

Which Survival Strategy Are You Running On?

A guide from Dee Ryan | The Worthy Therapist



Something feels off. You can't quite name it — but you're tired in a way that sleep doesn't fix. You keep saying yes when you mean no. Or you keep moving so you don't have to stop. Or you feel like you're always one wrong word away from everything falling apart.

This isn't a personality flaw. It's a survival strategy. And it made complete sense once.

FAWN

This is the woman who...

- Says yes when every part of her means no
- Feels responsible for how everyone else feels
- Apologises before she's even done anything wrong
- Loses track of what she actually wants

Your nervous system learned: if I keep everyone happy, I stay safe.

FLIGHT

This is the woman who...

- Stays perpetually busy so she doesn't have to feel
- Equates achievement with being loved or safe
- Overthinks everything — the planning never stops
- Rests, then feels guilty for resting

Your nervous system learned: if I stay in motion, nothing can catch me.

FIGHT

This is the woman who...

- Goes from 0 to 100 — and hates herself for it
- Pushes people away before they can leave
- Reads criticism into neutral comments
- Protects herself by staying one step ahead

Your nervous system learned: if I stay in control, I won't get hurt.

FREEZE

This is the woman who...

- Goes blank when she needs to speak up most
- Shuts down when things feel too big
- Numbs out — scrolling, wine, TV, anything
- Feels invisible, even in rooms full of people

Your nervous system learned: if I go still, I become safe.

A Few Things Worth Knowing

Before you decide what this means about you

Most women use more than one strategy.

You might fawn at work and freeze at home. That's not inconsistency — that's your nervous system reading different environments and responding accordingly.

None of this is a character flaw.

You didn't choose your survival strategy. Your nervous system chose it for you when you were young and needed a way to stay safe, connected, or loved.

The woman who can't stop doing. The woman who can't say no. The woman who goes quiet in the middle of an argument. The woman who snaps before she even knows she's angry. These aren't flaws — they are intelligent adaptations.

The problem is that they're still running. Long after the danger has passed.

What actually changes things

Not willpower. Not positive thinking. Not deciding to be different.

Change happens at nervous system level.

When your body learns — really learns — that it is safe to slow down, safe to say no, safe to be seen, safe to feel — the strategy begins to loosen.

Not because you forced it. Because you no longer need it.

If you recognised yourself in any of this —

I run four live workshops — one for each strategy — where we go deeper into how it shows up in your life and what starts to shift it.

www.theworthytherapist.com/survival-strategy-workshops

You don't have to keep running on survival mode.

