

Lesson 3: Our Inner Hero, The Autonomic Nervous System

Discussion Questions

Teacher's Note: Before this lesson, think of a few personal examples like the Penny story when your own sympathetic nervous system was activated.

Student Questions

- Have you ever had to act fast to respond to an urgent situation? Have you ever been with someone who has had to act fast? (Turn to a partner and share a time when you had to think fast and respond to an urgent situation.)
- What are some signals that your body gives you when your sympathetic nervous system has been activated? How does it feel? (You can also word this more simply: Have you ever felt the need to *fight or flight*?)
- Brainstorm some strategies for returning to *rest and digest* after having a *fight, flight or excite* experience. Make a list together as a class or in small groups.
- When your sympathetic nervous system is activated, your body and brain think they are responding to an emergency. Have you ever felt the need to *fight or flight* when something really wasn't an emergency? (Share some personal examples, e.g., being nervous about a test, performing, etc. Getting mad or frustrated about something, etc.)

Teacher's Note: This is a wonderful opportunity to discuss how each person responds to things differently, and there is no right or wrong response to a situation. What might make one person nervous is easy and comfortable for another person. For students, this conversation will help create a safer, more understanding space for each person to feel comfortable with his or her own life experience and teach others to be more empathetic and understanding of one another. This concept will be further explored with the sorting activity in Lesson 3.