



# Fear Responses

When experiencing GBV

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# Stress responses

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- Flight
- Fight
- Freeze





# Female responses to stress research

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1932 fight and flight response coined (Cannon 1932)

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Before 1995 females constituted 17% of the research participants

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Between 1985 and 2000 females accounted for 34% of the studies

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Women have too many hormones due to their menstrual cycle that may give unpredictable results

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Diagnoses of hysteria which is basically women being hysterical hence the vibrator



# Relevance

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- Professor Ahmed Bawa, chief executive officer of Universities South Africa , 58% of the students in South African universities are women and 42% men.
- This shows us that we need more research that is relevant to our populations
- Higher Health study, 62% of students in South Africa consider themselves at high risk of gender-based violence
- With 26 HIEs and over 2 million students, statistics show that sexual violence is a major problem on campuses, with 20 to 25% of women reporting sexual abuse at universities.



# Tending

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- E. Taylor et al 2000 hypothesizes that males and females have different responses to stress
  - 1) Natural selection survival of the fittest and smartest.
  - 2) Females have greater role in care, so they pass on responses to stress.
  - 3) Female must choose a response that will ensure their safety and their offspring's
  - 4) Quietening and caring for offspring's and blending into the environment
  - 5) Fighting does not work when pregnant or caring for the young

# Befriend

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- Protection of self and young is challenge when alone
- females resort to being in social groups
- These groups increase the protection of both them and their young
- Creation of networks for survival
- Women more likely to be depressed
- Going to the bathroom together
- Girls love bad boys



# Trauma and the tend and befriend response

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- When women are threatened, they try to tend and befriend their perpetrator
- Making themselves more compliant and loveable
- They negotiate their way to safety
- Please do not hurt me I will not fight you
- You can take anything you want just don't hurt me or my baby
- Do not hurt me when raping





## We all do it

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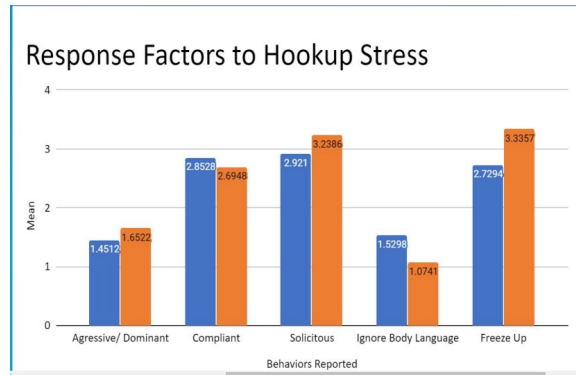
- Studies show that people who are more educated and have high income are more likely to use tend and befriend regardless of sex
- When studying just men, it was found that those who experienced stress were more likely to act prosocially when making group decisions than those that did not experience stress
- In a similar vein, recent research has found that, within sexes, young women and men both use tend-and-befriend behaviors more than any other stress response
- This finding is consistent with evolutionary hypotheses as to why it might be beneficial for men to also use tend-and-befriend behaviors as they had to hunt and fight wars
- Women also use flight behaviors, not just tend-and-befriend behaviors, more than men, suggesting that sex differences may lie in fight-or-flight behaviors, not just tend-and-befriend



# Reported behaviors

Rotated Factor Loading	
<b>Aggressive/Dominant (<math>\alpha=.89</math>)</b>	
I tend to be more aggressive.	0.84
I tend to be more assertive.	0.74
I tend to be a little more (too) dominant.	0.70
<b>Compliant (<math>\alpha=.81</math>)</b>	
I try to please others more.	0.64
I'm more compliant.	0.62
I tend to say yes to things I wouldn't normally or don't feel comfortable doing.	0.60
I'm a little too suggestable.	0.56
I stay in the situation when I would prefer to leave	0.47
<b>Sollicitous (<math>\alpha=.79</math>)</b>	
I tend to talk too much.	0.60
I tend to smile more.	0.58
I get overly friendly.	0.54
I tend to laugh nervously.	0.46
I share too much about myself.	0.45
<b>Ignore Body Language (<math>\alpha=.86</math>)</b>	
I ignore others' body language.	0.84
I don't pick-up on body language as much.	0.73
<b>Freeze (<math>\alpha=.70</math>)</b>	
I get quiet.	0.70
I tend to freeze up.	0.58

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Equamax with Kaiser Normalization.



# Attachment as a predictor

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- Levy et al (2019) hypothesized that attachment was a better predictor of fear responses
- Anxiously attached adults fear abandonment and cling to romantic partners or other supports. They are also easily disappointed and often worried, especially in relationship contexts (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016)
- Avoidantly attached individuals tend to shun intimacy, preferring isolation and often lacking empathy, caring, or other attributes designed to enhance interpersonal interaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016)





## findings

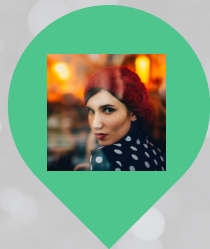
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- Attachment anxiety positively correlated with and predicted fight and flight, but not tend/befriend
- Avoidant attachment negatively correlated with and predicted tend/befriend responses.

## Three ways of experiencing GBV



VERBAL



VISUAL



PHYSICAL

# What is it?

Unwelcome sexual advances

Requests for sexual favours

Negative comments about a group or person



# Who can get harassed

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- Anyone by anyone
- Anywhere
- Any relationship





# What does it look like

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- Making conditions of employment or advancement dependent on sexual favors, either explicitly or implicitly.
- Physical acts of sexual assault.
- Requests for sexual favors.
- Verbal harassment of a sexual nature, including jokes referring to sexual acts or sexual orientation.
- Unwanted touching or physical contact.
- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Discussing sexual relations/stories/fantasies at work, school, or in other inappropriate places.
- Feeling pressured to engage with someone sexually.
- Exposing oneself or performing sexual acts on oneself.
- Unwanted sexually explicit photos, emails, or text messages

# What to do if harassed?

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- Tell them to stop
- Show them you are uncomfortable
- Report the harassment
- Collect evidence





# What responses do we get in therapy

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- Student do not believe that they were raped? I just froze or I said he could
- Students self blame? Self hate
- Fear of telling other because they will blame me
- Scared to say I did not say no because then it was not rape





# Recommendations

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- Educate students of these responses
- Use these responses as a strength
- Normalize the use of these responses
- Proactive education
- Have research based on race and environment