AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

(smooth muscles)
(involuntary)

SYMPATHETIC BRANCH

Activates during positive **and** negative stress states including: sexual climax, rage, desperation, terror, anxiety/panic, trauma

Noticeable signs

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

During actual traumatic event OR with flashback (visual, auditory and/or sensory):

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

PARASYMPATHETIC BRANCH

States of activation include: rest and relaxation, sexual arousal, happiness, anger, grief, sadness

Noticeable signs

Slower, deeper respiration
Slower heart rate (pulse)
Decreased blood pressure
Pupils constrict
Flushed skin color
Skin dry (usually warm) to touch
Digestion (and peristalsis) increases

During actual traumatic event OR with flashback (visual, auditory and/or sensory):

Can also activate concurrently with, while masking, sympathetic activation leading to tonic immobility: freezing reflex (like a mouse, caught by a cat, going dead). Marked by simultaneous signs of high sympathetic and parasympathetic activation.

Rothschild, B. (2000). *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*. New York: W.W. Norton.

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