TO EAT OR BE EATEN

THE NATURE OF STRESS

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DOLPHIN STRESS TEST

• This is a simple test designed to indicate whether people have too much stress in their life.
  It’s a picture of two dolphins. The two dolphins appear normal when viewed by a stress-free individual. This test is not accurate enough to pick up mild stress levels.
  It’s quite simple. If there is anything that appears different about the dolphins (ignore the fact of the slight color differences) it is often an indication of potential stress related problems. Differences, if any, may also indicate the source of your stress.
  Sit upright and viewing the screen head-on, take a deep breath, breathe out and then open the picture and look directly at it.
  If there is anything out of the ordinary then you should consider taking things a little easier.

If you see anything other than two dolphins you need a break!!!
**Stress Defined**

- Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. (Richard S Lazarus)

**Underlying Mechanisms of Stress**

- Fight-or-Flight
- General Adaptation Syndrome

**FIGHT OR FLIGHT**

- Mechanism to help humans survive a sudden physical threat
- Stress hormones released, adrenaline and cortisol, creating a surge of strength
- Glucose spikes
- Heart rate and blood pressure increase
- Stress over time increases cholesterol and plaque

**The Effect of Stress on Performance**
The Essence of Stress Management

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Discipline
- Mastery of Coping Skills
- Establishing a Personal Routine
- Time Management

Potential Negative Impacts of High Stress

- Binge eating on junk food
- Smoking an excessive drinking
- Reduces resistance to colds and flu
- Promotes depression, high blood pressure, and memory loss
- Can exacerbate heart disease, hardening of the arteries, autoimmune disease, diabetes, and ulcers
- Can speed up the aging process

Lifestyle Choices to Manage Stress

- Build your physical reserves
- Maintain you emotional reserves
- Moderate your physical reactions to stress
- Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress

Three Ways to Manage Stress

- **Action-oriented:** In which we seek to confront the problem causing the stress, changing the environment or the situation;
- **Emotionally-oriented:** In which we do not have the power to change the situation, but we can manage stress by changing our interpretation of the situation and the way we feel about it; and
- **Acceptance-oriented:** Where something has happened over which we have no power and no emotional control, and where our focus is on surviving the stress.
Robert Sapolsky's Observations on Stress

- Individuals who can differentiate between a genuine threat and situations that may be threatening, but really are not, experience less stress than those who perceive threats everywhere (Type A Personalities)
- Individuals who spend considerable time enjoying their friends and other relationships are less likely to experience stress negatively than those who spend more time alone.

PROVEN STRATEGIES FOR BEATING STRESS

- Socialize. Good relationships ease stress
- Emote. Talk, laugh, cry, get angry
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Lose yourself in pleasurable activities
- Get perspective. You will get through the bad
- Breathe. Practice slow, deep breathing
- Live in the moment

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

- All humans, especially bright ones, think in cognitive loops
- These loops contribute to stress
- Learning to control the loops is a key to reducing stress and maintaining greater self-control

PROCESS OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

- Raise awareness of specific thought content
- Identify thoughts that tend to loop and differentiate between loops that are positive and those that are negative
- Negative loops tend to be irrational
- Develop realistic counter to negative loop
- Practice substituting counter thought for negative loop whenever it occurs
Natural Self-Protection or Defense Mechanisms

- Denial
- Avoidance
- Intellectualization
- Rationalization
- Projection
- Others

Relaxation, Meditation, Self-Hypnosis

- These are skills that like others work best when practiced
- They are all states of focused attention
- Progressive relaxation may facilitate all three states
- They can all enhance performance and memory

Common Steps to Relaxation

- A quiet, distraction free environment
- A comfortable body position
- A focal point. It may be visual, auditory, or based upon other sensory system.
- Passive concentration. Your mind will probably wander so gently bring it back to focus.

Expressions for High Stress Days

- 1. You! Off my planet!!
- 2. Well, this day was a total waste of makeup.
- 3. Errors have been made. Others will be blamed.
- 4. Sarcasm is just one more service we offer.
- 5. I'm just working here till a good fast-food job opens up.
6. How do I set the laser printer to stun?
7. I’m not tense, just terribly, terribly alert.
8. When I want your opinion, I’ll give it to you.
9. Stress is when you wake up screaming and you realize you haven’t fallen asleep yet.

You Know Your Stress Level is Too High When

1. At lunchtime, you find yourself sitting in your parked car pointing a hairdryer at passing cars to see if they slow down.
2. You page yourself over the intercom and don’t disguise your voice.
3. You put your trash can on your desk and label it "IN".

4. You call the psychic hotline and just say, "Guess".
5. You tell your children over dinner "Due to the economy, we are going to have to let one of you go."