

## Exercise 5

# RECOGNISING YOUR OWN PRIMAL REACTION BASED ON THE 3 PRIMAL REACTIONS (FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE/HIDE)



### SITUATION

Guess each participant's primal reaction



### PARTICIPANTS

Variable



### MATERIAL

- **Appendix 1:** The three animals - print once separately
- **Appendix 2:** Examples of primal reactions - print for each participant
- **Appendix 3:** Tips for stepping out of your primal reaction - print per participant



### TIME

45 minutes

## OBJECTIVES

- Being aware of your natural reflex (primal reaction) towards inappropriate conduct
- Discovering your own primal reaction
- Be aware of your primal reaction and its associated feelings and limiting thoughts regarding a client's inappropriate conduct
- Be able to name your own primal reaction
- Step beyond your primal reaction and choose a professional reaction (assertive behaviour, giving feedback)



## SEQUENCE

### The trainer:

1. Distribute the paper printouts per animal (**Appendix 1**) and spread them across the room so that the participants can stand near them.
2. Ask the participants to recall a situation where a client showed inappropriate behaviour. This might be a harsh and disrespectful statement. Or a question that is out-of-place, a comment that is wrong or a gaze that is condescending, ... The participants need to choose a situation that caused them a lot of stress.

## Exercise 5

3. Ask them what their reaction was during the first seconds following the client's statement or behaviour and to share this with the group.
4. Start by giving a personal example. By giving a personal example, the trainer demonstrates that everyone has a primal reaction. They talk briefly about the situation (without naming anyone), their primal reaction and what their (negative) feelings and thoughts about it were. The trainer explains how the first reaction is a natural reaction. It is important to know that whatever your first, primal reaction may be, you can change this into a professional reaction.
5. Ask the participants to go and stand by the animal that behaves in the same way they do in a stressful situation.
6. Let the lions, hares and frogs tell the rest about their initial reactions. They will explain their thoughts and feelings. The feelings range from powerlessness, being overwhelmed, scared or shocked to anger and rage. The thoughts are mostly about themselves or the client.
7. Refer to the tips for stepping beyond your primal reaction (**Appendix 2**).

### Tip!

It is important for the trainer to not react judgementally. Correct reaction:

"That's a normal reaction. You were in a stressful situation and that is part of your primal reaction."

"Those are natural reactions."

"By saying what you think and feel, you can reflect and see what you can do next."

### 8. Decision:

Know what your primal reaction is. It's a natural reaction that differs from a professional reaction in which you give a clear answer.

If you react from your primal reaction, you don't resolve the situation. Anger begets anger. If you walk away or freeze, the client will not know they have crossed your boundary. This means that inappropriate conduct may be repeated in the future. A professional reaction is necessary.