

Responding Versus Reacting

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

—Viktor E. Frankl

The brain is set to either ramp up stress and, with it, extremes, or to process experience and return to joy.

React



Fight, flight or freeze Release of hormones puts body on alert

Stress Reaction

Stress hormones:

- ↑ Glucose rises
- ↑ Blood pressure
- ↑ Sweat gland function
- ↑ Pulse rate
- ◆ Narrow mental focus
- **↓** Digestion
- **◆** Shallower Breathing

YOU ↑↑↑ Internal Stressors

↑↑↑ External Stressors

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Respond

Awareness

Strengthen prefrontal cortex of brain where critical thinking occurs

Stress Response

Slight response in stress hormones



Responding to Stress:

- Be aware of body sensations
- Assess thoughts, feelings, perceived threats
- · Stay in the moment
- Be conscious of the present
- View situation with openness & without judgment
- Accept



Reacting to Stress:

- High blood pressure
- · Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue
- · Acid reflux
- Irregular heartbeat
- Frequent infections
- Feeling sad
- Irritable bowel
- Worrying
- Headaches
- Backaches
- Memory loss

Intensifies symptoms of existing health conditions (i.e., diabetes, arthritis, asthma), especially autoimmune disorders.



Negative Ways of Coping:

- Overwork
- OvereatDenial
- · Increased alcohol intake

Monkey mind

• Increased tobacco use

- Less sleep
- Increased caffeine consumptionZoning out on computer, TV
- Ongoing stress shrinks executive function in the brain—the habit-forming part of the brain.

Our ability to choose is a gift, but also a huge responsibilty.



Long-Term Effects of Stress

- Chronic health problems
- Depression/anxiety
- Infertility
- · Weight gain



Positive Ways of Coping:

- Seeing new options & opportunities in life's challenges
- Nurturing yourself/self-care
- · Physical movement
- Problem solving



Improved Health & Well-Being:

- Quicker recovery
- Calmness
- Reduced risk of health problems/illness
- Positive mood/happiness

Adapted from: Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain and illness. New York: Dell Publishing.



