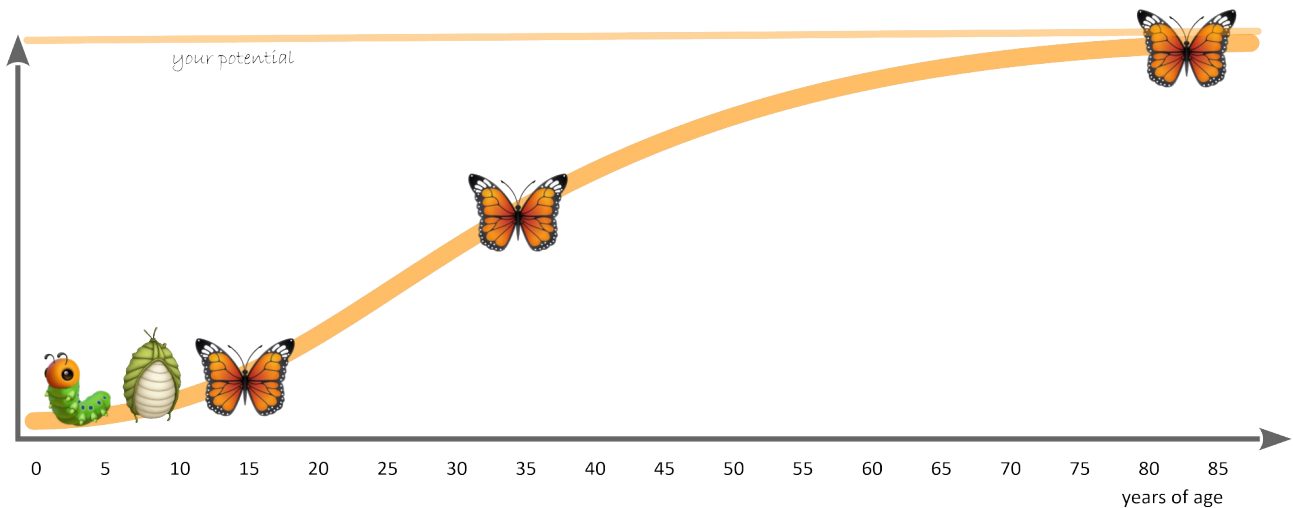


*Figure 1: We often react to the “shadow of fear.” Triggers activate stored situational memories, and like shadows, these memories grow larger with distance. In the case of “trauma”—a situation that remains unresolved over time—we see and feel our memory of fear. That fear can feel enormous.*

*This is why it's essential to recognize all levels of the experience: the current situation, our habitual patterns, and when fear has become deeply rooted within us as part of our worldview and belief systems. Recognizing these layers is the first step toward understanding and eventually overcoming them.*

When a situation—often from childhood—becomes deeply embedded, we tend to react to the memory rather than the present moment. Emotionally, we remain stuck in that past situation. In those moments, we revert to being 3, 5, or 7 years old and only have the capabilities we had at that age to deal with it. It's like seeing the shadow of fear, and the further away we are from the source, the larger and more distorted that shadow becomes.

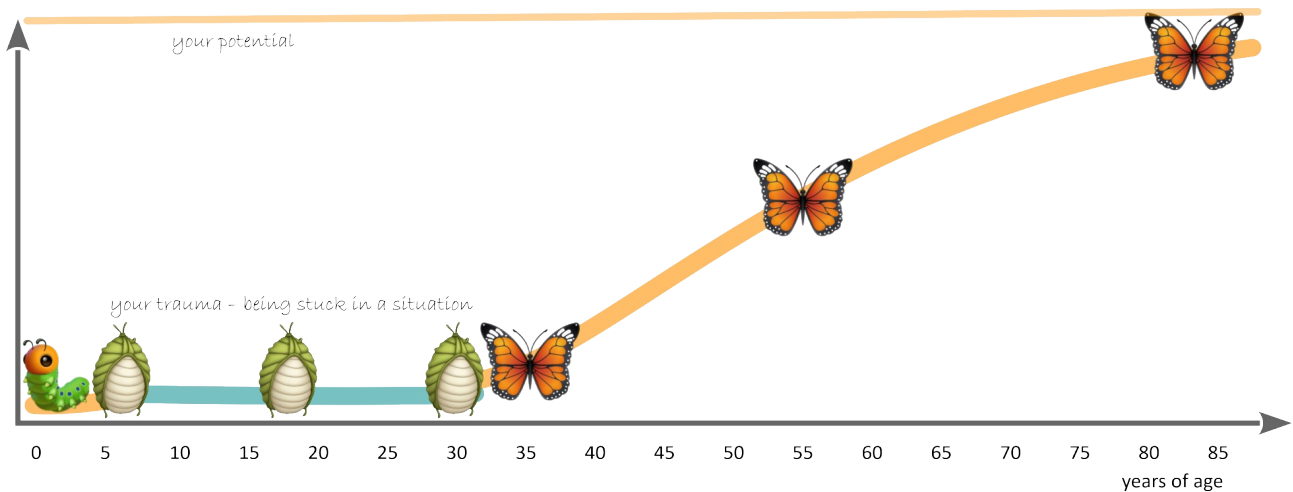
The key is to recognize these patterns within ourselves and others, understand them, and respond in a constructive way. If we only react to outward behaviors in relationships or parenting, the situation will keep repeating itself. This creates an endless loop, a kind of feedback cycle where we remain trapped in the “Gecko” mode—the fight, flight, or freeze response. To break free, we need to change something fundamentally. Otherwise, we'll stay stuck, and the problem will only worsen over time.



Fear hinders healthy development. Let's illustrate this with the metaphor of the caterpillar and the butterfly. When we're babies or toddlers, we are like caterpillars—nurtured, fed, and cared for. The butterfly already exists within us, but we are still in a different form.

From around ages 7 to 10 or 12, we enter the cocoon stage. This is the time when we are meant to transform into the butterfly. The magic of this transformation lies in how the caterpillar dissolves and reassembles itself. The essence of the caterpillar and the butterfly remains the same; everything is simply rearranged into its new place.

Once the butterfly emerges, it continues to grow and thrive, reaching its full potential. That's the story—at least in theory.



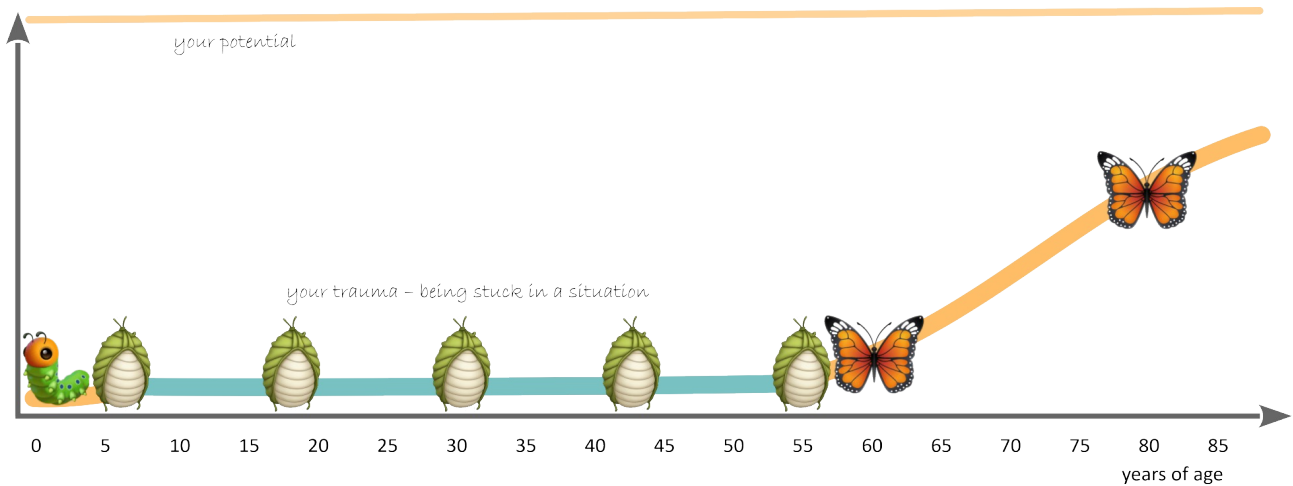
As mentioned above, things can get in the way—and for about 97% of people, something does. Often, it's not just one thing but several. In our metaphor, this means we either stay stuck as the caterpillar or remain trapped in the cocoon. We find ourselves in a loop, unable to break free.

This is what it means to be “stuck in trauma.” It halts our emotional development, sometimes to the point where we stop believing in the butterfly within us.

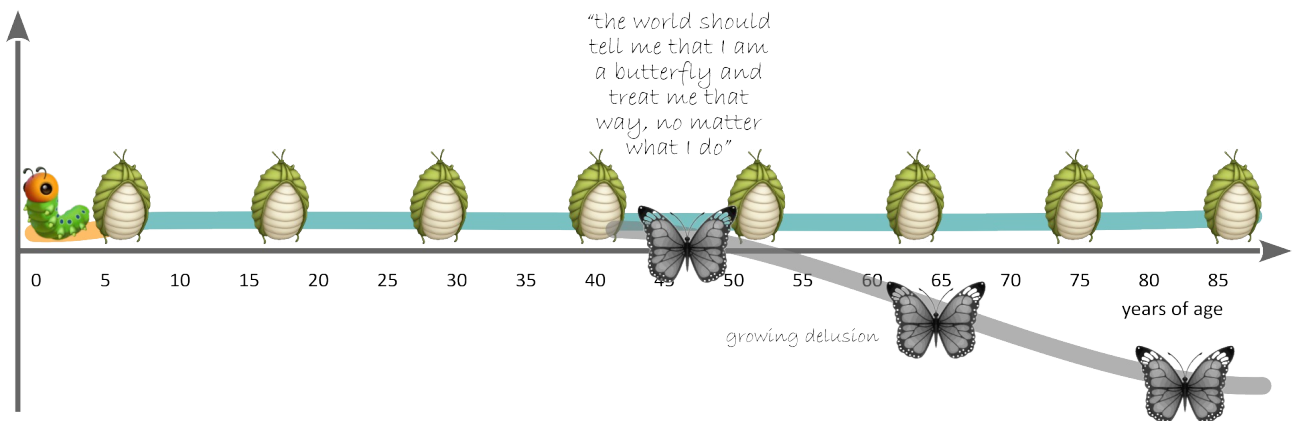
Many people say, “This requires therapy.” That's true to an extent, but the most powerful “therapy” is experiencing genuine connection with another person—someone who truly sees, hears, understands, and touches us.

This might sound a bit esoteric, but it's pure psychology. We are human beings, not machines, even though we are often treated as if we were. When we experience this kind of connection, we can finally complete our transformation into the butterfly. And this can happen at any stage of life. It's always worth it.

However, there is a cost. Time lost. We miss out on life, and we may never fully realize our potential. But the transformation, no matter when it occurs, is still invaluable.



The later we begin our transformation, the less of our full potential we may achieve. On one hand, this can feel sad or like a missed opportunity. But the moment we recognize that we've been stuck, we can start to move forward and make things better. Every single day is worth it.



The saddest situation is when we settle for living as a caterpillar or remaining stuck in a cocoon, expecting the world to reassure us that everything is fine. This self-deception can become a demand for others to join in, creating a cycle of wasted life. Yes, every person has the right to choose their own unhappiness, but that choice should come from freedom, not the programming of a three-year-old.

When we observe the “Gecko” within us—our instinctual fight-flight-freeze reactions—we may notice just how many people are stuck as caterpillars or in cocoons. The purpose of this isn't to judge or ridicule but to break the mechanisms that trap us.

Two major sources of fear keep us stuck:

1. **The trauma itself:** Triggers that activate the cocoon state or the feedback loop. These can be deep-seated beliefs like, “I’m only worthy if I achieve something.” This belief can drive us to constantly prove ourselves to avoid losing our sense of purpose or validation. Such pressure can be immense, and it often operates below the level of our conscious awareness.
2. **The fear of becoming the butterfly:** After 10 or 20 years in a feedback loop (the cocoon), we may no longer believe that anything else is possible. But even here, patience and genuine connection can help.

To navigate these fears, we use tools like a “cheat sheet” for quickly identifying fear patterns. In the following sections, we delve deeper into the nine levels of this model. Each level examines a specific aspect of how we react to fear and stress. With clear descriptions and relatable examples, you’ll learn how to identify these patterns in yourself and others. Recognizing these patterns allows us to better understand both ourselves and those around us.

Once we see the symptoms clearly, we can trace them back to their root causes. And when we address the root cause, we stop fighting symptoms and begin to truly heal.

# Gecko Cheat-Sheet

The quick overview to print out, hang up or use. 90% of all “toxic” (dysfunctional) people and situations clear up immediately.

But of course we can’t always remove the source of the anxiety. But we can create and increase “emotional and psychological safety” (i.e. a *SafeSpace*).

## 9 Levels of Established Fear *(Established: Stuck in Unresolved Fear over a Long Period of Time)*

<b>Level 9</b>	Heart diseases; Burnout	Gastrointestinal, Insomnia; Anxiety, Depression	Fatigue, Immune system; Depression, Dissociation	<i>Physical and Psychological Effects</i>
<b>Level 8</b>	Assertive/Leading; Power/Status; Control	Avoidance; Stable Environment; Procrastination	Waiting for assignments; Routine; Inactivity	<i>Work and School Environment (Style, Goals, Stress Pattern)</i>
<b>Level 7</b>	World is Hostile; Seeking Power	World is Dangerous; Seeking Safety (Protection)	Meaninglessness; No hope/Control	<i>Worldview and Beliefs</i>
<b>Level 6</b>	Dominant Personality Style, Impulsivity	Avoidant Personality Style, Low Self Esteem	Passive Personality Style, Helplessness	<i>Long-Term Personality Development</i>
<b>Level 5</b>	Conflict with others, Low empathy	Social withdrawal, Distrust	Social Passivity, Communication Difficulties	<i>Social Interactions</i>
<b>Level 4</b>	Aggression, Dominance	Avoidance, Withdrawal	Speechlessness, Inactivity	<i>Behavioral Patterns</i>
<b>Level 3</b>	Focus on threat, Impulsive decisions	Overthinking, Catastrophizing	Mental blankness, Confusion	<i>Cognitive Processes</i>
<b>Level 2</b>	Anger and Aggression, Frustration	Fear and panic, Anxiety, People pleasing	Overwhelm, Shame	<i>Emotional Reactions</i>
<b>Level 1</b>	Cardiovascular Activation, Tension, Adrenaline	Increased Breathing Rate, Sweating, Dilated Pupils	Reduced Heart Rate, Shallow Breathing, Numbness	<i>Physiological Reactions</i>
	<b>Fight</b> <i>moving towards threat</i>	<b>Flight</b> <i>moving away from threat</i>	<b>Freeze</b> <i>feeling stuck, unable to move</i>	

*Base Fear/ Stress Patterns*

# DeepDive

Here are the 9 levels with more details.

## Level 1: Physiological Reactions (Directly in the Situation)

The physiological reactions are the most immediate and tangible signs of our fear reactions. They are the foundation on which all other levels are built. Without understanding these physical processes, it would be difficult to grasp the deeper psychological and social implications.

When we perceive a threat, our brain activates the autonomic nervous system, especially the sympathetic nervous system, which puts the body in a state of heightened readiness:

<b>Fight</b> <b>The body prepares itself for a confrontation.</b>	<b>Flight</b> <b>The body prepares to flee quickly.</b>	<b>Freeze</b> <b>The body switches into a protective mode. (make invisible/dead)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Activation of the sympathetic nervous system: increased heart rate and blood pressure in preparation for a confrontation</li> <li>▶ Constricted blood vessels in non-essential areas: Redirection of blood to the muscles</li> <li>▶ Cardiovascular activation: Increased pulse and blood pressure to transport more oxygen to the muscles</li> <li>▶ Muscle tension: preparation for action</li> <li>▶ Adrenaline and noradrenaline increase: increase in energy and alertness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Activation of the sympathetic nervous system: Similar to combat, but with a focus on fast movement</li> <li>▶ Increased breathing rate: more oxygen for fast movement</li> <li>▶ Sweat production: body cooling</li> <li>▶ Dilated pupils: Better perception of the surroundings</li> <li>▶ Digestion slows down: save energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (dorsal vagus nerve): Sudden drop in heart rate</li> <li>▶ Reduced muscle tension: physical immobility</li> <li>▶ Reduced heart rate: sudden immobility</li> <li>▶ Shallow breathing: minimizing movement and noise</li> <li>▶ Feeling of: Reduced blood flow to the extremities; detachment from the body</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Herzklopfen, Schwitzen, Zittern</li> <li>▶ Schnelle Atmung</li> <li>▶ Gefühl von Hitze</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Herzklopfen, Schwitzen, Zittern</li> <li>▶ Schnelle Atmung</li> <li>▶ Gefühl von Hitze</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Puls geht runter</li> <li>▶ Flache Atmung</li> <li>▶ Gefühl von Taubheit und Kälte</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Gerötete Haut</li> <li>▶ Körperliche Unruhe oder Starre</li> <li>▶ Anspannung</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Gerötete Haut</li> <li>▶ Weit geöffnete Augen</li> <li>▶ Körperliche Unruhe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Blasse Haut</li> <li>▶ Starrer Blick</li> <li>▶ Starre</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** Lisa is walking alone through a dark park in the evening. Suddenly she hears footsteps behind her. Her heart begins to race (Fight/Flight), her senses are heightened. She decides to walk faster (Flight).

**Example 2:** Tom is about to take an important exam. When he enters the exam room, he suddenly feels paralyzed. His hands are cold and he can't move (freeze).



## Level 2: Emotional Reactions

Emotions are the key to our behavior. They influence how we react to our physical responses and the decisions we make. Understanding our emotional reactions helps us to cope better with stress and be more empathetic towards others.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Anger and aggression: feeling of being attacked and the desire to strike back; feeling of strength and willingness to confront</li> <li>▶ Frustration: about the situation or perceived injustice</li> <li>▶ Irritation: Low stimulus threshold; anger at the perceived threat</li> <li>▶ Determination: focus on overcoming the obstacle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Fear and panic: Desire to escape the threat; urge to flee</li> <li>▶ Restlessness: feeling of urgency to run away</li> <li>▶ Uncertainty: doubts about the ability to cope with the situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Overwhelming: Feeling of being overwhelmed by the situation and a sense of helplessness or powerlessness</li> <li>▶ Helplessness: perception of loss of control</li> <li>▶ Dissociation: Emotional detachment from the situation</li> <li>▶ Shame: feeling unable to react appropriately; self-doubt and withdrawal; overthinking + speechlessness (communication stop)</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Intense feelings such as anger or fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Inner trembling or nervousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling of emptiness or numbness</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Irritable or aggressive behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Avoidant behavior or withdrawal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Silence or lack of response when spoken to</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** Markus is criticized by his boss. He feels a rising anger (fight) and would like to contradict it out loud.

**Example 2:** Sarah learns that she has to speak in front of a large group. She feels panic (Flight) and thinks about how she can escape the situation.

**Example 3:** Tim is involved in a traffic accident. Although he is uninjured, he sits rigidly in the car and cannot react (freeze).

## Level 3: Cognitive Processes

Our thoughts influence how we interpret and react to situations. Negative thought patterns can increase stress, while positive or realistic thoughts can help us to deal with it better.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus on threat: tunnel vision; concentration on details of the danger; everything else is ignored</li> <li>▶ Impulsive thinking: quick decisions without careful consideration</li> <li>▶ Strategic thinking: looking for ways to overcome the threat</li> <li>▶ Self-confidence: Belief in one's own ability to control the situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Overthinking: pondering ways out</li> <li>▶ Catastrophize: Overestimating the danger</li> <li>▶ Thinking about escape routes: planning the quickest way to escape</li> <li>▶ Self-protection thoughts: prioritizing your own safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Empty mind: difficulty thinking clearly</li> <li>▶ Confusion: lack of clarity about the situation and possible reactions</li> <li>▶ Time distortion: feeling that time is passing slower or faster</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Impulsive decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thought circles without a solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Difficulty concentrating on other things</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Abrupt or rash actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Indecision or hesitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Confused or absent-minded facial expression</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** Julia has an important presentation. She keeps thinking: “What if I make a mistake?” (overthinking) and imagines how she will embarrass herself (catastrophizing).

**Example 2:** Daniel is barked at by a dog. His only thought is to defend himself (fight) and he grabs a stick.

## Level 4: Behavioral Patterns

Our behavior is the most visible result of our inner processes. It determines how we act in the world and how others perceive us. Recognizing these patterns helps us to communicate more effectively and improve relationships.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Aggressive behavior: Seeking confrontations, speaking louder, physical aggression; verbal or physical confrontation</li> <li>▶ Striving for dominance: Taking control, dictating decisions; taking up space, speaking loudly</li> <li>▶ Active intervention: Attempt to control or change the situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Avoidance behavior: Avoiding places or situations that remind you of the threat; making excuses; making promises to appease</li> <li>▶ Withdrawal: isolate yourself, reduce social contacts; break promises as soon as you get out of the situation</li> <li>▶ Escape reactions: Rapid movements, restlessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Inactivity: Inability to act, despite knowing that action is necessary</li> <li>▶ Speechlessness: inability to find or speak words</li> <li>▶ Reduced responsiveness: Delayed or no response to external stimuli</li> <li>▶ Immobility: Physical immobility</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Aggressive actions or words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sudden desire to leave the room</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Not being able to react even though you want to</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Someone gets loud or confrontational</li> <li>▶ <i>Children</i>: shouting, biting, kicking, pushing; using swear words; defiance; resistance</li> <li>▶ Blame game; defending and shifting blame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Leaving situations without explanation</li> <li>▶ <i>Children</i>: fidgeting, hyperactivity, restlessness</li> <li>▶ Lots of “I’m sorry” and “I promise...” (People Pleasing<sup>1</sup>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Silence or lack of participation</li> <li>▶ <i>Children</i>: Daydreams</li> <li>▶ A lot of “I don’t know” or “I can’t”</li> </ul>

The examples are more difficult here because we are looking at a pattern, i.e. a repeated occurrence.

**Example 1:** A student who is confronted with a difficult task suddenly leaves the classroom (flight).

**Example 2:** An employee who is ignored in a meeting remains silent for the rest of the meeting (freeze) and no longer participates.

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned, there is also the “Fawn” pattern. This is the adapted version (adopted as a role) of the Fight/Flight/Freeze basic pattern. At the higher levels, the transition is seamless.

## Level 5: Social Interactions – Interpersonal Dynamics

Humans are social beings. Our reactions to stress affect not only ourselves, but also our relationships with others. Understanding these dynamics can help us avoid conflict and communicate more empathetically.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Conflicts with others: Frequent arguments, competitive thinking; increased irritability can lead to arguments</li> <li>▶ Little empathy: focus on own needs, lack of understanding for others</li> <li>▶ Dominance behavior: Attempt to control or dominate others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Social withdrawal: avoidance of contact. (Breaking promises as soon as out of the situation)</li> <li>▶ Distrust: Difficulty building or maintaining relationships</li> <li>▶ Social withdrawal: avoidance of meetings, less communication; avoidance of social contacts</li> <li>▶ Isolation: feeling alone or withdrawn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Social passivity: little interaction or participation; let others decide</li> <li>▶ Communication problems: difficulty expressing thoughts or feelings</li> <li>▶ Dependence: reliance on others for decisions or actions</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Frequent disputes with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Desire to be alone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling of not being heard or understood</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Aggressive or defensive behavior in conversations (blame game, defensiveness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Someone avoids social activities</li> <li>▶ Ghosting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Lack of response to contact attempts</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** A colleague who is under pressure begins to criticize and blame others (fight).

**Example 2:** A friend withdraws completely after an argument and no longer replies to messages (Flight).

## Level 6: Long-Term Personal Development

Long-term reactions to stress can shape our personality. If certain patterns occur again and again, they can become fixed characteristics. Understanding these developments can help us to understand ourselves better and initiate change.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Dominant personality style: Striving for control and power</li> <li>▶ Impulsiveness: tendency to act quickly and unplanned</li> <li>▶ Resilience or hypervigilance: constant readiness for defense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Avoidant personality style: Permanent avoidance of challenges and risks</li> <li>▶ Low self-esteem: doubts about own abilities; feeling of inadequacy</li> <li>▶ Anxious personality style: Tendency to worry and anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Passive personality style: lack of initiative; dependence on others</li> <li>▶ Learned helplessness: belief that you have no influence on your own life; powerlessness</li> <li>▶ Alienation: feeling of distance from oneself and others</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Repeated patterns in reactions to stress</li> <li>▶ Difficulty breaking out of habitual behaviors</li> <li>▶ Feeling of stagnation or dissatisfaction</li> </ul>		
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Someone always shows the same reaction pattern to stress</li> <li>▶ Resistance to change or new things</li> <li>▶ Dependence on routines or certain people</li> </ul>		

**Example 1:** A manager who is constantly under pressure develops an authoritarian management style (fight), which leads to dissatisfaction in the team.

**Example 2:** A person avoids entering into new relationships for fear of rejection (Flight).

## Level 7: World View and Beliefs

Our beliefs shape how we see and interact with the world. They influence our decisions, relationships and our general well-being. Negative or distorted beliefs can limit our lives.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ World as a hostile place: constant struggle required</li> <li>▶ Belief in strength: appreciation of power, control and dominance</li> <li>▶ Little trust in others: Skepticism about the motives of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ World as dangerous: constant expectation of threats</li> <li>▶ Search for security: need for protection and stability</li> <li>▶ Pessimism: Expectation of negative results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling of futility: feeling that efforts are in vain; difficulty in finding meaning</li> <li>▶ Fatalism: belief that you have no influence on your own life</li> <li>▶ Spiritual distancing: Possible loss of faith or spiritual orientation</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Negative thoughts about the world or the future</li> <li>▶ Beliefs that limit us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Negative thoughts about the world or the future</li> <li>▶ Beliefs that limit us</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling of powerlessness or resignation</li> <li>▶ Beliefs that limit us</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Distrust</li> <li>▶ Resistance to positive change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Someone often expresses pessimistic views</li> <li>▶ Resistance to positive change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Over-generalization of negative experiences</li> <li>▶ Resistance to positive change</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** A person who has been cheated on several times believes they can no longer trust anyone (Flight).

**Example 2:** Someone who has often been passed over in their career thinks that efforts are useless anyway (freeze).

## Level 8: Work and School Environment

We spend a large part of our lives at school or at work. These environments can both trigger and intensify stress. Understanding how anxiety reactions work here helps us to deal better with challenges and positively influence the working or learning environment.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Working method: Dominant, assertive, seeks leadership; takes control, may micromanage</li> <li>▶ Goals: Power, status, career advancement</li> <li>▶ Behavior under stress: conflicts with colleagues, need for control, competitive thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Working method: Avoids responsibility, delegates tasks, withdraws</li> <li>▶ Goals: Safety, stress reduction</li> <li>▶ Behavior under stress: frequent absences, withdrawal, procrastination, job change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Working method: Waits for instructions, little initiative; passive; unable to make decisions</li> <li>▶ Goals: Maintaining the status quo, avoiding change</li> <li>▶ Behavior under stress: procrastination, inactivity, missed deadlines/deadlines</li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Conflicts with colleagues, superiors or subordinates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Desire to avoid responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling overwhelmed by new tasks</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Someone is constantly taking control or delegating everything</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Frequent absence or unreliability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Resistance to change or new ideas</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** A student who constantly calls in sick to avoid presentations (Flight).

**Example 2:** An employee who always says: “We've always done it this way” and resists change (freeze).

## Level 9: Physical and Psychological Effects

Long-term stress can have serious health consequences. Understanding these effects is crucial in order to take early countermeasures and protect our health.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ High blood pressure, cardiovascular problems (increased risk of heart attack)</li> <li>▷ Muscle tension (including pain and migraines)</li> <li>▷ Irritable bowel syndrome &amp; nausea due to constant anxiety and nervousness</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Mental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Burnout risk</li> <li>▷ Personality disorders: antisocial or narcissistic tendencies due to constant dominance and aggression</li> <li>▷ Impulse control disorders: Difficulty controlling impulses, leading to rash actions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Gastrointestinal problems</li> <li>▷ Sleep disorders</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Mental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Anxiety disorders: Generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder</li> <li>▷ Avoidant personality disorder: social isolation, fear of rejection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Tiredness</li> <li>▷ Exhaustion</li> <li>▷ Weakened immune system</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Mental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Depression: feelings of helplessness and hopelessness</li> <li>▷ Dissociative disorders: Disconnection from thoughts, identity or consciousness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>How we notice it</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Persistent physical complaints without a clear cause</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feeling of exhaustion or listlessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Mood swings or persistent sadness</li> </ul>
<i>What we see in others</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Behavioral changes, e.g. irritability</li> <li>▶ Signs of burnout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Changes in behavior, e.g. withdrawal</li> <li>▶ Frequent sick notes or health complaints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Signs of depression and boreout</li> <li>▶ Frequent sick notes or health complaints</li> </ul>

**Example 1:** An entrepreneur who is constantly in fight mode develops heart problems (Fight).

**Example 2:** A person who constantly withdraws suffers from social isolation and depression (Flight).