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Life, Stress and Health

SEPT 2002

Mass Today

by John Upledger, DO, OMM

Stress is a primary contributing factor in a myriad of diseases processes, yet the biggest factor is actually the way in which our bodies deal with stress. Perhaps our high-tech society has evolved more rapidly than our bodies' ability to respond effectively.

Stress responses began to be seriously recognized as causing disease processes during the '40s and '50s. Hans Selye, MD, was the pioneer in this area. He did most of his work at the University of Montreal before dying at age 75 in 1982. Today, through clinical and laboratory work, we have come to know many of the mechanisms by which stress stimulates internal responses that damage organs, tissues, psyches and the like. What's more, the stress itself does not have to be within your conscious awareness.

Let's say you've finally found a job that is perfect in every way except one: the air conditioner in the office makes a strange kind of hum that sets your teeth on edge. You tell yourself you can get used to it. You have a great job and you aren't going to let a silly thing like noise screw it up. So you push the sound into your subliminal perception so you don't consciously hear it anymore.

The problem is, the vibrational frequency that irritates/stimulates something in you can still affect your body. You may be having a great time, but you seem to catch every germ that flies into your space. After a while, your temper becomes more active.

Are all these "colds" making you irritable and cross? Perhaps. But let's look at this from a stress/response point of view. First, the vibrational frequency of the irritating sound you removed from your consciousness is still getting into your body. Why

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should your body be so sensitive to a given sound frequency that it produces a stress response? For whatever reason, the vibration in question is a stressor to you.

Perhaps certain tissues in your body resonate with this particular vibration. On the other hand, maybe this is the same vibrational frequency that occurred when you were in an operating room getting your tonsils out. The sound came from the hospital air conditioner at the same time you were afraid the anesthesia might kill you. Although you had suppressed the memory of the fear that occurred during your tonsillectomy, it became linked with the vibrational frequency nonconsciously, as did your bodily responses.

And how does your body respond to the fear stressor being initiated now at your new place of employment? By producing adrenalin, which saves your life. Adrenalin diverts blood flow from organs to muscles, because you may need your muscles to survive. It also increases your heart rate and blood pressure, which gives you a greater ability to physically confront danger.

At the same time adrenalin is emitted, your internal alarm system goes on ready alert. The reticular alarm system connects with your adrenal glands and sympathetic nervous system. When the alarm system senses danger, both systems activate to prepare you for a life-saving battle. The sympathetic nervous system is also a division of your autonomic nervous system. It has the ability to shut down internal systems and organs not necessary for "fight or flight," such as your digestive system and related organs: kidneys, bladder, bowel elimination system and immune system.

Consider now that the air conditioner at your new job sets off the internal alarm system that remembers the danger of the operating room and your tonsillectomy. It activates your adrenal glands and sympathetic nervous system so you become uptight and irritable. At the same time, your sympathetic nervous system reduces immune system activity, so you lose some of your ability to resist passing germs.

Dr. Selye also showed that increased adrenalin can cause a weakening of the heart muscle and ulcers in the stomach. The adrenal glands, which enlarge to help keep up with the increased demand, eventually devitalize and lose their ability to produce satisfactory amounts of adrenalin. Once this occurs, your stress response is compromised. You can no longer fight off the effects of stressors, and ultimately collapse into illness.

Many of us think of stressors as things we can see, feel or perceive, but as I've illustrated, your body responds just as significantly to stressors of which you may not be aware. It's

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also not unusual for our bodies to sound the alarm in preparation for an acute crisis that never comes. Why? Because in our world we are surrounded by chronic stressors. Many have to do with vibrational frequencies: sounds, lights, colors, aromas, magnetic fields, electrical fields, barometric pressure changes and so on. Others include molecules that are toxic or stressful to our biochemistries. They can be in food, drink, the air, our clothing, and any number of other places.

You can turn off or move away from many of these environmental variables. Yet there is another area of stress that is less tangible and somewhat more fun to hypothesize about. These are the stressors that come from consciousness fields and intentions that are either foreign or neutral to us, or perhaps downright unfriendly. We encounter these "energy fields" in our daily lives.

Haven't you found yourself naturally drawn to someone from across the room? Or perhaps you've seen others who repulse you, scare you, or give you a feeling of distrust. Call it intuition, fantasy, imagination, or something else, but more and more proof is coming from the scientific world that energy fields exist both through and around living systems. And evidence mounts that these energy fields have characteristics that correlate to anger, danger, fear, guilt, love, compassion, empathy, and other emotions. It is not a big jump to presume each of us has internal sensors that tell us about the nature of an energy field moving into our own.

What can we do to avoid the destructive effects of stress? First, avoid stressors you can identify. There are also ways to disempower stress factors so your system responds more reasonably and recovers more quickly. I always recommend regular meditation and centering to avoid long-term responses. Exercise is another great way to use up the adrenalin produced and not used when, for instance, a car cuts you off on the interstate. Years ago I put up a punching bag in my basement. Whenever I got home from work, I would go into the basement, beat on the bag and feel better.

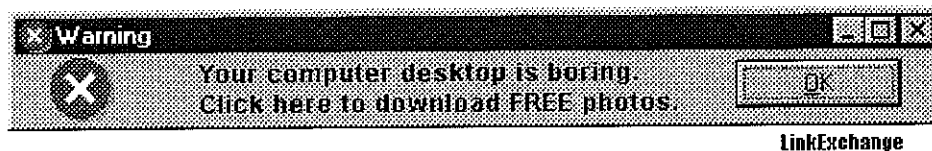
I'm sure at the time the bag saved me from an ulcer. These days, I'm convinced the most effective methods of stress-response control fall under the umbrella of CranioSacral Therapy, including Energy Cyst Release, SomatoEmotional Release, and Therapeutic Imagery and Dialogue. CranioSacral Therapy has been shown to reduce sympathetic nervous system activity and irritability, indicating a decrease in adrenalin production. This is the immediate symptomatic effect.

Going a step further, we can release old tissue memories of things that occurred during childhood (or earlier) that continue

to cause over-responses. We use Energy Cyst Release to discharge foreign energies that were injected into the body by injuries, infections and emotional crises. These energy cysts, which keep stress-response systems on ready alert, can be released so alarm systems can relax. Using SomatoEmotional Release, we can disempower previous experiences, such as abuse, rape and near-death traumas, so the hyper-responsiveness is calmed down. And using Therapeutic Imagery and Dialogue, we can dialogue with the reticular alarm system and negotiate a reduced level of activity.

Yes, I am biased about the best methods for maintaining an appropriate stress response. I have seen remarkable success using these techniques. It is time we learn to work with stress (and our responses to stress) to avoid disease. This seems a more effective method of enhancing health than the "patch 'em up after the fact" approach that still dominates.

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