

# **Fight or flight or...?**

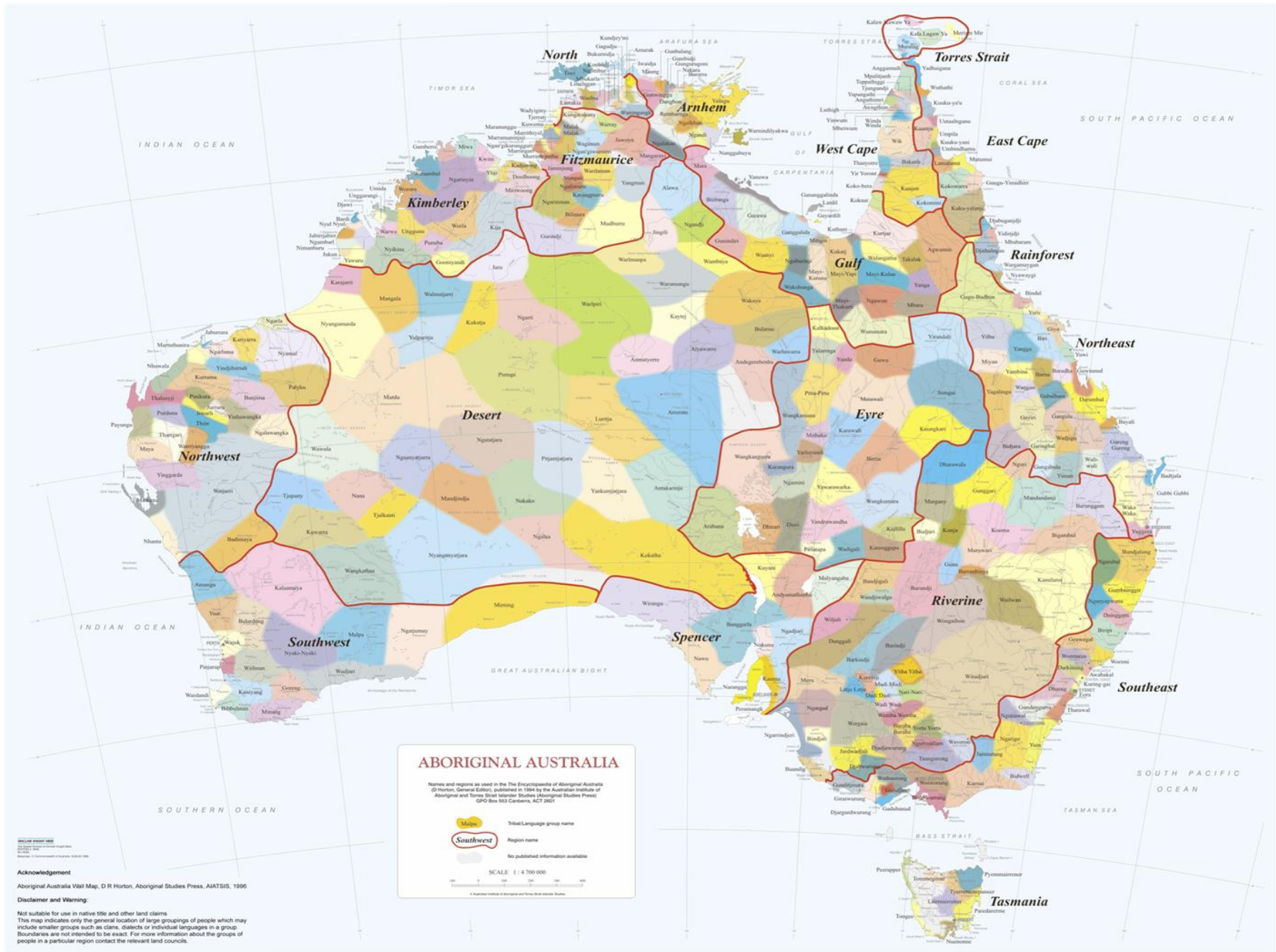
## *Victim reactions to interpersonal violence*

**Dr Angela Williams**

Senior Forensic Physician  
The Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine

**Associate Professor Vanita Parekh**

Sexual Health and Forensic Physician  
Director Clinical Forensic Medical Services



**ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA**

Names and regions as used in the *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia*  
 © Horton, General Editor, published in 1994 by the Australian Institute of  
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Aboriginal Studies Press)  
 GPO Box 543 Canberra, ACT 2601

|   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">Males</span>     | Tribal/Language group name         |
| <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">Southwest</span> | Region name                        |
|   | No published information available |

SCALE 1 : 4 700 000

© Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**  
 Aboriginal Australia Wall Map, D R Horton, Aboriginal Studies Press, AATSIS, 1996

**Disclaimer and Warning:**  
 Not suitable for use in native title and other land claims.  
 This map indicates only the general location of large groupings of people which may include smaller groups such as clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. Boundaries are not intended to be exact. For more information about the groups of people in a particular region contact the relevant land councils.

# EVERY TWO MINUTES

- Improve family violence services



## Melbourne: Mother's tribute after father kills son with cricket bat

14 February 2014 Last updated at 12:57 GMT

## THE PULSE: Police probe deaths of grandmother and young boy in Melbourne

April 1, 2015 6:23am

Son who killed mother says she went 'berserk' when he skipped piano practice  
Kamilla Palu, Jayne Stinson and agencies | January 27, 2016, 8:23 pm

## Man pleads not guilty to killing sister, stabbing her son

By Joanna Menagh  
Posted Thu at 2:20pm

A 43-year-old man has pleaded not guilty in Western Australia's Supreme Court to murdering his sister and attempting to kill his nephew.

MAP: Gidgegannup 6083

Hitting Home: The hard truth about Australia's domestic violence crime wave

OPINION  
By Sarah Ferguson  
Updated 26 Nov 2015, 9:34am  
It's hard to imagine in Australia today there is a need for refuges, places where women and children live protected by sensor alarms and



## Domestic violence victim speaks out after knifed 6 times in front of children by abusive Facebook boyfriend

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

25-02-2016

Lindsey Pawson suffered two collapsed lungs, a damaged liver, and wounds to her back, stomach and

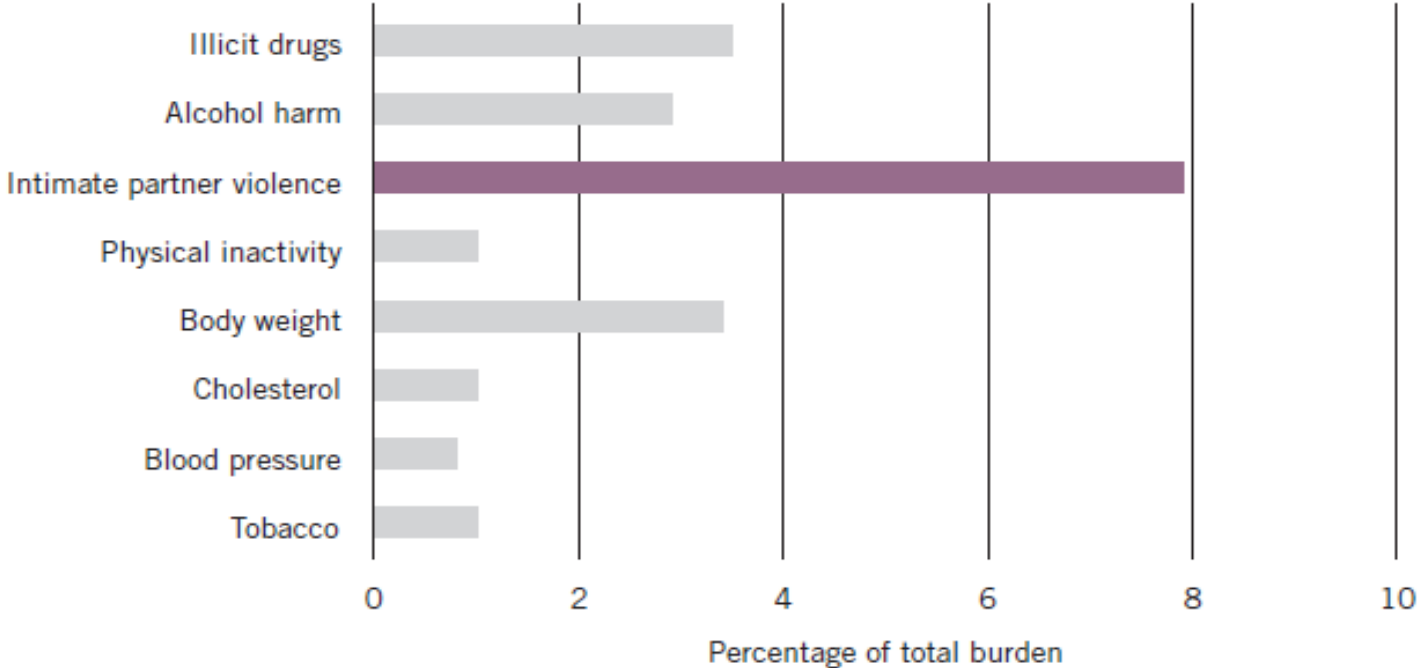
## The numbers that will shock you to tears

NOVEMBER 25, 2014 12:53PM

24



**Figure 2: Top eight risk factors contributing to the disease burden in women aged 15-44 years, Victoria, Australia, 2001**



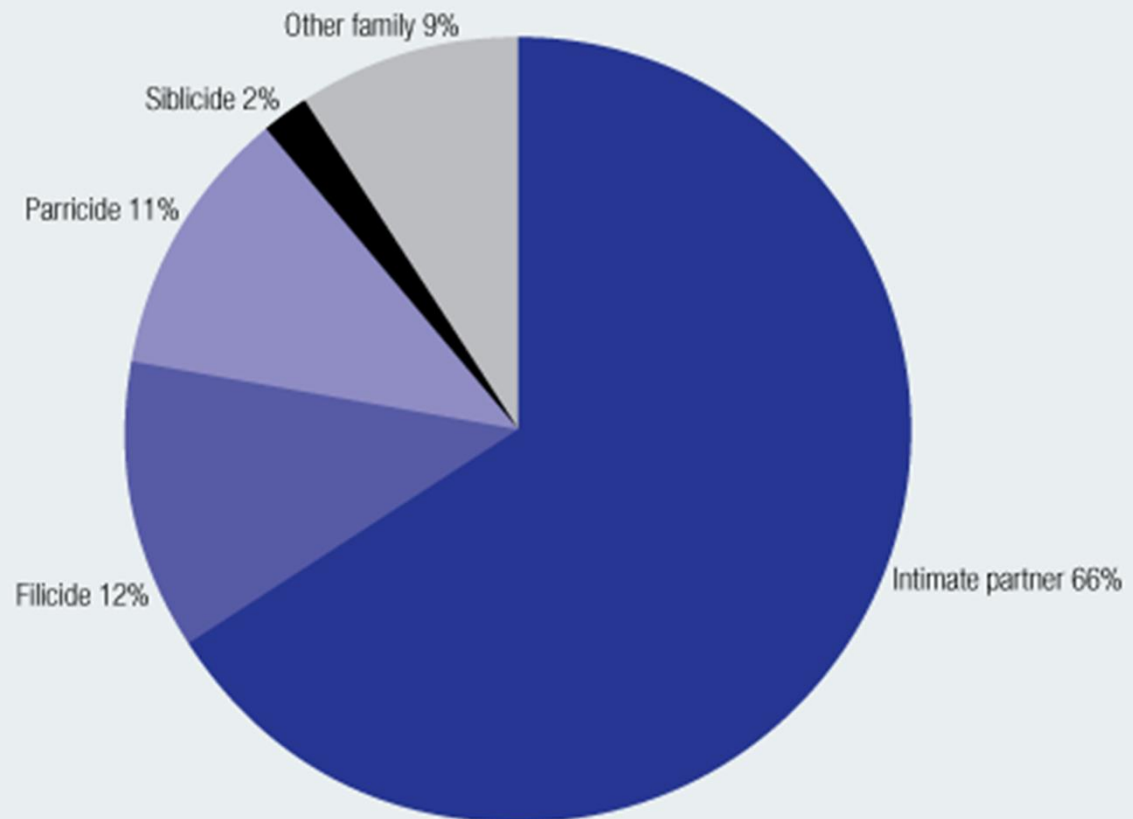
Some will never tell anyone

~~One~~ **Two** Australian women are murdered every week...

and children

and men

Domestic homicide incidents by sub-classification, 2008–10 (%)



# Consequences

- 40% of calls to Victoria Police were FV related
- Health impact – pregnancy/birth,
- Homelessness, isolation, education
- Alcohol and drugs
- Media impacts reporting rates and service response



# VicPol Offender Review:

- Current estimates:
- Offender with >3 victims = ● 26,000
- Offender with 5+ victims = ● 5,500
- Offender with 10+ victims = ● 1,500

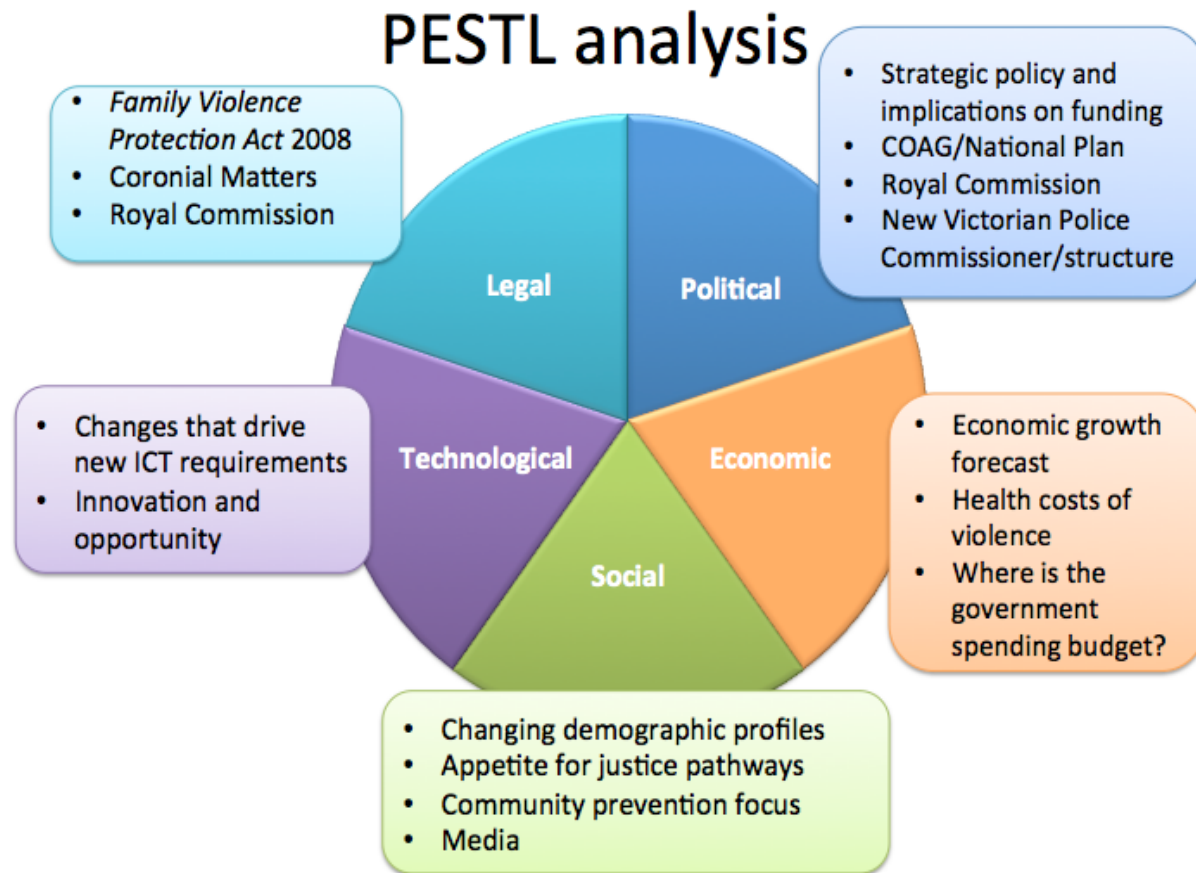





# CHILDREN ARE PRESENT

- More likely to be abused themselves
  - Less likely to receive healthcare
  - At risk of perpetrating violence
- 
- The cumulative impact of a child's repeated exposure to family violence may be as serious as direct victimisation

# Better placed to plan an effective strategy





✓ **Provide**  
comprehensive health services  
for survivors



✓ **Collect data**  
about prevalence, risk factors,  
and health consequences



✓ **Inform policies**  
to address violence against women



✓ **Prevent violence**  
by fostering and informing  
prevention programmes



✓ **Advocate**  
for the recognition of violence against  
women as a public health problem



# Strategy

- Reduce the incidence
- Prevention/early intervention
- Hold perpetrators to account
- Support victims
- Safety of future
- Systemic response
- Integration and coordination
- Multidisciplinary and coordinated
- Collect, evaluate and measure

# DILEMMAS

# Dilemma 1:

## Narrow window for reporting

- Research suggests women are on average assaulted between 3 and 7 times before reporting violence to police
- .... however after 5 assaults woman is increasingly unlikely to report to police
- Divorce/separation common factor in all studies of domestic homicide

## Dilemma 2: Demand & distribution of resources

- Number of victims/offenders
- Triaging service response to child victims/adults
- Single doorway approach
- 24 hr nationwide



# Data & Information Sharing

- Just victim identification?
  - or perpetrators, children etc
- Has the patient presented in childhood/adulthood
- Mandatory reporting
- Possible that multiple family members can access multiple service agencies but a coordinated response is not realised
- How do you connect multiple family member contacts?
- Data flags
- Predicted variables that inform future risk potential

# Evidence

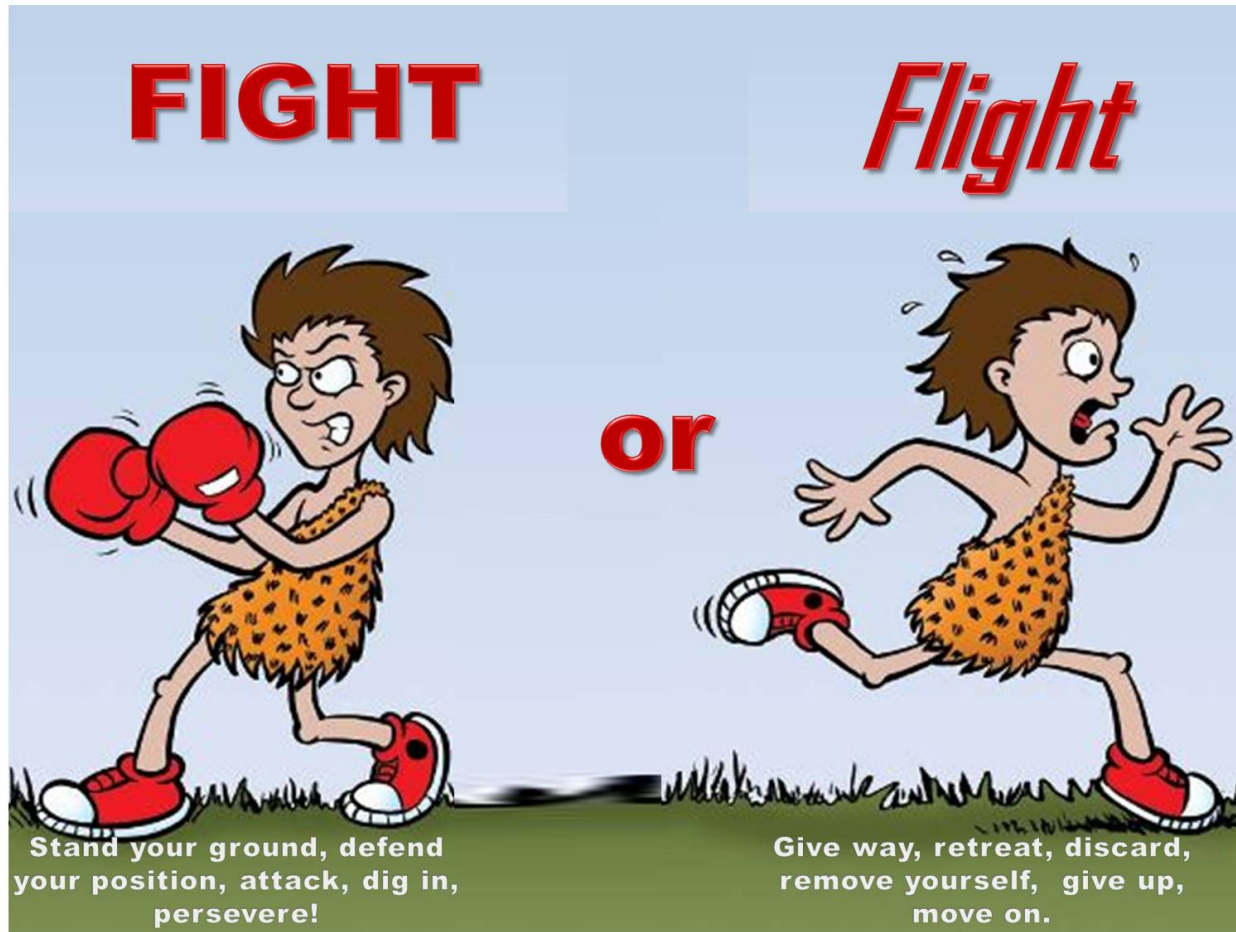
- 'Collating' and interpreting case files over time
- Interpreting injuries over time
- Determining 'seriousness'
  
- Victim reactions



# Reactions To Sexual Assault

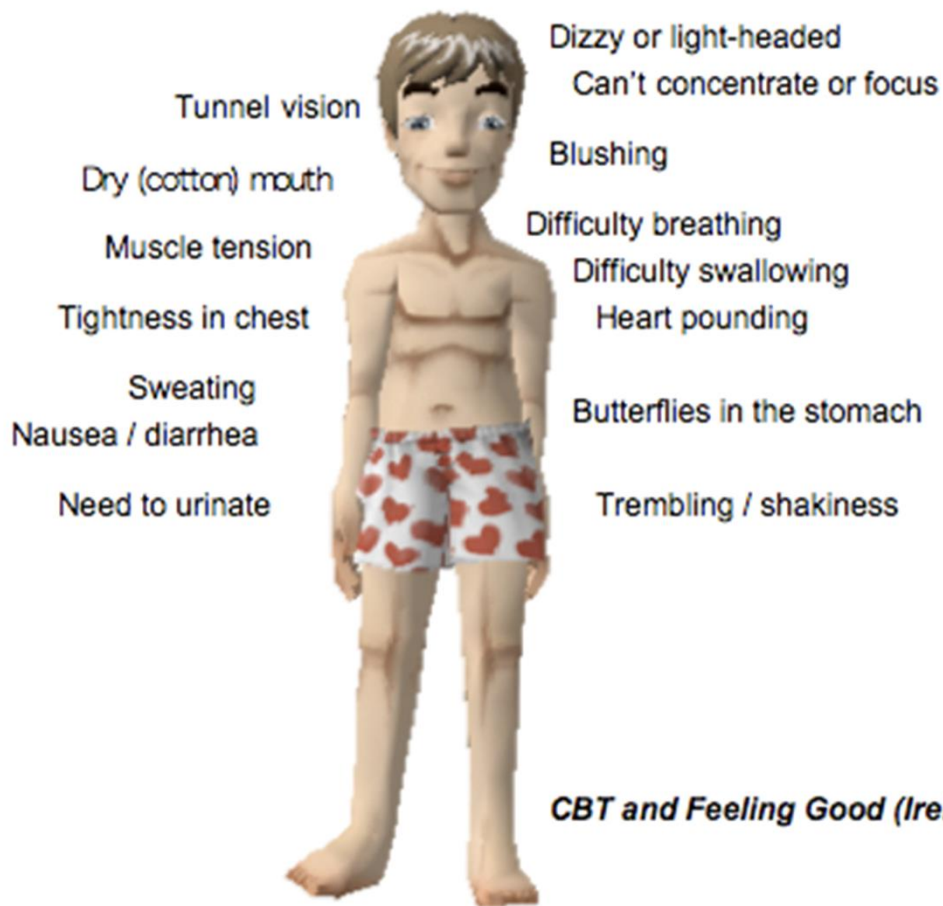
- Freeze
- Flight
- Fight
- Surrender
- Negotiate
- All impact on injury or lack of
- Case example

# Adrenalin- fight and flight



# The Physiology of Fight or Flight

What we know is happening...



# Flight response



# Fight response



[dreamstime.com](http://dreamstime.com)



Freeze



Surrender

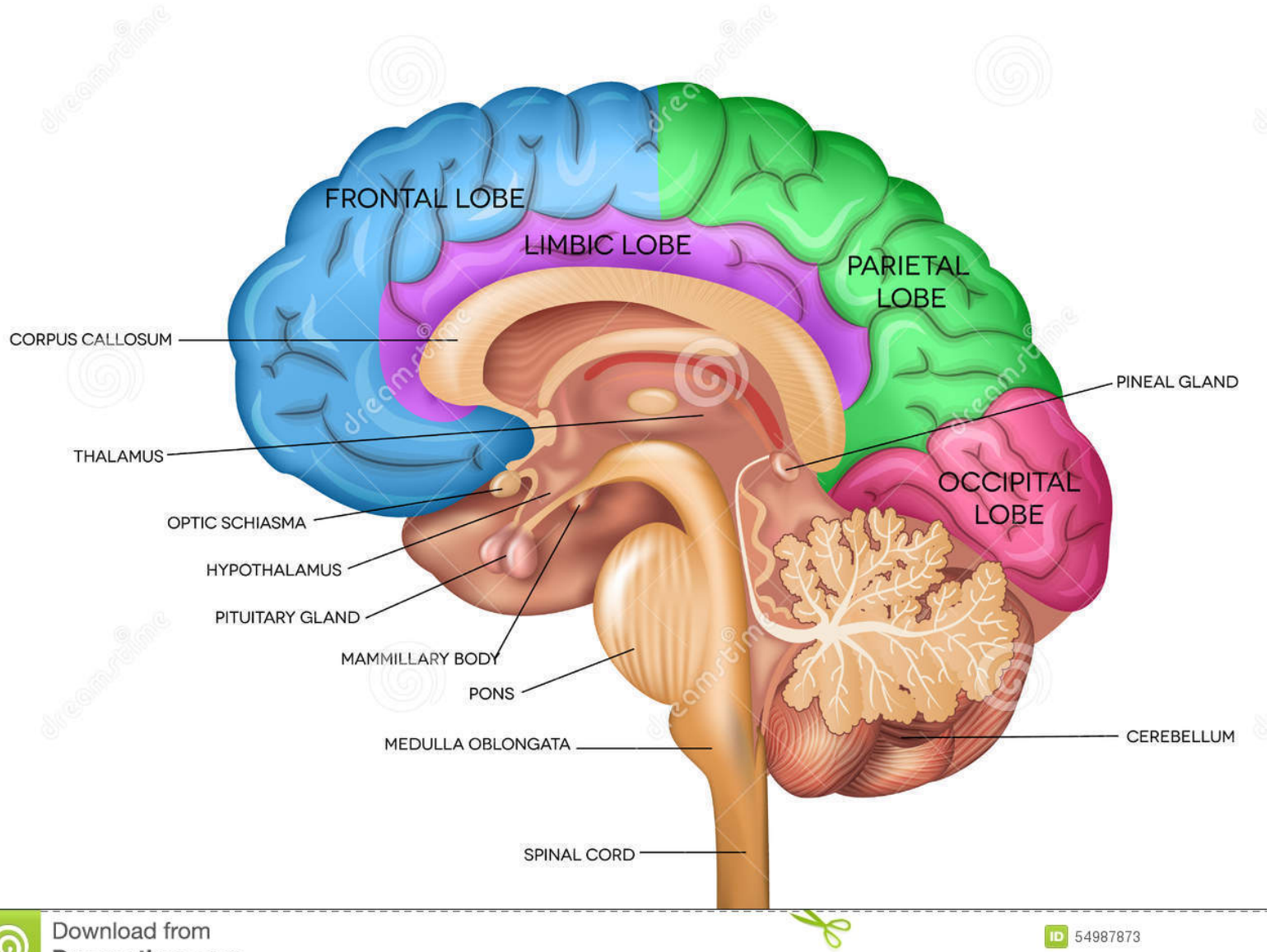


# Negotiate



"Lots of give and take in that negotiation...  
they took and we gave."

# ANATOMY OF THE BRAIN



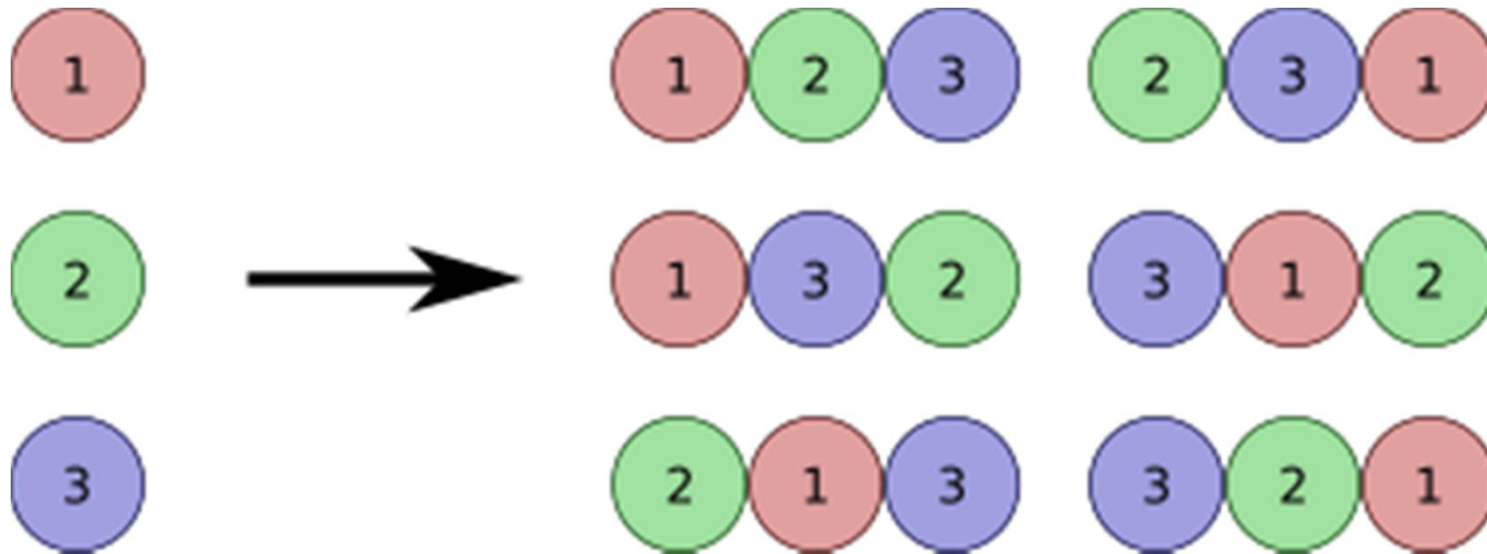
Download from  
**Dreamstime.com**

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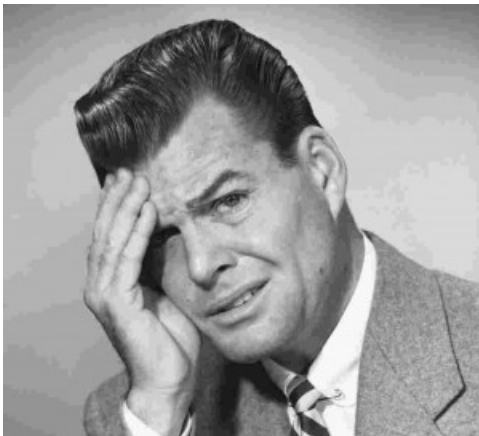
ID 54987873

© Guniita | Dreamstime.com

# Combinations of responses



# Responses in stressful situations



# Myriad of feelings

- Mental blanks
- Focusing on one thing – ie getting out of the car/house, sounds/smells etc
- Dissociated – watching it all happen as if in an out of body experience
- Denial – this is not happening to me, can't be happening, I must have this wrong
- Helplessness
- What will other people think of me?/judgment
- Distress
- Numbness
- Confusion
- Wanting to leave
- Thinking they might die/get hurt
- How will this be believed
- Disgust
- Negotiation
- Hyperarousal
- Physically affected – unwell, heart racing, sweating, nausea
- Concern for future (immediate/to distant)

# Limitations

- Limited research
- No known speciality known to be expert
  - Encountered daily in clinical practice
- Not well used in courtroom
- Generalised evidence
  - 9/11 reactions
- How we grow the expert in the environment



# Limitations

- Limited research as to numbers in each F response group
- Mixed reactions
- Use of counterintuitive evidence – seeking neutrality?

# Space & Moments

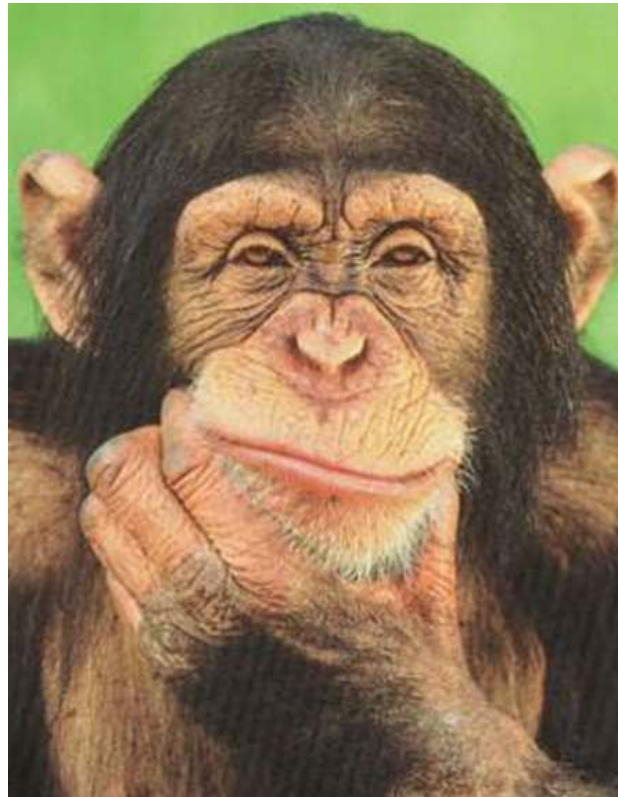
# Looking after ourselves



10/10/2016

VP

What do you do when you have  
a case that upsets you?



# Stuff we do when it gets bit much?

- Talk to friends
- Hand the case over
- Spiritual comfort
- Talk to colleagues
- Stay calm and try to calm down
- Nothing
- Tell my husband or wife
- Speak to my boss
- Distract myself
- Play with the kids

# What keeps you going?



10/10/2016

# What keeps us going?

- Belief that what we do is valuable
- Enjoyment
- Variety
- Justice
- Helping people
- Sense of responsibility
- Appreciation
- Hope for my country
- Our colleagues
- Pride in our work
- Passion for what we do
- Sense of purpose
- More good days than bad
- Serving the community

10/10/2016

10/10/2016

# And there is more....

- Trust of the victim and community;
- - Motivation to hold those responsible of crime to account;
- - Teamwork and accountability within the team;
- - Passion for their work;
- - Appreciation by
  - o Public
  - o Work
- - Love of Peace;
- - Being in the role of gatekeeper to justice;
- - Helping Others;
- - Being a servant of community;
- - Having pride in their work;
- - The challenges of police work;
- - The interaction with the community;
- - Developing an understanding of human nature;
- - Respect from Community and Peers;
- - Dedication to making a difference;



# Some useful tricks

- Focus on where you are in the present
  - Mindfulness
- You are doing a job that is important
- 2 techniques
  - Separating yourself from images
  - Colours

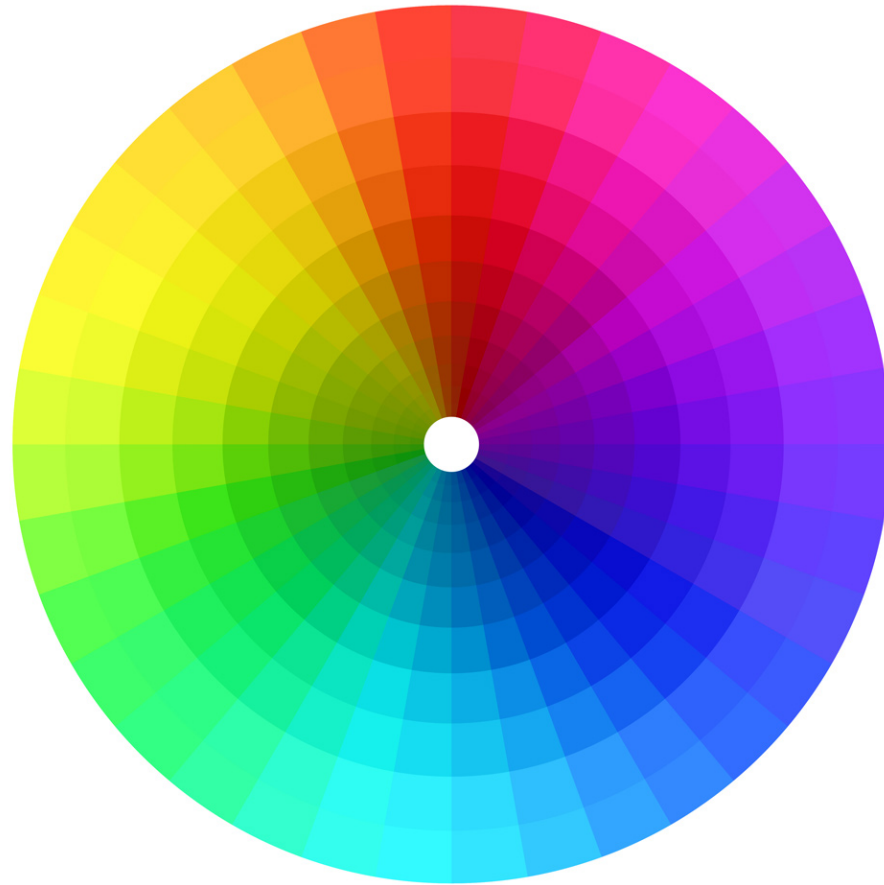
# Viewing images



10/10/2016



10/10/2016



- Think of a colour
- Think of 5 things in your home in that colour

# Looking after ourselves

- Acknowledge that this is unusual work
- Know that the job you do is of value
  - Share this with trusted colleagues
  - Each experience is a learning experience
- Healthy food
- Exercise
- Enjoy downtime/non-work time
- Take your holidays
- Humour

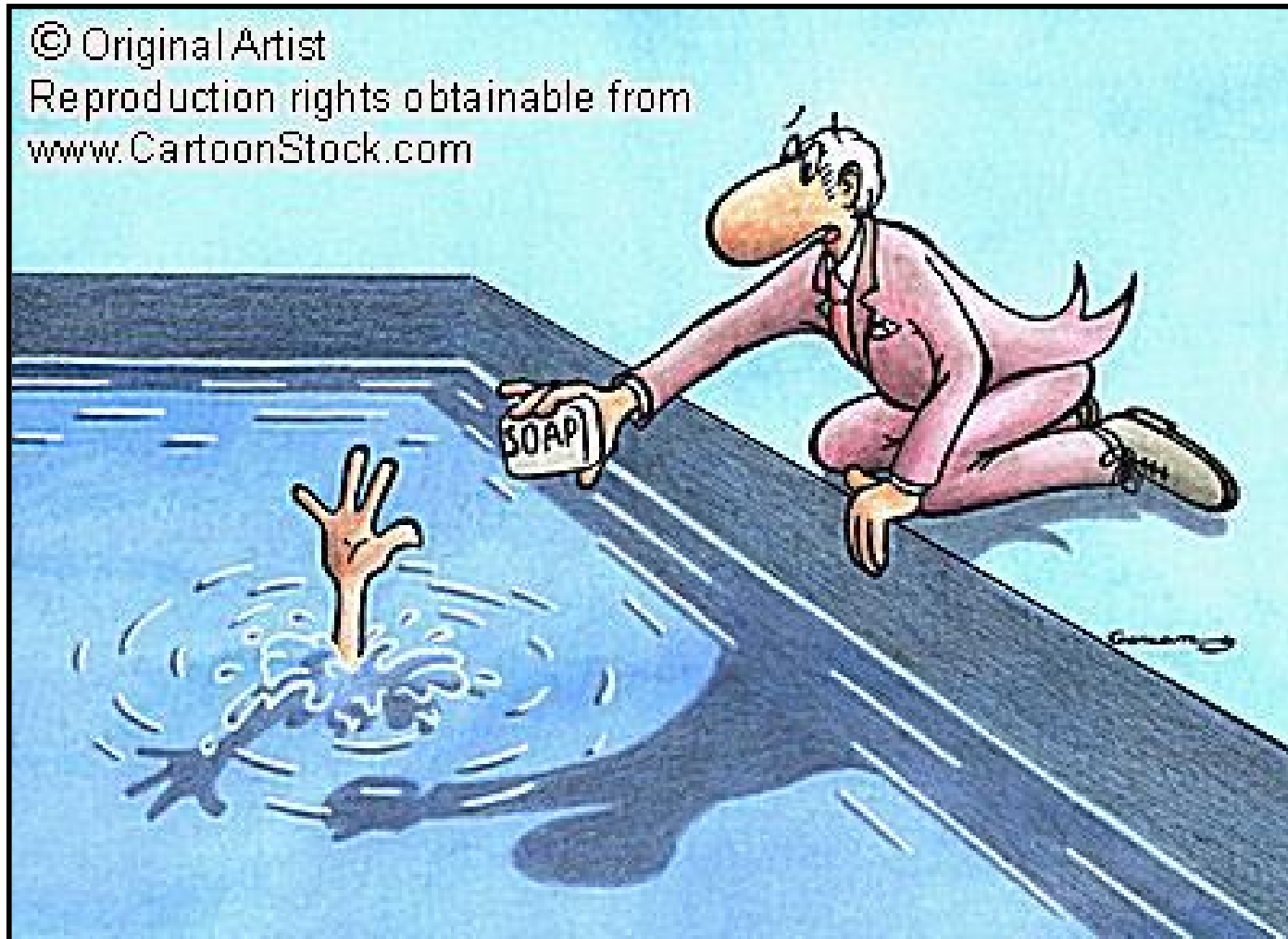
# Care with alcohol

**BEFORE 6 BEERS**



**AFTER 6 BEERS**

# Questions



# Case Study