

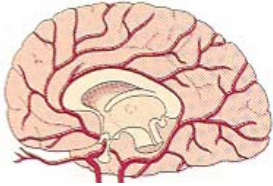


Presents

**Self-Care by
Design—in
Times of Stress**

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Brain References**





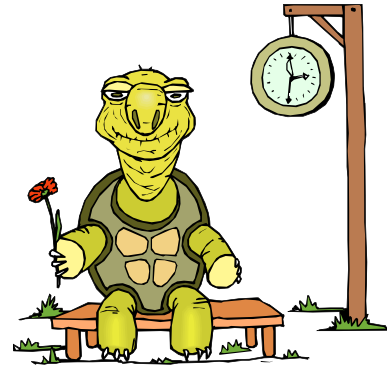
The Brain

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**Is the first body system
to recognize a stressor**

**It reacts with
split-second timing**

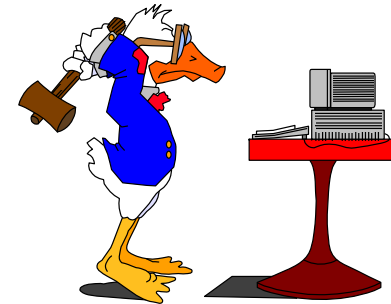
**It can stimulate the stress response for
up to 72 hours after a traumatic event—
real or imagined—longer, if you keep
rehearsing the event**



Stress is Living

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**Simply being alive
requires adaptive responses
from brain and body**



**The absence of stress is death
(your brain and body are unable to respond
and adjust to requests for change)**

**However, unmanaged stress can kill brain
cells and damage body organs**

Effective Stress Management

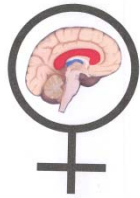
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Is critical for females as they are twice as vulnerable as males to many stress-related disorders



Studies reported in *Molecular*

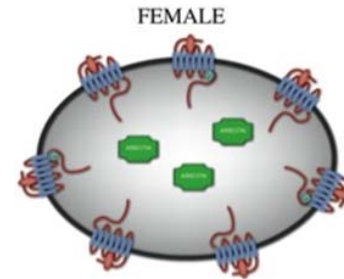
***Psychiatry*: In response to a stressor, Corticotropin Releasing Factor (CRF), both a hormone and a neurotransmitter, binds to receptors on cells in the locus ceruleus, an alarm center deep in the brainstem**



“Macho” Female Brain

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When the going gets tough inside a locus ceruleus neuron, the female brain acts *macho*



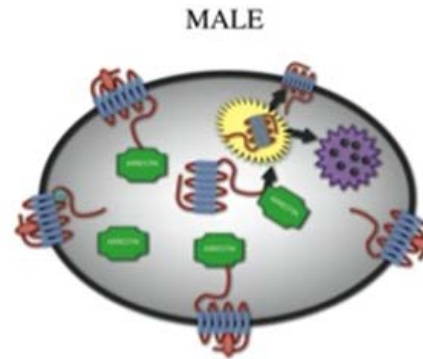
In response to a stressor, receptors for the stress hormone CRF remained exposed on the neuronal membrane in the female rat, taking the full hit – this increased CRF binding heightened the brain's stress reactivity



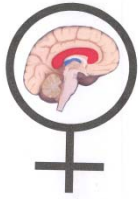
Male Brain Uniqueness

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In the stressed male rat, receptors danced with internal proteins called arrestins (green), which enabled some to retreat into the cell's interior, where they couldn't bind with CRF



This adaptation, unique to the male brain, toned-down the neuron's stress sensitivity



Female Brain

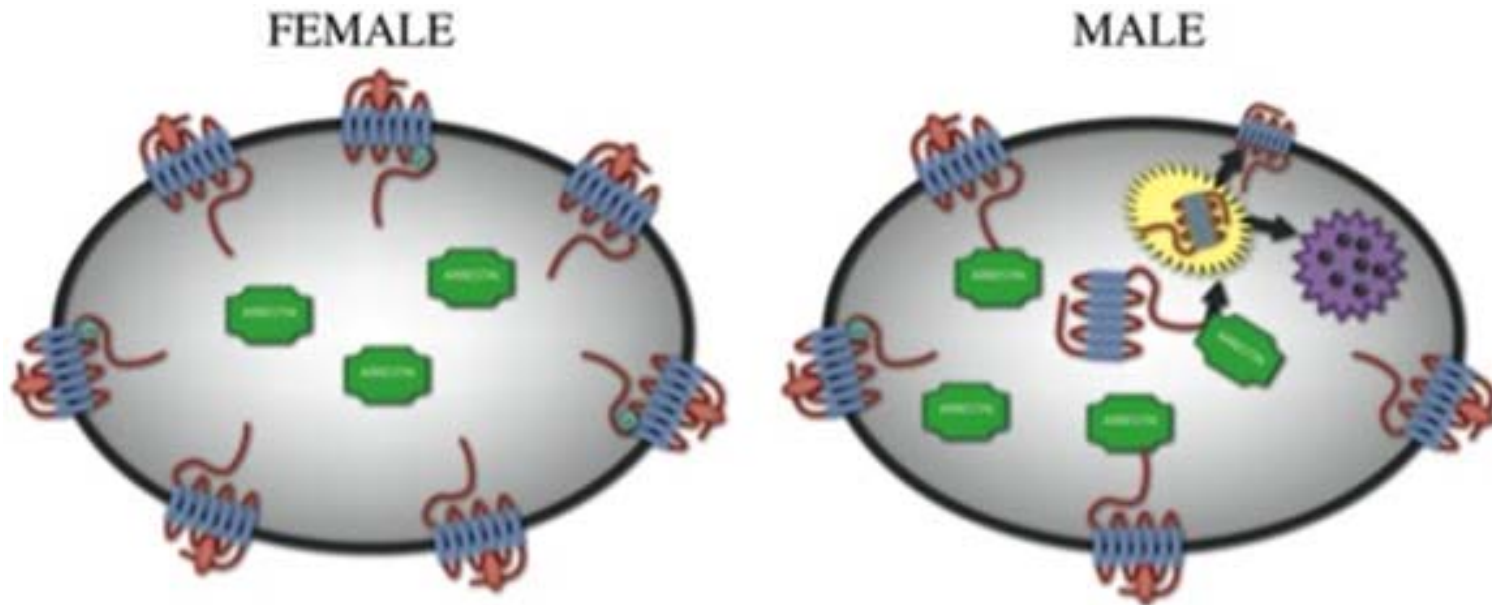
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The alarm system is more sensitive to CRF and stress



Lack of receptor internalization in the female brain could translate into impaired ability to cope with high levels of CRF — as occurs in depression and PTSD

Even in the absence of any stress, the female stress signaling system is more sensitive from the start —Debra Bangasser PhD



**Blue receptors and ↑
binding to CRF – help ↑
the brain’s stress reactivity**

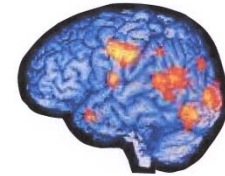
**Green arrestin proteins
help CRF receptors retreat
inside the cell – and ↓
stress reactivity**

http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2010/stress-hormone-receptors-less-adaptive-in-female-brain.shtml?WT.mc_id=twitter&sms_ss=email

Three Types of Stressors

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- ❖ **Eustress – Desirable and positive stress about which you often have some choice**
- ❖ **Distress – Undesirable and often outright negative stress**
- ❖ **Misstress – Unrecognized stress that can be more harmful than distress over time**



Eustress: Positive Desirable

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**When you participate in choosing,
undesirable consequences to
your brain and body are reduced**

**Negative, chronic effects tend
not to accumulate**

**Vacation, college, marriage, childbirth, promotion,
retirement, travel, learning new skills, family
gatherings, holiday / anniversary events**



Distress: Negative Undesirable

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**Think ahead and avoid
distress whenever possible**

**If unavoidable, manage
effectively and carefully**

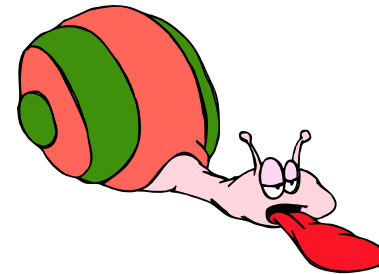


**Laid off, bankruptcy, earthquake or other
natural disaster, divorce, any type of abuse,
accidents, chronic illness, death, wars,
recession, serious addictions**

Misstress: Unrecognized

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**You may *miss* the impact
on your life of these hidden
stressors—at least initially**



**Cumulative and can produce
greater negative results than distress**

**Worry, anxiety, unrealistic expectations,
inaccurate perceptions, mis-eating, lost keys,
lack of sleep, long commutes, high alcohol
intake, excessive computer usage**

Stress: Work Expensive

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Hundreds of studies show high cost of stress:

- ✓ **Workers with high stress are twice as likely to be absent 5 or more days a year**
- ✓ **40% of job turnover is due to stress**
- ✓ **60 to 80% of accidents on the job are stress-related**



Stress: Health Expensive

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Unmanaged stress reactions are a more dangerous risk factor for cancer and heart disease than either cigarette smoking or the ingestion of high-cholesterol foods

- ↓ cognitive ability**
- ↓ libido**
- ↓ energy potential of 30%**



Three Reaction Forms

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Studies have identified three types of reaction forms the brain may implement when trying to deal with stressors:

- 1. Fight-Flight**
- 2. Tend-Befriend**
- 3. Conserve-Withdraw**





Fight-Flight

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**Probably the most studied
of the three reaction forms**



**Tends to be implemented
more often by the male brain**

**Unmanaged it can lead to ulcers, high
blood pressure, and any number of acute
or chronic illnesses**



Tend-Befriend

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Females exhibit fight-flight reaction under sudden stress, but soon fall back to tend-befriend" (nurturing children or connecting with others)



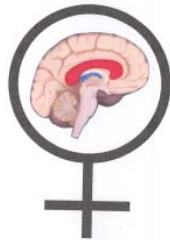
Unmanaged it can lead the individual to tolerate the intolerable, resulting in any number of stress-related symptoms, and the potential for serious injury / death



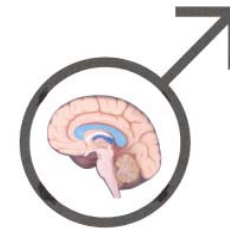
Conserve-Withdraw



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May be implemented
by all types of brains



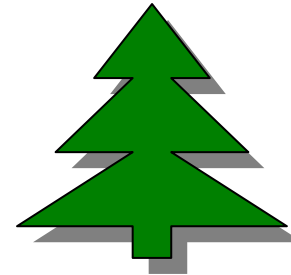
**Involves the brain's attempt to sit still
and wait it out, especially when the
situation appears to be unresolvable**

**Can be helpful in the short term;
unmanaged in the long term it can lead
to depression and immobility**

Different Strokes . . .

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**Stress is a relative concept
because every brain is unique**



**Stress responses are typically learned
and often relate to personal flexibility—
trees that cannot flex with the wind are at
high risk of uprooting in a storm**



**Several key tasks can help you
enhance self-care during stress**

Take a Self-Inventory

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**You can manage only what
you can label and describe**



**Be brutally honest with yourself (denial is
more prevalent than one river in Egypt)**

***Not everything that is faced can be
changed — but nothing can be changed
until it is faced*** —James Baldwin

Key Stressors

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Identify your own key stressors

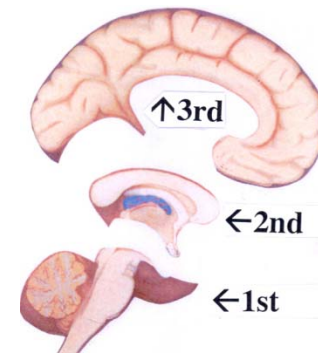
- **Make a list in each of the three general categories**
- **What symptoms does each produce?**
- **What behaviors do you exhibit?**
- **How long do they last?**



Hone Your Superego

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Think of the superego concept as a wise parent who lives in your mind and helps you do what is right and good for yourself and others



In adulthood, you become your own *parent*—responsible for good self-care by critical thinking and implementation

Know Yourself

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**Identify good self-care for you
and then do it—consistently**



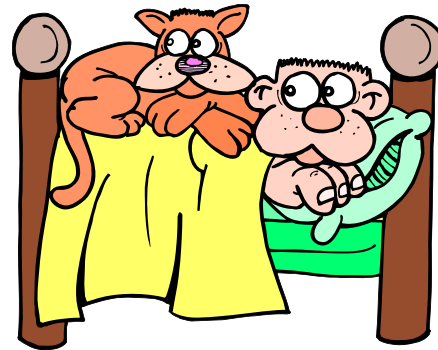
- **How much sleep does your brain need?**
- **How much exercise is optimum?**
- **What types of foods are best?**
- **What energizes or exhausts you?**
- **What is fun for you?**
- **What stressors are more lethal?**

Expectations and Perceptions

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What you don't know you don't know can sabotage you

Are your expectations and perceptions YOURS or someone else's?



Do they need to be tweaked more realistically or even discarded?

Transform when Possible

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Distress and Misstress events can sometimes be transformed into Eustress simply by changing your perceptions of the event or your expectations around it

Ask: will it matter 12 months from now?

If no, let it go. If yes, live the Serenity Prayer



Brain-Stress equation

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**Stressors interact with the
brain in a two-part equation:**

20% = stressor effect

80% = your perception



***It's not so much what happens that matters
as what you think about what happens***

—Epictetus, 2nd Century Greek Philosopher

Live the 20:80 Rule

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Only 20% of any negative effect to brain and body is due to the event



80% is due to your perception of the event the weight you give to it

Even when you can't do anything about the 20%, you can do almost everything about the 80%