

## Your Stone Age Brain

Modern humans originated in Africa within the past 200,000 years. Life could be hard, and many people died young. If you were born 200,000 years ago you would have lived in a small group and would know most of the people in your tribe. Being part of a group meant safety in numbers. Dangers or threats in those times included:



Cold



Hunger



Other people



Dangerous animals



Being excluded from your group

Our brains haven't changed much since the Stone Age, and they are well-designed to detect these kinds of real-world threats. We still have much of the same programming that developed to help our ancestors to survive in those times. This programming makes it easy for us to feel afraid and respond to danger by:



Freezing, hiding, or 'playing dead'



Running away



Fighting or acting aggressively

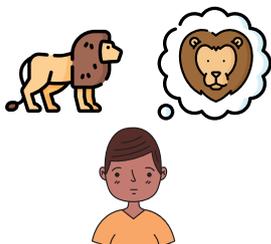
The changes that happen in your brain and body which get you ready to act in these ways are called the **fight or flight response**. Being programmed to respond in these ways helped your ancestors to survive by prompting them to act quickly and automatically when danger was near. We all still have the same programming, and we all have the urge to react in these ways when we sense a danger.

## Modern downsides of your Stone Age brain

Your Stone Age brain is incredibly well-evolved for detecting threats and setting off your fight or flight response. However, it comes with a couple of downsides:



**Better safe than sorry.** Your brain operates on the *better safe than sorry principle*. It would rather set off ten 'false alarms' than miss one real danger. This means that you are prone to suddenly feeling afraid, even when there is no real danger.



**Reality vs. imagination.** Your brain isn't very good at telling the difference between real threats in the world vs. imagined threats that you are just thinking about. Sometimes it will set off the fight or flight response for imagined threats.