

When your brain perceives danger, your body and mind will go instantly into one of three modes—flight, fight, or freeze. Your heart races, your body tenses up, your hands shake, and your emotions take over rational thought.

## You've entered The Flood Zone.

When children experience The Flood Zone, their behavior changes. They yell, bite, or run away. They withdraw and lose concentration. They blame and lie. In this state, children are unable to be rational, regulated, or otherwise compliant. Even the most motivated child (or adult) with the greatest coping strategies won't be able to identify or manage their emotions in The Flood Zone.

In *Flooded*, counselor and bestselling author, Allison Edwards explains how parents, teachers, and counselors can identify when children have entered The Flood Zone. She also offers suggestions for teaching children (and adults!) how to regain control of their emotions.

In this book, you'll get:

- An overview of how the brain interacts with emotions
- Understanding of the role of trauma in emotional health
- Explanation of why children can't respond rationally in stressful circumstances
- Techniques for teaching children how to regulate emotions
- Suggestions for setting up your classroom or office to improve emotional awareness
- Strategies for improving interactions with children at school and home

As educators, parents, and professionals, we need to teach children and teens how to identify their emotions, learn what triggers those feelings, and provide strategies to manage their feelings in a healthy way. This book explains how.



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her undergraduate degree in Education from Northwest Missouri State and a graduate degree in Counseling from Vanderbilt University.

Before opening a private practice, Allison developed and maintained a play therapy program for at-risk and immigrant children in the public school system. In her current practice, she sees children of all ages, consults with parents, supervises counselors, and writes about childhood anxiety. She also serves as an Affiliate Professor at Vanderbilt University where she enjoys teaching future counselors how to work with kids.



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# HOW THE BRAIN PROCESSES EMOTIONS

The brain is a highly complex system that regulates every function in the body. It controls learning, emotion regulation, thinking, understanding complex ideas, and initiating movement throughout the body. It sends and receives messages all day, every day to help our bodies function. Its primary job is to keep us alive, and it will do whatever necessary to ensure that happens. Survival is the brain's highest priority, and fear is the emotional signal it sends, letting us know danger is near.

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The brain has always alerted us to danger, but the environment has changed. Back when humans lived in caves, if you heard a sound in the middle of the night and said to yourself, "Ah, it's probably nothing," you would likely be killed by an animal or intruder. Today, you might be able to ignore the noise because you have a security system, a large dog that will let out a scary bark, or a cell phone on which you can quickly dial 9-1-1. From a

## EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO POTENTIAL DANGER:



### FIGHT

Attack

Anger

Insult

Blame



### FLIGHT

Panic

Fear

Avoid

Sabotage



### FREEZE

Shut Down

Confused

Comply

Silence

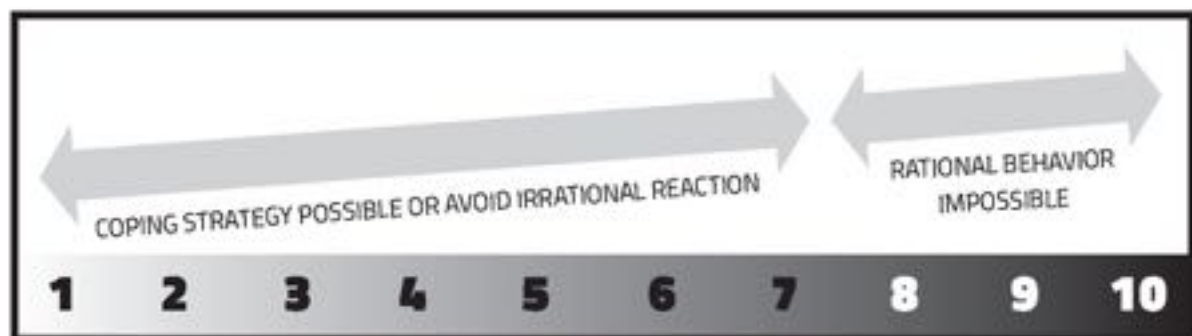
## PHYSICAL RESPONSES TO POTENTIAL DANGER:

**Dilated pupils:** In times of danger, the body heightens its awareness of the immediate surroundings. When pupils become dilated, more light enters the eyes, resulting in better vision.

**Pale or flushed skin:** Blood moves to the muscles, brain, legs, and arms so the body is prepared to run or fight. This shift in blood flow throughout the body causes pale skin.

# THE FLOOD ZONE

The Flood Zone occurs when there is no blood left at the top of the brain. Being “flooded” occurs when you can no longer think rationally, manage emotions, or trust yourself to have healthy conversations with others. On a number line from 1-10 with 10 being the most intense and 1 being the least, The Flood Zone occurs at an 8 or higher. From 1-7, we might be able to utilize a coping strategy or talk ourselves out of an irrational reaction. Once we reach an 8 or above, rational thought and behavior is not possible.



The Flood Zone causes problems for all of us. We will act out in ways we later regret, give unfair consequences to our kids, and say the first thing that pops into our head without thinking about how the other person will perceive it. This occurs in adults whose brains are mature, so kids have an even harder time managing The Flood Zone because their brains are not fully developed. The brain is not fully developed until around 25 years of age,<sup>7</sup> and the area of the brain that connects the left (logical) and right (creative), called the Corpus Callosum, is not fully developed until most kids graduate college.