

Stress Responses

THE BODY'S STRESS RESPONSE

Alarm

1st stage
Body and mind go on high alert (Flight-or-fight or Tend-and-befriend)
Adrenaline is the “emergency hormone” that prepares the body to respond to a stressor.

Resistance

Body adapts to the rush created by alarm and reacts to stressor

Fatigue

3rd Stage... tired feeling takes over that lowers your level of activity. Both mind and body become exhausted after the stressor lessens (complaints often show up after the stressor lessens and causes confusion to person as to “why now”). Body not in survival mode anymore.

Psychosomatic Response: physical reaction that results from stress rather than an injury.

Chronic Stress: Stress associated with long term problems beyond control.

Physical Fatigue: Muscles work hard for long periods of times, often causing soreness and pain.

Psychological Fatigue: Results from constant worry, overworking, depression, boredom, isolation, or feeling overwhelmed.

Pathological Fatigue: Over working the body's defense and fighting disease.

Stress and Gender Responses

Fight-or-Flight: Is it a Male Thing:

- ▶ Azar (2000) Upheld the “flight-or-fight” as main response to stress
- ▶ Male responses appear to be regulated by testosterone

Tend-and-Befriend: Is it a Female Thing:

- ▶ Move over “flight-or-fight”~ there is a new paradigm
- ▶ Doesn't replace “flight-or fight” but adds dimension to stress responses
- ▶ Female stress response appears to be biological, cultural, and situational
- ▶ Same immediate hormonal response but followed by a physiological response that inhibits flight

Male and Female Responses:

- ▶ Male: Adrenaline hormones secreted into the bloodstream~ mobilized to attack or flee (Fight or flight)
- ▶ Male: Civilized world, not easy to fight or flee. May result in buildup of stress responses resulting in high rates of male cardiovascular disease.
- ▶ Female: Respond to stressful situations by protecting self and others. (Tend)
- ▶ Female: Form alliances with social group (Befriend)
- ▶ Female: Stress response builds on care giving system; nurturing
- ▶ Tend-and-befriend (Taylor, 2000): Females have this coping skill due to being the primary caregiver of their children
- ▶ Female fleeing too readily would put offspring at risk
- ▶ Female: Oxytocin is released which enhances relaxation, reduces fearfulness & decreases the stress responses typical of flight-or-fight response (Tyalor, 2000)
- ▶ Rather than *fight-or-flight*, women often *tend-and-befriend*.
- ▶ Males less likely to have naturally high levels of oxytocin (Callahan, 2000).

Gender Differences in Action:

- ▶ Oxytocin effect: Some studies have found that oxytocin promotes caregiving behaviors & underlies attachment between mother and infant.
- ▶ Females often prefer being with others when stressed
- ▶ Females more likely to seek out & use social support systems
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- ▶ 'Working fathers' with highly stressful workday more likely to withdraw from family/spouse
- ▶ 'Working fathers' with interpersonal conflict at work are more likely to generate conflict with family/spouse
- ▶ Adolescent females also seek out & receive more social support than males
- ▶ While males are less likely to elicit social support, receiving it also reduces stress

- ▶ These gender generalizations do not always hold true~ initiate thought or awareness
- ▶ Both genders may better understand co-workers & their differing responses to stress; often the same stressor
- ▶ Male co-workers might withdraw or be aggressive while female co-workers may be wanting & needing support
- ▶ Distrust can occur from these different responses
- ▶ The "tend-and-befriend" response reinforces the importance for females to establish & utilize support systems, yet avoiding the temptation to do so inappropriately within the workplace; & for males to reach out more than they might be inclined to do so
- ▶ May apply to personal relationships

Stress Quiz:

- ▶ Do you seem to tire more easily lately?
- ▶ Have people said you don't look well?
- ▶ Seem to be working harder and accomplishing less?
- ▶ Do you frequently forget appointments, deadlines, personal possessions?
- ▶ Do you feel yourself becoming more cynical and less enchanting?
- ▶ Are you seeing friends & family less frequently?
- ▶ Are you more irritable, short-tempered, or disappointed with people around you?
- ▶ Are you often struck by sadness you can't explain?
- ▶ Are you having physical complaints like body aches, headaches, pain, colds not able to shake more frequently?
- ▶ Do you have very little to say to people?

Scoring:

- ▶ Yes to 5 or more~ may be serious candidate for burnout

Take Control of Your Time:

- ▶ List 3 main priorities in your life:

- ▶ Everyone gets 168 hours a week~ no more; no less
- ▶ 168 hrs in a week – __hrs asleep= __awake hrs.
 - ___spend hours on (school, work, etc) per week
 - ___spend hours with friends/social per week
 - ___spend hours on work per week
 - ___spiritual reflection hours per week
 - ___spend hours with family per week
 - ___physical activity hours per week
 - ___leisure per week
 - ___ (add your own)
 - ___ (add your own)

Change the above number of hours to percentages; reflect on where you are spending your time; review what you listed as your priorities; how does your time spent reflect your priorities?

Expect Change:

- Transitions
- Family role
- Friendships/relationships
- Aging

Parting Thoughts:

- ▶ ***Stress Makes Us Think***
- ▶ ***Thought Makes Us Wise...***
- ▶ ***And Wisdom Makes Stress Manageable.***

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