

TAKEOFF

HOLISTIC HEALTH

STRESS & BALANCE

The Answer Lies Within

STRESS AS ENERGY

When we perceive danger, need a burst of energy, or are inspired by a new idea, the body experiences what we label as “stress.” The heart may beat faster, the pupils may constrict, the blood sugar spikes. We are taught that we are at the mercy of stress no matter what we do. All stress is, however, is energy. The body is changing and altering its energy to adapt to the situation it is in. Stress is neither good nor bad, it is a response. If we learn the on and off buttons of the stress response — the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, more commonly known as “fight or flight” and “rest & digest” — could we flip the stress response switch on and off? Could we learn to respond in a way that signals to the body, “I am safe,” “I am at ease,” and “I am at peace”?

We believe external circumstance is the cause, and understandably so — there are plenty of circumstances that can be “stress-inducing.” And of course, there are situations that arise that can be so jarring we are left in disbelief, denial, grief, or anger. But what is the inducer of stress? Let us dive deep into space to discover its origins.

We notice that people with lower stress levels have simply learned to deal with and handle stressors with ease. How is it that some individuals, exposed to the very same stressor, the same stimulus, can have vastly different responses? There must be a difference in consciousness — the realization of a deep peace that cannot be disrupted or destroyed, regardless of the circumstance.

THE NATURE OF BALANCE

Everything in nature is in perfect balance. Male and female. Night and day. And we are a part of nature, not separate from it. To find the balance, we must stop seeking and start noticing — begin to witness the balance, the sacred, the divine dance of all of life. You are a part of the Whole. Yet you are also whole. When we know our innate wholeness, there is balance, there is peace, there is absence of disease.

From the ancient Hindu philosophy and the *Upanishads*, we learn the Sanskrit term Sat-Chit-Ananda — a compound word describing the nature of ultimate reality:

- Sat** — The truth of unity.
- Chit** — Consciousness of the truth; the fullness of peace that cannot be disturbed.
- Ananda** — The joy of being in this Awareness.

When we dwell in Sat Chit Ananda regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in, there is nothing that can touch us. We become immune to stress because we don't involve ourselves in it. The body and mind will react, while we remain at peace in the seat of Awareness.

“Without a change in consciousness, there is no real reduction in stress.”

“The goal of letting go is the elimination of the very source of all suffering and pain.”

“The goal of surrender is transcendence.”

— David R. Hawkins, Letting Go

STRESS AND THE ROCKET BODY

There is no doubt that poor adaptation to stress — this change in energy — creates real physiological changes that, if prolonged, weaken the immune system and contribute directly to disease. Take for example the commonly known stress hormone, cortisol, which is released from the adrenal glands when we need a burst of energy. When cortisol circulates in the blood for too long, it creates an imbalance of energy. It says to the muscles, “break down so we can use your energy,” and “keep sugar in the blood so we can use it,” not realizing that it is creating imbalance. Excess muscle breakdown gives rise to weakened muscles and joints, while prolonged high blood sugar gives rise to diabetes. It is easy to see that the rocket body cannot sustain mach 10 speed at all times; it needs balance.

When we suppress, repress, or avoid feelings surrounding a situation or event, that energy gets trapped in the rocket body. In Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, there is a term for this trapping of energy: *Samskara*. When we experience a distressing situation and resist or suppress the emotions surrounding it, the energy gets stored in the body and the psyche. The body may try to release the stuck energy, but the psyche has the tendency to suppress or avoid it because, to the psyche, it is painful. But this cycle is what keeps the energy stuck, and it can stay trapped throughout our life. So the next time a past memory arises that creates discomfort, ease into it. Relax your shoulders, your eyelids, and notice it. Allow it to be, see it for what it is — a passing experience through consciousness — and allow its energy to dissipate. Accept it as it is, and it will be released. You no longer need to hold on to it, so let it arise, let it be, and let it go.

• LAUNCHPAD TIP

Releasing stuck energy from the rocket body can be done, and its ultimate benefit is liberation. Vipassana meditation is a specific form of meditation that cultivates deep awareness by observing the breath and physical sensations with nonjudgment. There are many free centers throughout the country that offer 10-day Vipassana meditation retreats. Check out the books *The Emotion Code* by Bradley Nelson and *Becoming Supernatural* by Joe Dispenza for alternative ways to release trapped energy.

THE ROOT OF STRESS

Many human beings are in a near-constant state of stress. This is because many of us are cut off from our source, eternal love — Sat Chit Ananda. Many of us feel a state of separateness, of yearning, of longing for something better: some theoretical future moment when we'll finally be happy, be at peace, be in bliss. But that future moment does not exist. The only moment that exists is this one. Therefore, the only way to access Sat Chit Ananda is Now, through Presence, through Awareness.

The mind makes up a past to cling to and a future to hope for, but does everything it can to avoid the now. The past and future only exist in our minds, and must be cleansed through observing within — witnessing the inner world with love and non-judgment, allowing one to be, accepting one as is. This uproots the source of stress entirely.

Sure, tools such as diet changes, movement, massage, therapy, medications, aromatherapy, and distraction can help one temporarily, and are effective at preventing stress through the release of energy — but they themselves do not get to the root of stress, which is the ego, the survival animal instinct within us.

We've gotten so used to avoiding our inner worlds that stress has become the normal. Living in the city, I see many who have become victim to external conditions, not realizing that their perception of them is creating their reality.

BREAKING SELYE'S STRESS RESPONSE THEORY: ALARM, RESISTANCE, EXHAUSTION

Selye's stress response theory tells us that stress begins with alarm (an immediate threat or stressor is perceived, the body reacts in “fight or flight” mode), then comes resistance (the body continues the stress response but struggles to maintain balance), then exhaustion (the body is drained and depleted, no strength left, disease arises). At first glance, this chain reaction seems unavoidable. But actually, there are multiple opportunities to break this chain.

Let's say you find yourself in a sticky situation: you had just taken a swim in a lake and you are walking out from the water to the beach, when you happen to step into quicksand. The body reacts, signaling alarm and initiating the fight or flight reaction. Full panic mode ensues. What will you do? Your body is sinking into the ground. There are thoughts of denial: “No way this is happening...” “I can't believe this is it!” You try to lift your legs, but they are stuck. You shout for help, but there's nobody nearby. At this point, half your body is buried. Now here is where there's a decision to be made: will you continue identifying with the denial

and fear, or will you accept the situation? Will you continue resisting the situation, the thoughts of the mind, or will you let go and return to Awareness? You decide to surrender completely to the situation, and lo and behold, you notice a tree branch above your head that you failed to notice before, because you were so caught up in thought. The tree branch is just within your reach, and you pull yourself up to safety.

This situation is no different than the daily stress the rocket body perceives. Because we've become accustomed to resisting the thought-energies of stress, we do not notice their accumulation. The way out is surrendering.

Through continuous surrendering, while the alarm may initially throw us for a spin, we no longer resist the temporary feelings that arise. We know they will pass; we allow them to be as they are. We simply watch them. We do not create a story out of them, we do not sugar-coat or minimize them, we do not over-intellectualize them, we do not judge them — the shining of our conscious light is enough. This is not to say we "give up," or do nothing. Rather, it is to bring one back to Presence, returning to the Now. The action will arise in and of itself without us doing anything. This is the magic of surrender: we let go of all outcomes. We return our focus and attention to Awareness, to Sat Chit Ananda, which is always accessible to us.

ALTERING PERCEPTION

There are, of course, physical stressors — physical pain, trauma — but we are not discussing those here. If the stressor is not a threat to the individual's survival, yet we perceive it to be, the rocket body's response is the same as if we were being held at gunpoint. Any time a suppressed *Samskara* arises in consciousness again, it is an opportunity to allow it in, let its energy unravel, and surrender — let it go for good this time. The body and mind may still react: cortisol spiking, heart accelerating, feeling impending doom, but there is no reason to fear. Remaining in the seat of conscious awareness, remaining aware that we are aware, the energy will be enveloped and released.

What if we altered how we perceived the situation? What if, the next time it arose in consciousness, we watched it unfold without judgment, rather than avoiding or resisting it? What might happen if we surrendered to the situation, shining the light of loving consciousness upon it? Could we forgive ourselves for not knowing at the time what we were experiencing, but doing what we needed to survive? And the next time there is disturbance, will you resist or suppress it? Or will you surrender, falling back upon the seat of Awareness? The choice, once again, is entirely yours to make: continue reliving the same emotional turmoil, or perceive it in a new light.

Be graceful, young astronauts. There is no need for stress in life, for you are already balanced, already whole, already One.

Let the energy pass, and it *will* pass.

SOURCES:

Hawkins, David R. — *Letting Go*
Tolle, Eckhart — *The Power of Now*