

Stress 101

Stress

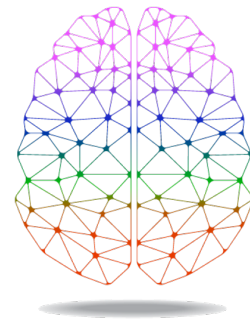
- ❖ A natural, protective, & predictable response that happens in the brain & body when there is a stressor.
 - ❖ Stressors can be both internal (physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual) & external (places, people, situations, sounds, smells, etc). What are some of your stressors?
- ❖ Stress is necessary & healthy. Harmful when it is ignored, in large doses, experienced in multiple parts of life, sudden, or overwhelms our capacity to cope.
 - ❖ Pros: early warning system for danger, builds resilience & self care, clues for setting boundaries, protective, builds bone and muscle, strengthens immune system, stimulates metabolism.
 - ❖ Cons: trauma, stress related illness, substance abuse, chronic pain, burnout, social/professional/relationship disruption, inflammation, weight gain metabolic & immune disruption, violence.

Stress Roadmap: What happens in the brain and body?

- ❖ Our whole brain works together to keep us safe by telling the body what to do in response to stress.
- ❖ Different parts of the brain & body have specific jobs (& tells) in times of stress:
 - ❖ The key to making friends with stress is to learn your body's personal stress tells. These tells are like the lights on a car dashboard informing us of potential breakdown & danger.
 - ❖ Tells can also show up in our thoughts, behaviors, & relationships.
 - ❖ Learning your tells helps you to understand what is happening in your brain & body so you can choose how to respond to the stressor.

❖ SURVIVAL BRAIN (Snake Brain) = Red/Yellow

- The brain's job: all basic life functions to keep us alive.
 - Increase/decrease heart rate and BP, open/close vessels, breathing, balance, muscle control, release/restrict hormones.
- The body: heaviness, tingling/numbness, closed/tense posture, whoosh in ears, hot/cold skin, GI changes, altered skin sensitivity.
- No sense of time, no words, no memory, no thinking or feeling.
- Always asking: Am I safe? The answer is YES or NO, never maybe.
- If YES, the whole brain stays active and 'on the job.'
- If NO, survival brain takes the lead & turns on Fight/Flight/Freeze
 - The rest of the brain goes into power save mode until it is safe.
- What happens in your body when your survival brain is in charge/quiet?



❖ FEELING/EMOTIONAL BRAIN (Limbic Brain) = Green/Blue

- The brain's job: add depth, detail, uniqueness, & context to our experiences.
 - Helps us tell our story by matching emotions with our experiences and senses.

- Home to our creativity, imagination, hope, emotions, dreams, & senses
- The body: sense of taste, smell, sight, hearing, & touch.
- Experiences & emotions are matched & stored as sensory information rather than with words, numbers, or in chronological order. This is why certain sounds, smells, places, etc can trigger both ease & stress
- What colors, sounds, textures, flavors, or scents cause a sense of ease or happiness in the body?

❖ THINKING BRAIN (Neo Cortex) = Pink/Purple

- The brain's job: command center for motivation, decision making, attention, organization, words, logic, concentration, judgement, comprehension, communication, impulse control, people skills, the ability to discern past-present-future, interpret tone/ body language, facial expressions (smiling, frowning, furrowed brow, etc).
- The body: relaxed open posture & facial features, sense of calm & ease, focused on the present, feel safe, lean in to others.
- If the survival brain is lit up, the thinking brain will be almost dark. We will have very little access to thinking skills. We cannot think or reason our way thru pain, survival threats, or a crisis.

In Case of Stress try this!

❖ Below are several ways to manage stress that will help you activate your whole brain!

❖ Can you name which part of the brain matches with each tool?

- Jazz/Blues music, hum, sing.
- Light a candle, diffuse essential oil, grab a favorite spice and take in the scent, citrus.
- Trust the gut feeling or the hair on the back of your neck standing up.
- Crossword puzzle, sudoku, color by numbers, paint, doodle, adult coloring books, puzzles.
- Take a hot bath or shower & finish with 30 seconds of cold water.
- Look at pictures of nature, favorite trips, fun family photos, silly/funny memes
- Stroll through the fresh fruit/vegetable aisle or a Garden Center & notice the colors & scents.
- 10-30 minutes of high intensity exercise or hold a yoga pose for 3 minutes.
- Enjoy a cup of coffee/tea and notice the temperature, aroma, memories that pop up as you sip.
- Watch a comedy or pull up funny videos. Or, watch a tear-jerker.
- Speak to yourself as you would speak to a dear friend or loved one instead of negative self talk.
- Ask for a hug, hold hands, massage, place your hand on your heart, hug yourself.
- Spend time with your furry family members or watch animal videos.
- Invite a friend over or meet up for a coffee, walk, meal, etc.
- Journal, mindfulness practices, breath work.
- Your favorite Survival Brain tool:
- Your favorite Feeling Brain tool:
- Your favorite Thinking Brain tool:

Wellness Resources

American Psychiatric Association Foundation/Center of Workplace Mental Health:

<https://www.workplacementalhealth.com>

'The Ageless Brain.' By: Dr. Dale Bredesen

'Anchored.' By: Deb Dana

'Beyond Anxiety.' By: Martha Beck

'The Body Keeps the Score.' By: Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk

'Boundaries.' By: Melissa Urban

'Burnout.' By: Emily Nagoski, PhD & Amelia Nagoski DMA

Dr. Deanna Minich: www.deannaminich.com (Nutrition, Creativity, and Health tips)

'Good Energy.' By: Casey Means

International Self Care Foundation: <https://isfglobal.org/what-is-self-care/>

Mental Health America: A website designed to help individuals cope better with stress and create more of the life they want: <https://www.mhanational.org/live-your-life-well>

'Real Self Care.' By: Pooja Lakshmin

The Rhythm of Regulation: <https://www.rhythmofregulation.com> (Nervous system regulation resources)

'Tiny Habits.' By: BJ Fogg

'The Triune Brain. The Brain is Adaptive. Not Triune. How the Brain Responds to Threat, Challenge, & Change.', Steffen, Hedges & Matheson, Frontiers in Psychiatry, April 1, 2022.

'What Happened to You?' By: Bruce Perry, MD, PhD., & Oprah Winfrey

'Whole Brain Living.' By: Jill Bolte Taylor

'Widen the Window.' By: Liz Stanley

PODCASTS/APPS:

Being Well

10% Happier w/ Dan Harris

The One You Feed

On Purpose w/ Jay Shetty

12 Minute Meditation

Insight Timer, Calm, Awake, Headspace

Mindful, Mindfulness Coach

*For medical information please consult your medical provider.

NOTES: