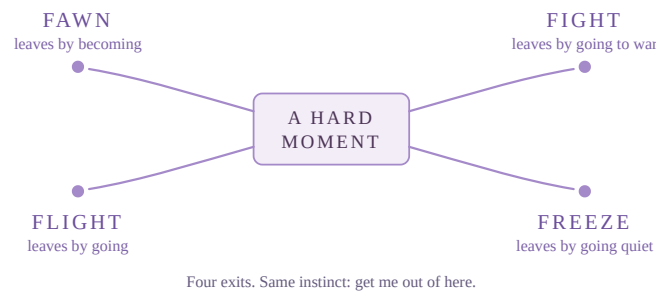


Four Ways of Leaving the Room

"Not all of our thoughts are true. Sometimes they are a story. And we have the power to write a new story every day."

Everybody leaves. When a moment gets bigger than your nervous system can hold, your body does something to get you out of it, and it tends to do the same something every time. That's your trauma response. It isn't a character flaw and it isn't a diagnosis, it's the exit your body learned back when leaving was the only safe move on offer. There are four. See if you find yours here, and hold it lightly, because you know you better than any list does.



FAWN

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The yes that's out of your mouth before you've checked whether you mean it. The apology for things that aren't yours.

WHAT IT COSTS

You lose track of what you actually want, and the resentment shows up later, alone.

WHAT IT PROTECTS

The peace. Somewhere, once, keeping the peace was the job that kept you safe.

THE SMALLEST WAY BACK

One small true preference, said out loud. "I'd rather do Thursday."

FIGHT

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The sharp reply already loaded. Heat in your chest before you've decided anything.

WHAT IT COSTS

You pay for the fire twice, once when it lands and again when you turn it on yourself.

WHAT IT PROTECTS

Something tender. The guard went up because going soft wasn't safe.

THE SMALLEST WAY BACK

One true sentence, said at the volume of a weather report. "That bothered me."

FLIGHT

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The phone in your hand mid-conversation. A calendar so full the feelings can't find a parking space.

WHAT IT COSTS

You're seldom in the room you're standing in, including the good rooms.

WHAT IT PROTECTS

It got you out. Staying wasn't safe once, and going was smart.

THE SMALLEST WAY BACK

One extra minute in a moment you'd usually exit. One minute, not forever.

FREEZE

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The task you can see but can't start. An evening that disappears without your permission.

WHAT IT COSTS

The world calls it lazy, and after a while you start believing the world.

WHAT IT PROTECTS

It sheltered you when there was no way out and no way through. You were never gone, you were sheltering.

THE SMALLEST WAY BACK

Halve the task until it feels almost silly, then do that version. Not the dishes, one cup.

Your pattern isn't the enemy

I won't tell you your trauma response is secretly a superpower, because it isn't, and you deserve better than that. Mine has cost me a great deal. But it isn't only a wound either. The same wiring that had me managing other people's moods like weather is the wiring that makes me good at a hospital bedside, where reading a room is the whole job.

The difference is whether you chose it. A pattern you can see coming, turn on, use, and then set down is working for you. A pattern that runs without asking you first is running you. The work isn't deleting the response, it's getting a say in when it runs. And you can't change a pattern you haven't met, so the first move, before any technique, is catching it happening in real time, without stopping it and without shaming it.

A PRACTICE: THE TEN-SECOND LANDING

Three times today, when nothing is wrong, practice the pause. Nobody learns CPR during the emergency.

1. Press your feet gently into the floor.
2. One slow breath in, then a long exhale, like you're fogging a window.
3. Name three things you can see.

Tie it to something you already do: the kettle, the car, the phone charger. If focusing on your breath feels like too much today, skip it. Feet and three things is a full rep.

A PRACTICE: THE FIRST REACH

Once today, after any stressful moment, even a tiny one, pause for thirty seconds and ask: what did I just reach for? The yes, the heat, the phone, the fog? Write down one line. No judging, no fixing. You're a scientist today, and everything you notice is data.

Your response was never proof something's wrong with you. It's proof something happened to you, and you got yourself through it the only way you could.

IF YOU WANT TO GO FURTHER

Find your pattern. The trauma response quiz takes about three minutes and it's free. Your result comes with an honest explanation instead of a label.

carriedavidson.com/quiz

Then work it. The Pattern Reset is a five-day nervous system challenge built for your specific response. Ten minutes a day, one small new experience for your body each day, which is the only way any of this actually shifts.

carriedavidson.com/pattern-reset

You are not broken. You are patterned. And patterns can change.

Carrie Davidson, BSPH, BSN, RN · Trauma Recovery Coach · carriedavidson.com · © 2026 Conscious Coaching Collective, PLLC. Share it freely, with credit.

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