


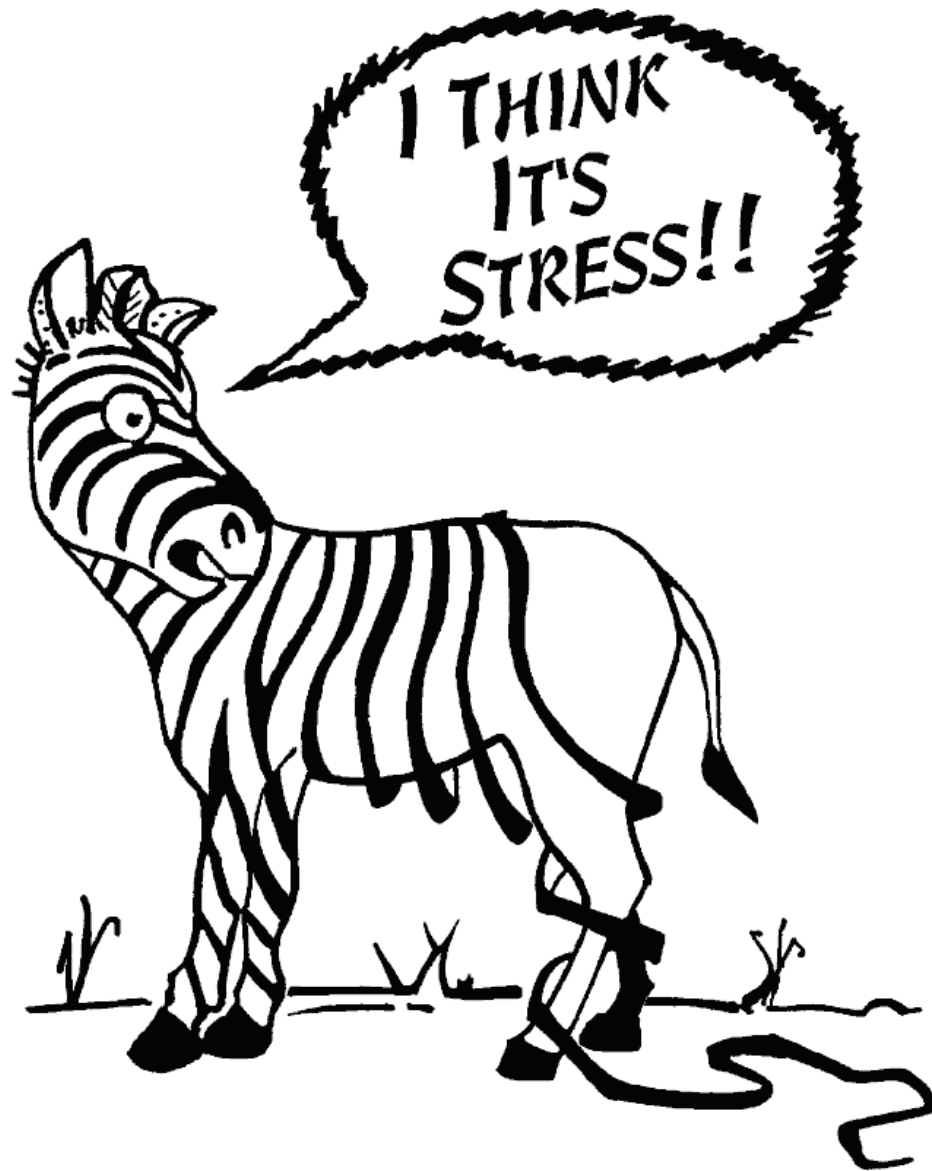
STRESS

- an inevitable part of life?

Dr Michael Epstein

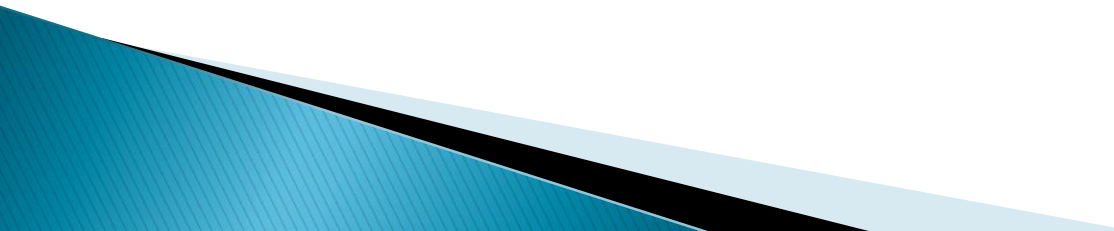
Stress

- ▶ *“I’m stressed because my boss is giving me stress, so I am going on stress leave and I’m having massage for my back stress.”*
 - ▶ Is ‘stress’ something we get, or give?
 - ▶ Other words we use include: anxiety, burden, hassle, nervous tension, oppression, pressure, strain, tautness, tension, trauma, worry
 - ▶ the word stress has become so widely used as to mean almost anything and the cause of every problem
- 



I THINK
IT'S
STRESS!!

What is stress?

- ▶ Stress is a body's method of reacting to a challenge
 - ▶ the challenge is called a stressor
 - ▶ Stress is a normal physical response to events that threaten your well being.
 - ▶ Stress can be experienced as positive or negative
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Roller coaster ride same stress, different result



the stress response

If danger threatens—the body's defences kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the “fight-or-flight-or-freeze” reaction, or the *stress response*.

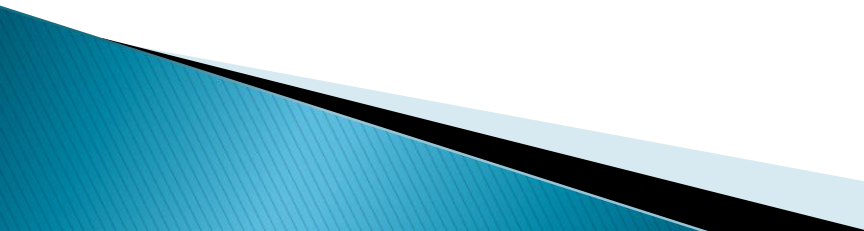
The stress response protects you from harm.

- ▶ ready to fight or to run
- ▶ blood flow diverted from gut to muscles and brain
 - focused,
 - energetic
 - alert.

In emergency situations, the stress response can save life—

- ▶ extra strength to defend yourself,
- ▶ slamming on the brakes
- ▶ swim to your drowning child

The stress response helps you to meet more mundane challenges.

- ▶ doing a presentation at work
 - ▶ kicking the winning goal
 - ▶ studying when you'd rather be watching TV.
- 

the stress response II

Stress response –short term response to danger.

- ▶ major hormonal and muscle response
- ▶ widespread use of body resources and energy.
- ▶ considerable drain of energy (note exhaustion after trauma when the stress response has ceased)

The stress response is energy intensive and switches off either when the threat has receded through ‘flight or fight’ or because it cannot be sustained.

At that point ‘stress’ can become ‘distress’

Stress ⇒ Distress

Let's reword that previous sentence:

'I'm distressed because my boss is putting me under pressure, so I'm having a break from work. My back muscles are very tense so I'm having massage'.

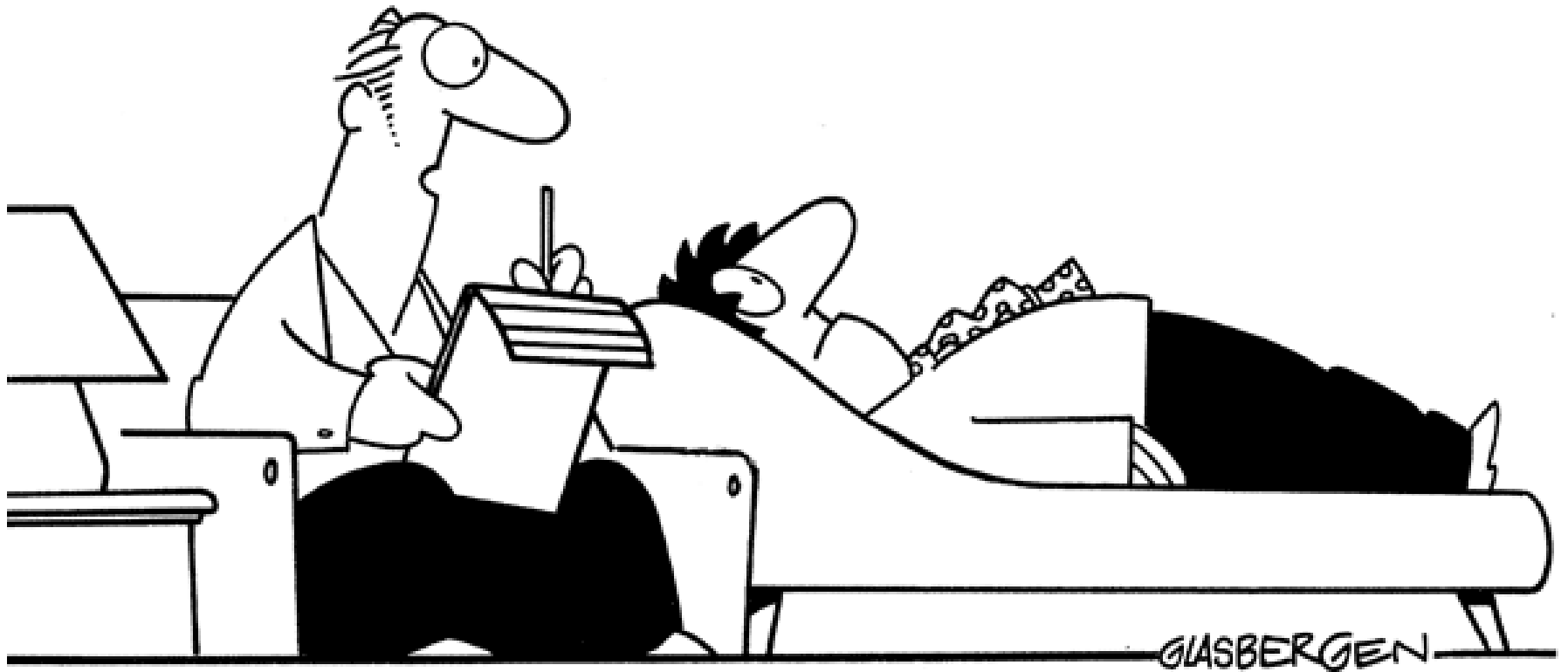
The experience of short term stress becomes long term distress

Common factors contributing to distress

External	Internal
Major life changes	Chronic worry
Work or school	Pessimism
Financial problems	Negative self talk
Too busy	Unrealistic
Relationship difficulties	expectations/ perfectionist
Children and family	Rigid thinking/ lack of flexibility
	All-or-nothing attitude

Factors assisting in coping with stress'

- ▶ **support network** : A strong network supportive friends and family – enormous buffer against life's stressors.
- ▶ **sense of control** – more control more tolerance for stress.
 - **Your attitude and outlook** – Optimistic people more resilient. embrace challenge, strong sense of humor, accept change as part of life.
- ▶ **ability to deal with emotions** – A boon if you remain calm and soothe yourself when feeling sad, angry, or overwhelmed by a situation.
 - Bringing your emotions into balance helps you bounce back from adversity
 - This is a skill that can be learned at any age.
- ▶ **knowledge and preparation** – The more you know about a stressful situation the easier it is to cope.
 - For example, if you go into surgery with a realistic picture of what to expect post-op, a painful recovery will be less traumatic than if you were expecting to bounce back immediately.



“Go home and let your dog lick your face. Dog saliva is the most effective antidepressant you can get without a prescription.”

managing stress

Managing stress – taking charge:

- ▶ thoughts,
- ▶ emotions,
- ▶ schedule,
- ▶ environment

avoid stressful situations – look ahead

alter the situation when you can,

adapt if you can't, change your reaction,

accept – leave it to time, learn, grow, forgive – make time for rest and relaxation.

Stress protectors

- ▶ **Your mental health**
 - diversity of interests
 - Trusted confidants
 - be with good people

- ▶ **Your physical health.**
 - **Exercise regularly.** reduces and prevents the effects of stress. aerobic exercise releases pent-up stress and tension.
 - **Eat a healthy diet** – fatigue is a killer.

If all else fails

- use

THE STRESS REDUCTION KIT



Stress Reduction Kit



**Bang
Head
Here**

Directions:

1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

Damage to the stress response

The stress response can be damaged by overwhelming stress or recurrent threats eg combat, ongoing domestic violence, police work etc that keep re-activating the response.

Factors causing this include stressors that are:

- ▶ unremitting
- ▶ overwhelming
- ▶ occurring simultaneously
- ▶ Of particular significance for you
- ▶ In the context is that your health is already poor

Response to this damage

The stress response becomes activated inappropriately, eg with minimal threat or no threat or is 'always on'.

This leads to a state of stress overload and we struggle to survive.


- ▶ We respond in 3 main ways:
- ▶ **Foot on the accelerator** –angry, agitated, or “fight” response. Heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
- ▶ **Foot on the brake** –withdrawn, depressed, or “flight” stress response– shut down, pull away, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
- ▶ **Foot on both** –frozen under pressure and can't do anything. Appear impassive, but under the surface we are extremely agitated.

Does stress cause disease?

- ▶ Surprisingly little scientific evidence linking stress and disease
- ▶ chronic psychological stress ⇒ altered inflammatory response
- ▶ psychological factors ⇒ ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease and irritable bowel syndrome
- ▶ acute stress ⇒ elevated blood pressure ⇒ myocardial infarction
- ▶ chronic stressors may have adverse effects on the heart
 - These are potentially modifiable
- ▶ **The US National Cancer Institute Fact Sheet 2013 states:**
- ▶ Psychological stress alone has not been found to cause cancer.
- ▶ Long-term stress may affect overall health and ability to cope with cancer
- ▶ People more able to cope with stress have a better quality of life when treated for cancer—but they do not necessarily live longer.

- ▶ However the consequences of **stress breakdown** can be catastrophic

Stress breakdown

- ▶ Coping with stressors requires resilience
 - ▶ Resilience is like an elastic band, it can only be stretched so far before it snaps, so when your capacity for coping is over stretched, you are never the same, your capacity for coping becomes damaged.
 - ▶ Most people who have a breakdown can pinpoint a particular time when ‘the elastic band snapped’, their capacity for coping breaks down and NEVER fully recovers
 - ▶ After seeing many patients in this situation I co-wrote my view of what was happening
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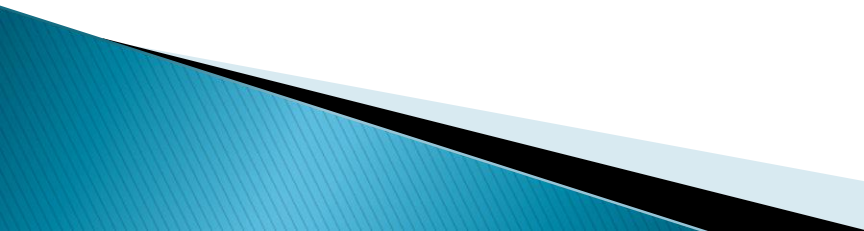
Falling Apart

LIVING WITH STRESS BREAKDOWN

MICHAEL EPSTEIN AND SUE HOSKING



The major causes of stress breakdown

- ▶ The 3 Fs: fear ,frustration and fear
 - ▶ Fear and frustration ⇨ fatigue
 - ▶ Fatigue and frustration⇨fear
 - ▶ Fatigue and fear⇨frustration
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- ▶ The end result – your capacity for coping is damaged.
 - ▶ It is like a giant juggernaut has run over you
- 



Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying

Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds


Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed/panic attacks
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness


Behavioural Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

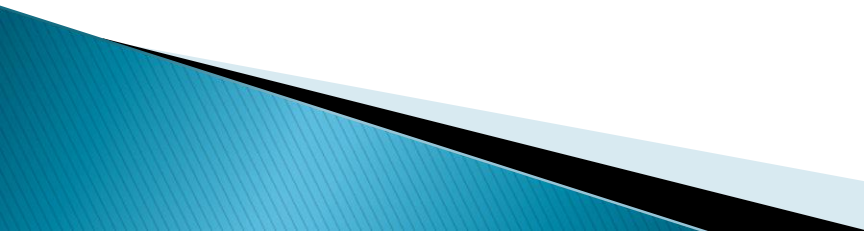
Consequences of stress breakdown

- ▶ Inability to work at the same level
 - ▶ Tension in family relationships
 - ▶ Withdrawal from others
 - ▶ Loss of enjoyment in any formerly enjoyable activity
 - ▶ Loss of fitness because of lack of activity and comfort eating leading to weight gain
 - ▶ Fear being away from home
 - ▶ Avoidance of any reminders of the stressor/s
 - ▶ Avoid crowds, supermarkets, shopping centres
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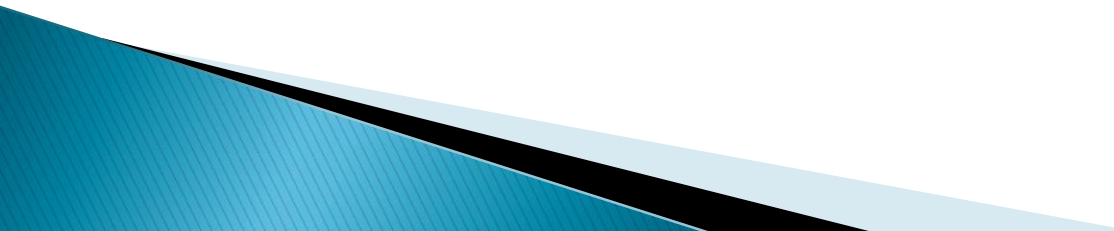
Treatment of stress breakdown

- ▶ Learning to cope with not coping
 - ▶ Medication for symptoms (not a cure)
 - ▶ Rest, meaning doing things that are restful
 - ▶ Avoid social situations
 - ▶ Avoid answering the front door and the phone
 - ▶ Ignore advice eg meditation, exercise, yoga that are good for relieving stress are counter-productive when breakdown occurs.
 - ▶ Avoid making decisions/ dealing with finances/ travel
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Treatment of stress breakdown II

- ▶ Have a timetable for the day
 - ▶ Do tasks on a time based basis rather than a task based basis eg if painting a room, paint for 30 minutes then stop for the day, rather than stopping when you have painted a wall.
 - ▶ Beware that your energy level fluctuates during the day, you will have energy for about 2 hours (at most) in the morning and 30–60 minutes mid afternoon. Schedule your activities during that time frame
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Progress of a stress breakdown

- ▶ Initially, high levels of depression, anxiety and panic, struggle to get through the day.
 - ▶ Later, symptoms flare up with mild stress, can get through the day.
 - ▶ Finally, takes years to settle – left with reduced energy levels, poor memory and recurrent inability to cope with stress.
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Conclusions

- ▶ Stress part of life
 - ▶ Leads to a stress response
 - ▶ Resilience vital in dealing with stress
 - ▶ Resilience enhanced by prayer
 - ▶ Factors improving resilience – physical and mental fitness, community involvement, religious faith
 - ▶ Stress can be overwhelming leading to a breakdown in capacity for coping – stress breakdown
 - ▶ Stress breakdown is a long term problem with limited recovery leaving ongoing issues.
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