

TAMING THE CAVEMAN: STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR THE NEW AGE

Diana F. Hott, LCSW CEAP
www.dianafhottlcsw.com

TAMING THE CAVEMAN



STRESS DEFINED:

The physical and emotional reaction people experience when there is a change.

GOOD STRESS:

(Eustress) reaction to situations that are perceived as positive, help to keep us motivated/fight off boredom.

BAD STRESS:

(Distress) reaction to situations that are perceived as negative, can create problems with health, mood and relationships.

ACUTE STRESS:

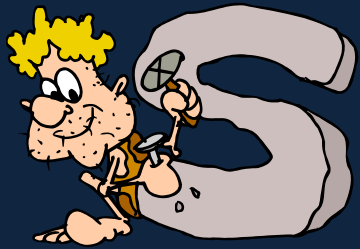
Has a sudden onset, is short lived. Generally we recover quickly from these events, i.e., riding a roller coaster, getting cut off in traffic.

CHRONIC STRESS:

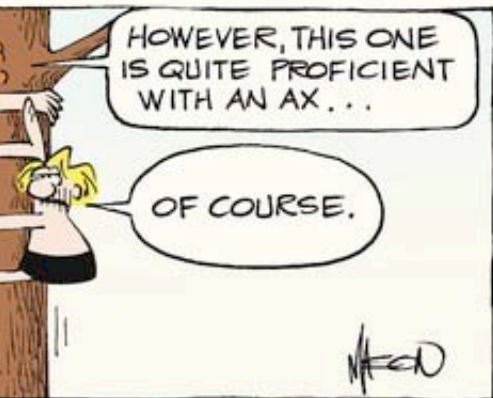
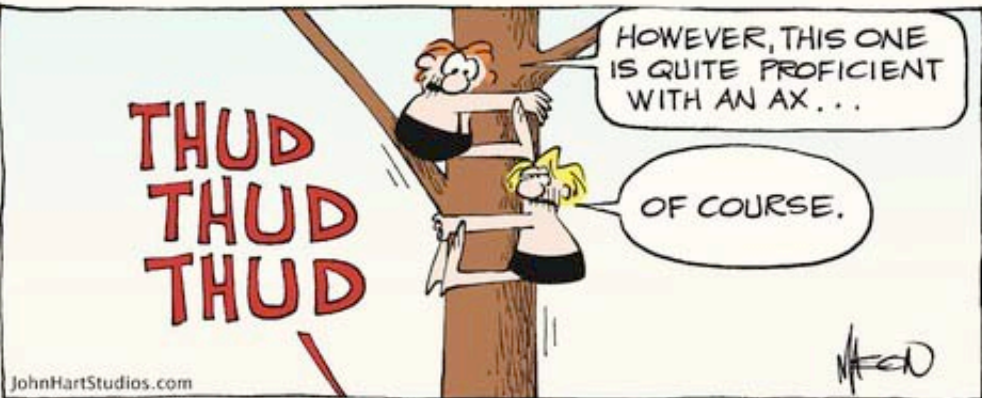
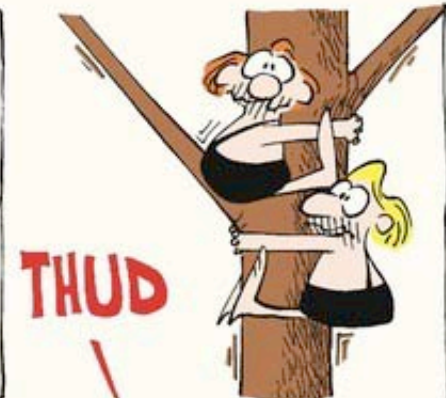
Ongoing events, duration at a level that challenges our usual coping mechanisms, i.e., poor economy, medical illness, job loss.

STRESS FACTS

1. 75% of the general population experiences as least some measurable stress every two weeks. 50% of these people rate their stress as either moderate or high
2. Stress lowers the immune system, making us more vulnerable to disease
3. Stress is associated with medical problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, IBS, spastic colon, diabetes, peptic ulcers, cancer & obesity
4. It is also associated with poor sleep, low libido, depression, anxiety, burnout and addictions



SO, WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO
WITH CAVEMAN?



HARD WIRING: PRE-HISTORIC MAN,
DARWINISM/SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST: THE
STORY OF SABER-TOOTH TIGER

FIGHT/FLIGHT RESPONSE

OUR BODY'S REACTION TO PERCEIVED THREAT:
ADRENALINE AND CORTISOL

SYSTEMS AFFECTED:

EYES - PUPILS DILATE, EYES WIDEN, "TUNNEL VISION"



LUNGS - INCREASE SHORT FAST BREATHS, HOLDING BREATH

LIVER - RELEASES GLUCOSE INTO BLOODSTREAM FOR ENERGY

STOMACH / INTESTINES - SLOWS DIGESTION

SKIN - DECREASE BLOODFLOW (PALE), SWEATING TO COOL FOR ACTION

HAIR - FOLLICLES STAND ON END

SALIVARY GLANDS - REDUCE PRODUCTION (DRY MOUTH)

HEART - INCREASE PUMPING TO LARGE MUSCLE GROUPS



BLOOD VESSELS - CONSTRICT IN NON-ESSENTIAL AREAS

MUSCLES - TIGHTEN TO PREPARE FOR ACTION

STAGES OF STRESS

1. **ALARM STAGE:** THE BRAIN PERCEIVES THREAT, DUMPS ADRENALINE/CORTISOL TO PREPARE BODY FOR ACTION
 - a. BRAIN MODERATES THE FLOW OF INFORMATION. (The amygdala and thalamus mobilize, thalamus in conjunction with the frontal cortex reassess danger)
 - b. NONESSENTIAL SYSTEMS SLOW/SHUT DOWN
2. **RESISTANCE STAGE:** RESPONSES WORKED, GO BACK TO NORMAL
3. **INITIAL EXHAUSTION STAGE:** STRESS CONTINUES/NEW STRESS ADDED. ALARM MODE CONTINUES, ENERGY EXPENDED, LEADING TO FATIGUE. DECREASED CONCENTRATION, INCREASED ANXIETY, LOWER TOLERANCE TO INFECTION. PERSON LOOKS FOR RELIEF – OVEREATING, DRINKING, DRUGS, AVOIDANCE
4. **ADVANCED EXHAUSTION STAGE:** FATIGUE, BODY MALFUNCTIONS, INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF SERIOUS ILLNESS, MALADAPTIVE EATING/SLEEPING/COPING PATTERNS BECOME HABIT. IRRITABILITY, POOR JUDGEMENT, REACTIVITY

**SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE BY
THOMAS HOLMES AND RICHARD RAHE, 1967**

**UPDATED: THE LIFE EVENTS INVENTORY: RE-
SCALING BASED ON AN OCCUPATIONAL SAMPLE, A.
SPURGEON, C.A. JACKSON, AND J.R. BEACH, 2001**

CHRONIC STRESS SYMPTOMS AND TRAITS

PHYSICAL - APPETITE/WEIGHT CHANGE, HEADACHES, TENSION, EXHAUSTION, SLEEP CHANGES, FEELING SICK/STOMACH PROBLEMS, HEART POUNDING, SKIN PROBLEMS, RESTLESSNESS

MENTAL - FORGETFUL, POOR CONCENTRATION/ATTENTION, POOR PROBLEM-SOLVING, CONFUSION, “SPACING OUT”, POOR MOTIVATION, POOR JUDGEMENT, MAKING MISTAKES

BEHAVIORAL - CLUMSY/MORE ACCIDENTS, OVER-REACTING, NERVOUS LAUGHING, BAD HABITS

EMOTIONAL - ANXIETY, FRUSTRATION, IRRITABILITY, SADNESS/TEARFUL, MOOD SWINGS, DISCOURAGEMENT, HOPELESSNESS, HELPLESSNESS, “TRIGGER TEMPER”

SPIRITUAL - EMPTINESS, DOUBT, UNFORGIVING, MAGICAL THINKING, MARTYRDOM, LOSS OF MEANING, LOSS OF SENSE OF SELF

RELATIONSHIP - ISOLATION, LONELINESS, LOW LIBIDO, NAGGING, SHUTTING DOWN/OUT, PASSIVENESS, OVER-DEPENDANCE, SELF-ABSORBED, RIGIDITY, ENTITLED, STUCK IN PAST

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

SENSE OF HUMOR - "TAKE YOUR JOB SERIOUSLY BUT YOURSELF LIGHTLY"

HUMILITY - "INFORMATION IS NOT CONDEMNATION", LEAD WITH CURIOSITY INSTEAD OF DEFENSIVENESS; LOOKS FOR HELP OUTSIDE OF ONESELF

BALANCE - KNOW WHEN TO SAY "WHEN"

BOUNDARIES - WHERE DO I END AND SOMEONE ELSE BEGINS, "TO WHOM DOES THIS PROBLEM BELONG"

RELATIONSHIPS - SUPPORTIVE, EMPATHIC PEOPLE WITH LIKE-MINDED VALUES, MORALS AND ETHICS; COOPERATIVE, TRUTHFUL, COMPASSIONATE, "GIVE AND TAKE"

CREATIVITY - USING ART, MUSIC, DANCE; THINKING "OUTSIDE THE BOX" TO SOLVE PROBLEMS, PUTTING TOGETHER RESOURCES IN NEW WAYS

PERSONAL POWER - CONTROL OVER THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND CHOICES; TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

SPIRITUALITY - "WE ARE NOT ALONE", ONE DAY AT A TIME, GRATEFUL, MERCIFUL, GENEROUS, REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS, HOPEFUL

MANAGING STRESS

SET HEALTHY LIMITS FOR YOURSELF

LIMIT “TO DO” LISTS TO 3 DO-ABLE ITEMS AT A TIME

“ALL I CAN DO IS ALL I CAN DO AND THAT’S ALL I CAN DO”

BREAK DOWN BIG TASKS INTO SMALLER ITEMS

SLEEP 8 HRS/NIGHT, EAT BALANCED MEALS, AVOID “ENTITLED INDULGING”

MOVE! EXERCISE, PLAY GAMES

AVOID ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, DRUGS

MEDITATE/PRAY, BREATHE IN A MINDFUL WAY

CRY, LAUGH

GET SUPPORT