

**TERROR**

**DEFINITION:** A state of extreme fear

**PHYSICAL SIGNALS AND BEHAVIORS:**

Rasping breaths  
 Bulging eyes; an inability to blink  
 Full body tremors  
 Bolting out of hiding and rushing away from the threat  
 Screaming, crying, or blubbering  
 Speechlessness or incoherence  
 Holding oneself tightly (clutching the arms or wrapping the arms around the belly)  
 Squeezing one's eyes shut  
 Moaning and whimpering  
 Trembling chin and lips  
 Running away with no destination in mind  
 Shaking one's head, as if in denial  
 Clapping the hands over the ears  
 Crumpling to the ground  
 Retreating into the fetal position or curling up on the knees  
 Covering the face  
 Cringing, flinching, or jumping at sounds  
 Tense muscles and a rigid posture  
 Flaring nostrils  
 Grabbing another person, refusing to let go or leave them  
 Clumsiness (bumping into things, knocking things over, etc.)  
 Clutching the throat or chest  
 Clammy skin  
 A harried, wild appearance  
 Clawing at the cheeks, dragging the fingers down  
 Tremors in the hands and fingers  
 Copious sweating  
 Risking a lesser danger in order to escape  
 Causing self-harm (cuts, bruises, etc.) while trying to escape, and not noticing  
 Spinning around, trying to spot any and all danger  
 Backing away in quick, jerky steps from something or someone  
 Fight responses (a rush attack, using anything at hand to hit or destroy, etc.)

**INTERNAL SENSATIONS:**

Hyperventilation  
 A racing pulse  
 The sound of the heartbeat thrashing in the ears  
 A clenched jaw  
 High pain tolerance—not feeling or noticing injuries  
 Increased strength or stamina

Claustrophobia (even if one is not usually claustrophobic)

Pain in the chest, lungs, or throat

Weak legs

Increased sensitivity to every sound, touch, or change in the environment

Dizziness; seeing black spots

**MENTAL RESPONSES:**

A compulsion to look back (when fleeing)

Impaired decision making

A single-minded focus: to save oneself or someone else

Risk-taking

Surrender (if a breaking point is reached)

Hyper-vigilance

Thoughts that keep coming back to the worst possible outcome

**ACUTE OR LONG-TERM RESPONSES FOR THIS EMOTION:**

Passing out from a stress overload, lack of oxygen, or both

A mental break (humming, rocking, hands over the ears or eyes, etc.)

Heart attack

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Hallucinations

A development of anxiety attacks, phobias, or depression

Nightmares

Substance abuse

Difficulties relating to others

Isolation

**SIGNS THAT THIS EMOTION IS BEING SUPPRESSED:**

Terror, by nature, is almost impossible to suppress or hide. Any attempt to hide terror would simply display itself as FEAR (128).

**MAY ESCALATE TO:** Panic (198), Paranoia (200), Anger (40), Rage (212)

**MAY DE-ESCALATE TO:** Fear (128), Wariness (280), Resignation (224), Satisfaction (230)

**ASSOCIATED POWER VERBS:** Blubber, bolt, clench, clutch, collapse, crumple, faint, freeze, gasp, hyperventilate, moan, quiver, run, scream, shake, shriek, stammer, startle

**WRITER'S TIP:** When conveying high emotion, keep the metaphors to a minimum. No matter how flowery or creative a character might be, in the midst of strong emotion, most people don't think in those terms. Keep it simple to maintain believability.