SESSION PLAN

Youth Group: Ages 10 to 16

Topic: Feel It, Name It, Tame It: Understanding Fight or Flight

Learning objective:
- Explain the body's stress response in a simple, relatable way
- Help young people recognise their own reactions (fight, flight, freeze, fawn)
- Offer practical tools to calm down and respond safely
- Reduce shame or embarrassment about emotional reactions

Materials Needed:
- Scenario cards
- Printed body outlines
- Colouring pens or pencils
- Reflection cards or sticky notes

Icebreaker – "What Would You Do?" (3 minutes)

Instructions:
Read short, age-appropriate scenarios aloud. Ask students to act out or raise a hand to say how they'd feel or react.

Examples:
- A big dog runs toward you barking
- Someone pushes you in the corridor
- You forget your lines in a school play
- You see a fight at school

Then introduce the idea:
"These reactions are part of something really clever your body does to protect you – it's called the Fight or Flight response… and it's totally normal."

What is Fight or Flight? (4 minutes)

Simple Explanation:
- Our brain has a built-in alarm system (the amygdala) that helps keep us safe.
- When it thinks there's danger, it sends out a message to either:
  - Fight - stand up, shout, hit
  - Flight - run away, hide
  - Freeze - get stuck, can't move or speak
  - Fawn - try to please or agree to stay safe

Use relatable examples:
- A friend shouts at you (you freeze)
- You get in trouble at school (you try to explain or fawn)
- Someone starts on you in the street (you run away or square up)

Feel It, Name It (5 minutes)

Activity: "How Does It Feel in My Body?" Give each student a body outline (or draw one on a big sheet).

Ask them to:

- Colour or mark where they feel stress (racing heart, shaky hands, sweaty palms, sick belly)
- Discuss in pairs or as a group

Facilitator Notes: Explain this is how the body gets ready to act fast - but it's not always helpful. Sometimes we feel these even when there's no real danger, like in arguments or embarrassing moments.

Tame It - Calming Tools (5 minutes)

Teach 2 or 3 simple regulation strategies:

🟣 **Box Breathing**:
Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4. (Draw a box in the air with fingers)

🔵 **Grounding Technique - 5, 4, 3, 2, 1**:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

🟢 **Muscle Squeeze & Release**:
Tense all your muscles like a statue, hold for 5 seconds… then let go like melting jelly.

Ask:

- Which one would you try next time you feel overwhelmed or angry?

Closing Reflection (3 minutes)

Prompt:

- "One way I can calm myself when I feel stressed is…"
- Let each student write theirs on a card or say it out loud.

End by reminding them:
"Your brain is amazing. It's trying to protect you. But you're in charge - and you can help it calm down."

Optional Follow-Up:

- Create a calming toolkit or "chill corner" in the classroom
- Invite a mental health worker or youth mentor to talk about real-life regulation
- Encourage journal prompts like "When I felt overwhelmed, I…"