

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE

All humans get anxious. Our brains have developed so that our bodies react when we don't feel safe.

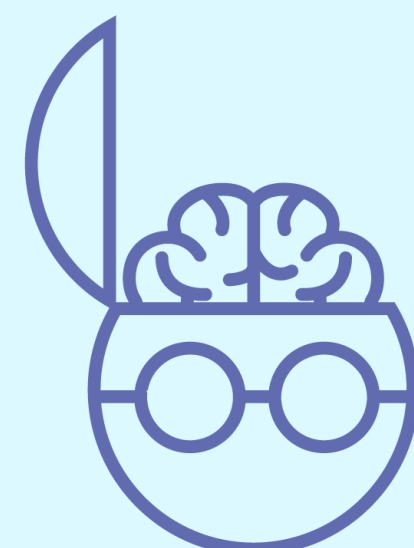
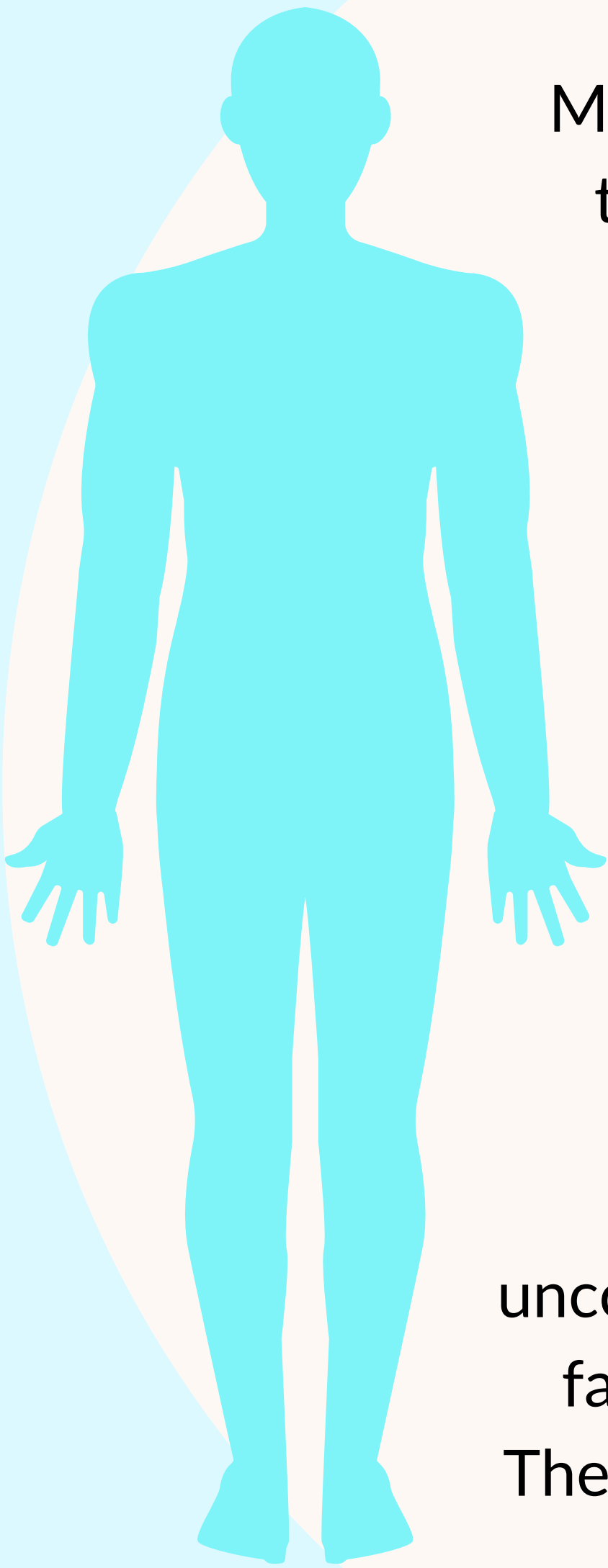
Many years ago there were lots of dangers, so the brain learned to keep us safe through a reaction called "**fight or flight**".

Our brains detect a threat or danger, but this might not be real. Brains sometimes get it wrong.

The body releases chemicals including cortisol and adrenaline, which help us jump into action and get to safety. The chemicals may make us angry, anxious, or both.

The reaction creates lots of funny or uncomfortable sensations in the body such as a fast heartbeat, sore tummy, tense muscles. These won't hurt you. They will pass when you feel calm again.

You may feel exhausted once the fight or flight response has passed. Your body has been working very hard.



TATF
THEY ARE THE FUTURE

lightheaded
& dizzy

red face

dry
mouth

easily
irritated

vision changes/
tunnel vision

breathing speeds up,
becomes shallow rather
than deep

your heart
beats faster

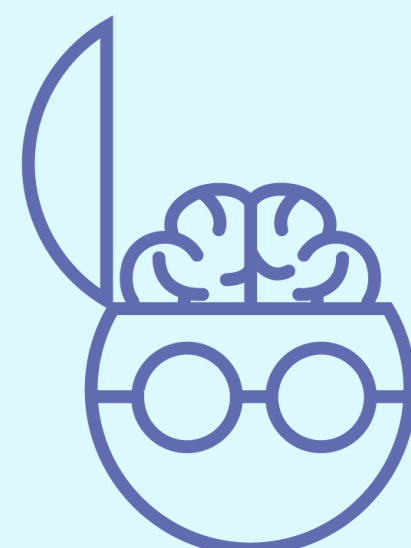
tummy ache or
"butterflies"

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

cold, sweaty,
shaky or tingling
hands

SYMPTOMS YOU MIGHT NOTICE

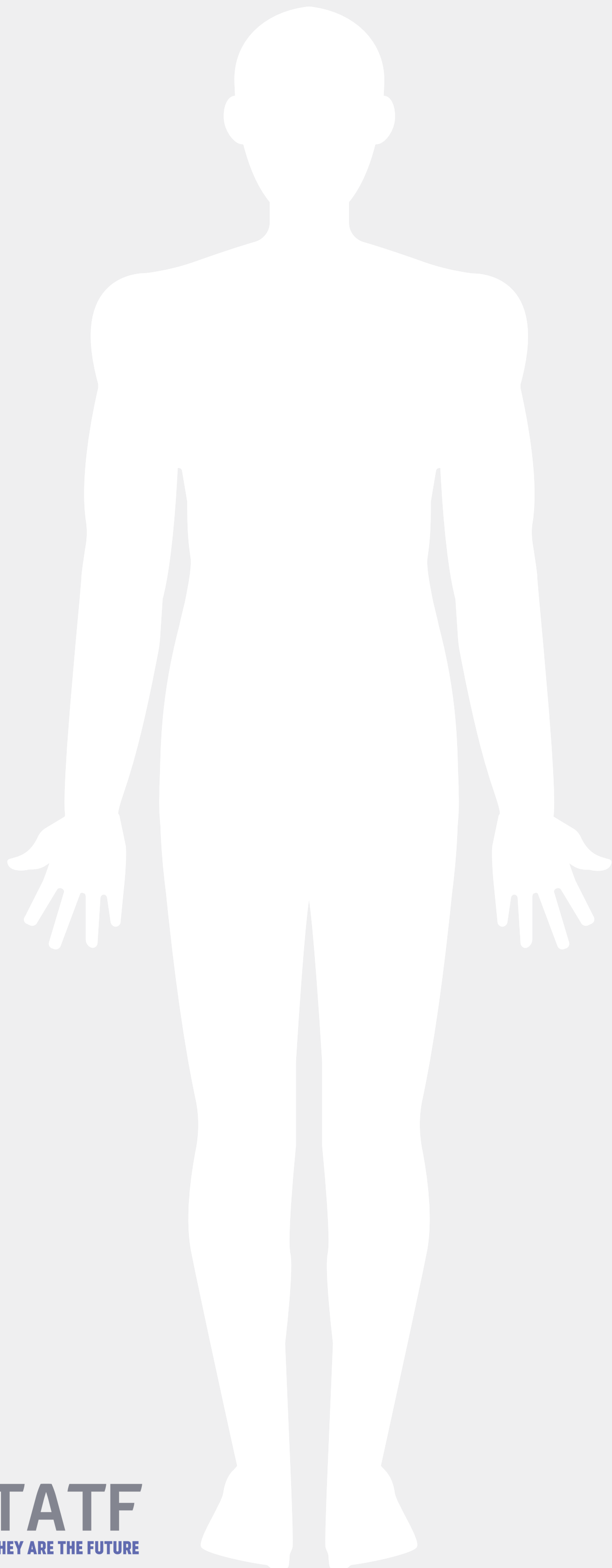
tense or
tight
muscles



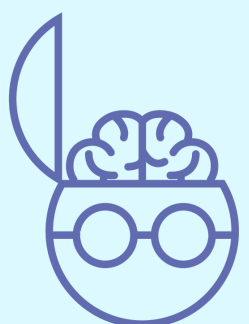
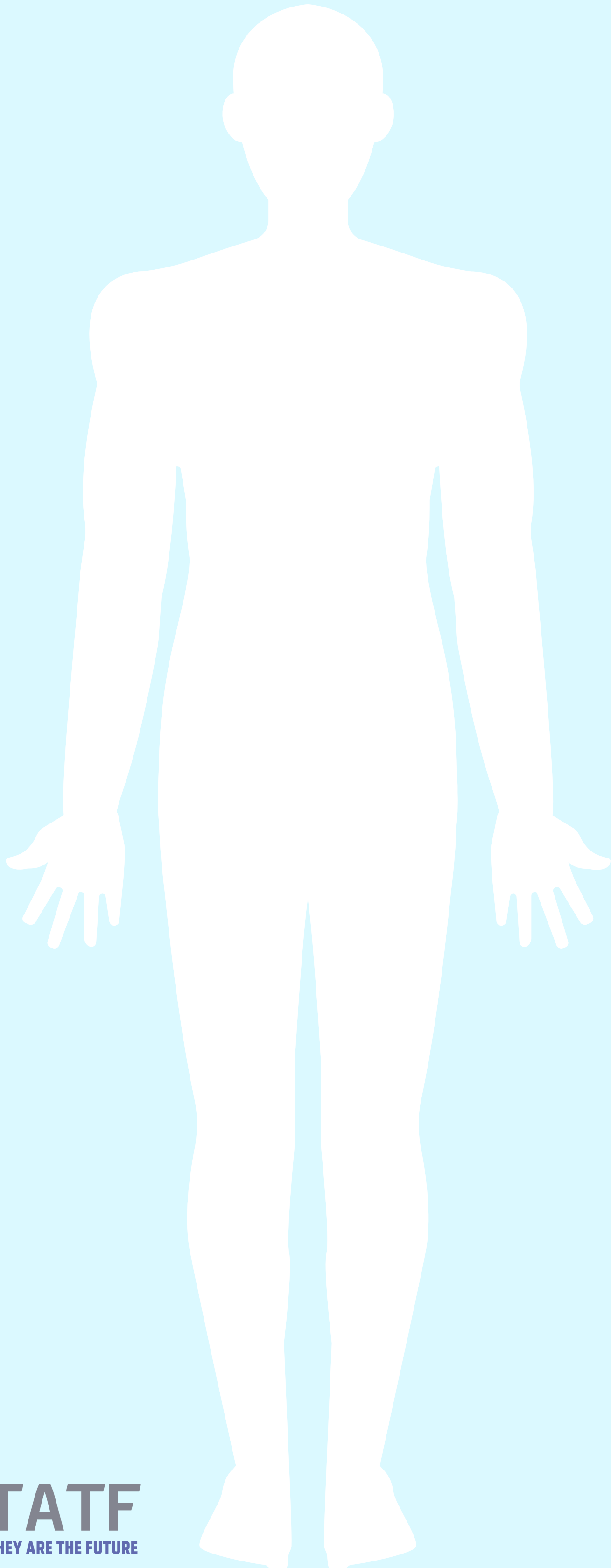
TATF
THEY ARE THE FUTURE

IT'S DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE

WHAT SYMPTOMS DO YOU NOTICE?



WHAT ARE YOUR COMMON TRIGGERS?



KEY TIPS TO HELP YOU MANAGE **FIGHT OR FLIGHT** SYMPTOMS

1. Remember that fight or flight is a normal response. It's just your body trying to keep you safe.
2. Remember that you can learn to control the fight or flight response, for example by slowing your breathing. It takes time and practise.
3. Know that the sensations will pass.
4. If possible seek out a quiet and comfortable space to take a break and recharge.
5. If you can, connect with a pet or animal, close family member or trusted friend to help you contain the response. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Remember, this is a common and normal reaction.
6. Very slow, deep breaths are your most powerful weapon against the fight or flight response. They tell your body that the danger has passed and trigger the parasympathetic nervous system (the "rest and digest" response).
7. Engage your senses: Focus on something pleasant to look at, listen to, smell, taste, or touch to help shift your focus away from the fight or flight trigger.
8. Distraction can be a helpful "in the moment" tool to get you through a fearful situation. For example, if you are scared of lifts (elevators) but need to get into one, sing your favourite song in your head or count backwards in 3s from 100. This will prevent your thoughts spiralling.
9. Create a safety plan for yourself that includes coping strategies, support people/animals, and emergency contact information.

