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“FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE OR FAITH: THE LEADERSHIP CHOICE”



THE REALITY OF LEADERSHIP



“Fight. Flight. Freeze. Faith: The Leadership Choice”

“Have you ever had a moment as a leader when everything just... stopped? A tough decision, bad news, a setback—and suddenly your instincts kicked in. Maybe you felt the urge to push back, to retreat, or maybe you didn’t know what to do at all. That’s the human side of leadership.

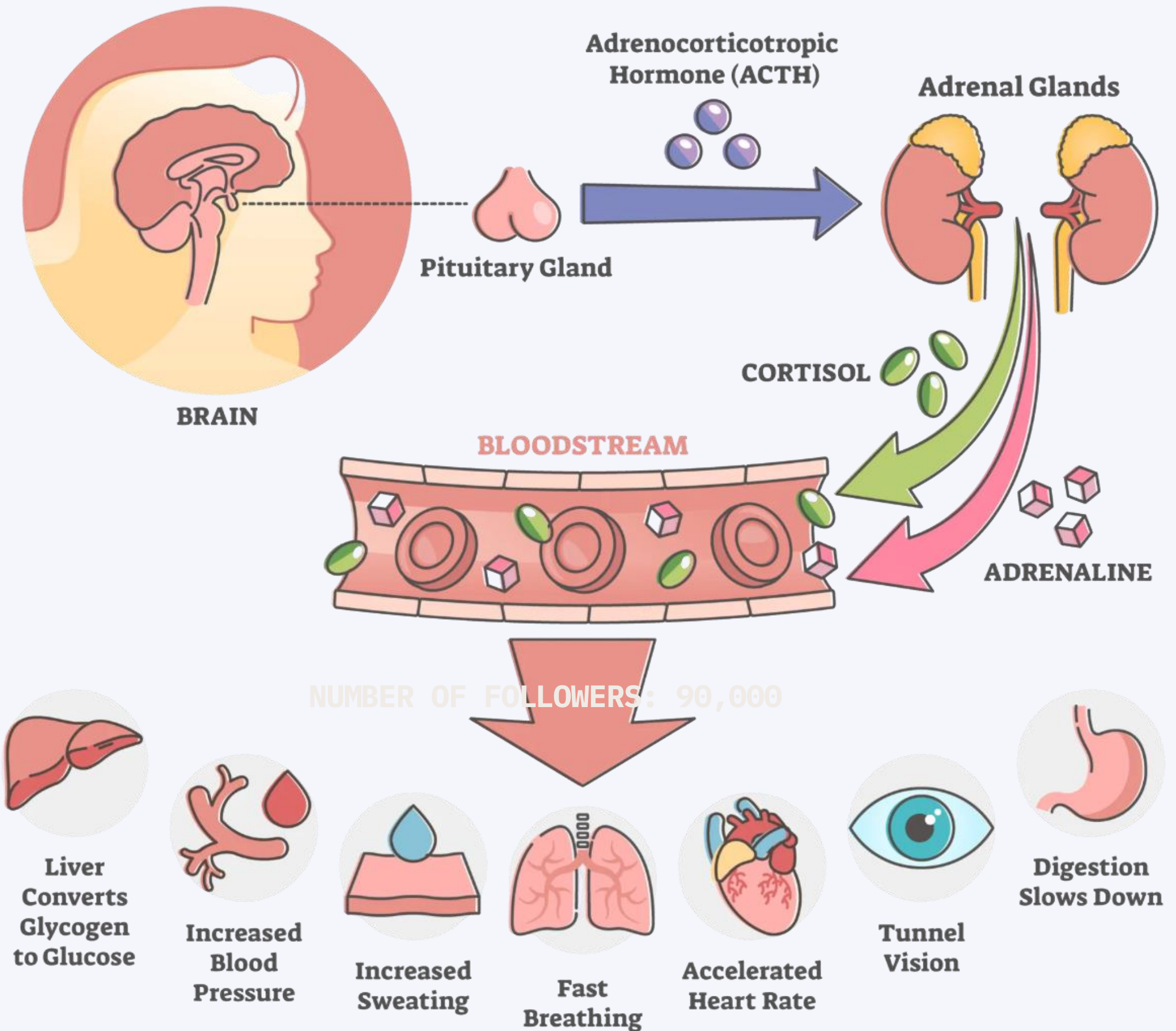
No matter whether you lead a small team, a big organization, or a community project, every leader faces these instinctive reactions. But there’s also a higher choice available to us—one that can shift everything,

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE



THE HUMAN SIDE OF LEADERSHIP

STRESS RESPONSE



FIGHT



FIGHT

- Fight is our instinct to push back and take control head-on.
- In conflict, we often react before we have perspective.
- Sometimes we fight the wrong enemy—each other—instead of the real problem



FIGHT: THE DANGER



01

UNCHANNЕLED FIGHT BURNS bridges and cultures.

02

WE CAN WIN THE ARGUMENT BUT LOSE THE RELATIONSHIP OR THE ROOM.

03

LEADERS OFTEN END UP APOLOGIZING FOR fights that never needed to happen.

FIGHT: THE BEE STORY



- A honeybee can only sting once; then it dies.
- The stinger sticks, and the bee pays a permanent price.
- Some “stings” in leadership—words, emails, decisions—have lasting consequences.

FIGHT: THE WIN

- Fight isn't bad; it just needs direction.
- Strategic fight focuses on the real issue, not the person.
- Strategic fight builds solutions and protects relationships.



FLIGHT



FLIGHT: NOT ALWAYS COWARDICE



- “Flight isn’t always cowardice. Sometimes stepping back saves you.”
- Flight can be a pause to listen, gather facts, and cool down.
- It is not disappearing; it’s creating space to get it right.

sometimes...

*Flight can be a strategic
retreat*

FLIGHT:

WISDOM VS. AVOIDANCE

- Used well:
 - Step back, regroup, pray/reflect, get counsel
 - Return with a clearer plan and tone
- Used poorly:
 - Ghosting hard conversations
 - Delaying decisions until opportunities die

FREEZE: THE SHOCK



FREEZE:



- Freeze is that moment of shock when you don't know what to do.
- Sometimes that pause protects you from saying what you'll regret.
- A deep breath can be warranted.

FREEZE: THE RISK

- Freeze becomes dangerous when it turns into permanent indecision.
- Boards and teams suffer when leaders stay stuck.
- Leadership demands movement—even small steps.



**“THE GREATEST WEAPON
AGAINST STRESS IS OUR ABILITY
TO CHOOSE ONE THOUGHT OVER
ANOTHER.”**

– WILLIAM JAMES

WHICH “F” DO YOU DEFAULT TO?

In your last big
challenge, did you:

- a. Fight too fast?
- b. Take Flight and
avoid?
- c. Freeze and
stay stuck?

CASE STUDY

The Budget Meeting

The Finance Director walks into what is expected to be a routine leadership meeting. Midway through the agenda, the CFO announces that a 15% budget cut will take effect immediately across all departments. The Board's programs are already operating with limited staff and resources—they will be significantly impacted.

**WHAT WOULD IT HAVE
LOOKED LIKE TO ADD
FAITH TO THAT MOMENT?**

FAITH: THE ANCHOR

- Faith doesn't ignore reality; it anchors you in values and vision.
- Faith-led leadership pushes people forward despite fear.
- Fear-led leadership always shrinks vision.



F
E
A
R

FACE

EVERYTHING

AND

RISE



FAITH IN PRACTICE

- Faith asks: "What are my core values here?"
- Faith remembers: "These are my _____, not my enemies."
- Faith steadies your tone, timing, and decisions.





- Am I fighting the right fight—or just fighting?
- Is this a moment to step back or step in?
- If I freeze, what is one small move I can make?
- How can I lead with faith in my values, my team, and my vision?

FINAL CHARGE

- **FIGHT WHEN IT MATTERS.**
- TAKE FLIGHT WHEN YOU MUST.
- **FREEZE ONLY TO THINK.**
- BUT ALWAYS, ALWAYS, CHOOSE FAITH.

FREEDOM

- WHEN YOU LEARN WHEN TO FIGHT,
- WHEN TO TAKE FLIGHT,
- AND WHEN TO FREEZE,
- FAITH TURNS FEAR INTO FREEDOM.
- YOU LEAD WITH COURAGE, CLARITY, AND CONSISTENCY.

THANK YOU



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Case Study: The Budget Meeting

1

A department director walks into what is expected to be a routine leadership meeting. Midway through the agenda, the CFO announces that a 15% budget cut will take effect immediately across all departments. The director's program—already operating with limited staff and resources—will be significantly impacted.

Fight

The director reacts immediately and emotionally. They challenge the decision in front of peers, question leadership's judgment, and argue that the cut is unfair and unrealistic. While the concerns are valid, the delivery is confrontational.

Impact: The room becomes tense, collaboration shuts down, and the director's influence diminishes—even though the issue is real.

Flight

Another leader responds by withdrawing. They avoid engaging in the discussion, tell themselves they will “figure it out later,” and leave the meeting without asking questions or offering input.

Impact: Key decisions are delayed, staff are left without direction, and the problem grows due to avoidance.

Freeze

A third leader is caught completely off guard. They feel overwhelmed and say nothing—not because they lack ideas, but because they are processing the shock of the announcement.

Impact: Freeze provides a moment to breathe and reflect, but staying frozen too long results in missed opportunities to shape outcomes.

Faith & Forward Action

A fourth leader chooses a different path. They pause, take a breath, and respond with clarity rather than emotion. They ask for specifics—timelines, priorities, and non-negotiables. They assess what must be protected, what can be adjusted, and how to communicate the change to their team with transparency and calm leadership.

Outcome: The leader regains control—not by fighting, fleeing, or freezing—but by responding with disciplined confidence and intentional action.

Leadership Reflection

- Which response feels most natural to you under pressure?
 - When can a pause be productive—and when does it become harmful?
 - How can you practice moving from reaction to purposeful forward action?
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