

Autonomic nervous system

Sympathetic & Parasympathetic

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Sympathetic branch

**Activates during
positive and negative stress states**

**Preparation for quick movement, leading to possible
fight reflex or flight reflex**

**Active during actual traumatic event OR during
flashback (visual, auditory and/or sensory)**

Noticeable signs:

Faster respiration
Quicker heart rate (pulse)
Increased blood pressure
Pupils dilate
Pale skin colour
Increased sweating
Skin cold (possibly clammy)
Digestion and peristalsis decreases

Parasympathetic branch

**Activates during
rest and relaxation**

**Can also activate concurrently with - while masking -
sympathetic activation leading to tonic immobility:
freezing reflex (like a mouse, caught by cat, going dead)**

**Usually active during rest and recovery, but
can be active during actual traumatic event OR during
flashback (visual, auditory and/or sensory)**

Noticeable signs:

Slower, deeper respiration
Slower heart rate (pulse)
Decreased blood pressure
Pupils constrict
Flushed skin colour

Skin dry (usually warm) to touch
Digestion and peristalsis increases

