

The American Institute of Stress

COMBAT STRESS

Harnessing Post-Traumatic Stress for Service Members, Veterans, and First Responders

Volume 9 Number 4

Winter 2020/2021



Dedicated Heroes

- Inside: **A Tribute to the Best of the Best** - Dr. Dan Kirsch, *Kathy Platoni* • **Stress and the Need for Control**, *Robert Kallus*
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- **Soldier for Life: One Veteran's Perspective and Beliefs in Why Service to the Nation is Important**, *DJ Reyes*
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The mission of AIS is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, The American Institute of Stress educates medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public; conducts research; and provides information, training and techniques to prevent human illness related to stress.

AIS provides a diverse and inclusive environment that fosters intellectual discovery, creates and transmits innovative knowledge, improves human health, and provides leadership to the world on stress related topics.

COMBAT STRESS

We value opinions of our readers.

Please feel free to contact us with any comments, suggestions or inquiries. Email: editor@stress.org

Combat Stress magazine is written with our military Service Members, Veterans, first responders, and their families in mind. We want all of our members and guests to find contentment in their lives by learning about stress management and finding what works best for each of them. Stress is unavoidable and comes in many shapes and sizes. It can even be considered a part of who we are. Being in a state of peaceful happiness may seem like a lofty goal but harnessing your stress in a positive way makes it obtainable. Serving in the military or being a police officer, firefighter or paramedic brings unique challenges and some extraordinarily bad days. The American Institute of Stress is dedicated to helping you, our Heroes and their families, cope with and heal your mind and body from the stress associated with your careers and sacrifices.

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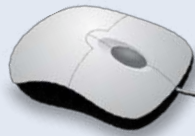
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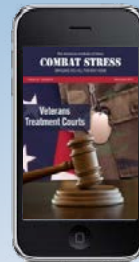


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Editor's Message

By **Kathy Platoni, PsyD, DAAPM, FAIS**

COL (RET), US Army, COL, Ohio Military Reserve/State Defense Forces

Editor, *Combat Stress Magazine*, Dayton SWAT, Member, Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame



There are no mixed emotions about the **tribute** to our fearless leader and creator of all things wonderful in this issue. It is only with pure sadness for those of us who have worked with and reaped such extraordinary benefits from Alpha-Stim technology to announce his retirement from Electromedical Products International. Although **Dr. Dan Kirsch**, inventor of the first and absolute best technology on planet earth, has made the decision to

retire, he will remain our Senior Editor for this publication. Dr. Dan has been and will remain one of this nation's primary heroes for all time.

LTC (RET) John Norvell, USAF, to whom I was recently introduced during a Veterans Day

webinar for our alma mater, Hobart and William Smith College in Geneva, NY, has graciously offered up his experiences as a Master Navigator and Weapons System Officer with over 1000 flying hours in the F4 Phantom II during the War in Vietnam. His

harrowing tales of both combat missions and Christmas at War serve as powerful keepsakes of those dedicated heroes that comprise membership in the greatest generations of Service Members and Veterans so willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Dr. Jeff Jernigan's stunning piece regarding PTSD and the neurological aspects of learning will astonish our readers in revealing the role of nutrition in recovering from PTSD, as well as the very destructive role of prolonged stress in victims of trauma. What he has imparted is invaluable information for both clinicians and those in their care and one that

begs to be shared broadly.

In the very same vein, **COL (RET) DJ Reyes** has again, graced our winter issue with the something that remains vital to those who serve their country...that service does not

end at the time of military retirement and instead, often inspires a lifetime of the same. This Soldier for life has devoted his post-service life to creating and sustaining Veterans Treatment Courts throughout the United States and to bringing an end to this

human trafficking. This is unequivocal proof that once a Warrior, always a Warrior.

As he has risen to infamy in his post-retirement career, **LTC (RET) Charlie Bass, MD, PhD**, has very accurately documented the rising tide of a propagandized media that has bastardized the truth and sold news sources down a dark vat of deception. Regardless of political ideologies, identity politics, and the like, the validity of his writing is unmistakable in its stark reality. *Keep in mind that Dr. Bass's piece is meant to be read with an apolitical lens.*

Though retiring from law enforcement in July of 2020, **Officer and US Army CPT (RET)**

To all of our authors, thank you so very much for your magnificent contributions and the many lives of Service Members, Veterans, first responders, clinicians, and caregivers that will be touched by your words.

Tom McMurtry is back on the force again, pen in hand. His striking piece on humanitarianism in war when least expected is often unfamiliar territory in the wartime theater. He has captured the essence of the lessons to be gleaned during the worst and most hellish of times, known only to those who have served in combat.

Robert Kallus, MS, DAIS, has provided a unique and striking perspective about stress and perceived needs for control, an issue that permeates much of the human race. Simplistic in his approach, he has divulged basic principles and insights often overlooked in the clinical context. We will be soliciting much more from him for future issues.

COL (RET) Ed Rothstein has discovered renewed purpose in his awe-inspiring desire to continue his service to humanity, his fellow Service Members, and the Department of Defense as creator and founder of the Education and Resiliency Center in the Fort Meade Region of Maryland. His endless accomplishments have come about through his own personal battles in overcoming his own silence and the terrible stigma of seeking the support that so unnecessarily eludes those most deserving of it.

And of course, **Dr. Ron Rubenzer** has bestowed yet another chapter of his back-to-basics approach to handling stress with his excellent stress management resource toolkit. In this issue, our readers will master “whole brain” utilization for management of test anxiety. Where was Dr. Ron when I was in graduate school?

To all of our authors, thank you so very much for your magnificent contributions and the many lives of Service Members, Veterans, first responders, clinicians, and caregivers that will be touched by your words.

Your Editor,

Kathy Platoni, PsyD, DAIPM, FAIS
COL (RET), US Army
COL, Ohio Military Reserve/State
Defense Forces
Editor, *Combat Stress Magazine*
Dayton SWAT
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A Tribute to the Best of the Best - Dr. Dan Kirsch

By Kathy Platoni, PsyD, DAAPM, FAIS, COL (RET), US Army

This tribute will require Kleenex... lots of it... as I try to summarize 30 years of unequalled friendship, mentorship and generosity, bar none. You see, Dr. Dan and EPI President Tracey Kirsch have been at the center of my friendship universe and have redefined what attachments and lifelong bonds mean. I owe them much more than money could ever buy, words could ever begin to convey, and the single most enormous balance due for thankfulness on this planet. They are family, far more than even my own flesh and blood.

At my Army retirement ceremony in 2014, it was Dan who stood on the stage and nominated me for president of the United States. Less than 24 hours later, "Kathy for President" signs appeared on both the front lawns of my home and my office. Dan is unstoppable in his antics and his belief in his friends. For him, I would have started campaigning.

When I blew the national record for numbers of pass-overs for promotion to "full bird" colonel, I am quite sure that it was Dan and Tracey that lobbied then Senator Max Thornberry to assure that I was promoted to that rank and that the US Senate confirmed it. If not for them, my Army career would have careened to an early end. This led to my position as Chief Psychologist for the Army Reserve and later, the same position for the Ohio Military Reserve, State Defense Forces. Dan and Tracey have

more to do with my accomplishments than I do.

Far more importantly, when Soldiers and Marines so desperately needed to reap the unlimited benefits of cranial electrotherapy in the wartime theaters of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, it was Dan and Tracey that packaged up thousands of dollars-worth of Alpha-Stim devices, with enough devices to cover every forward operating base at which my US Army Combat Stress Control teams were located throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, all donated by these extraordinarily generous spirits. I cannot even begin to describe the countless lives that were very literally saved by these acts. If not for the technology created

by the genius of Dan and Tracey, hoards of Soldiers and Marines would have been med evacuated back to the United States, lost to the ravages of guilt and self-blame for having



His new profession upon his retirement from EPI.



“deserted” their comrades in arms. It was unequivocally cranial electrotherapy stimulation that made it possible to for a high degree of psychological stability to occur and to be maintained for the duration of psychologically wounded Service Members’ deployments This is pure and unadulterated fact.

It is thanks exclusively to the unceasing efforts of Dan and Tracey that every military medical facility throughout the entire United States and the European theater provide Alpha-Stim devices to military personnel. As if these feats are not sufficiently remarkable, not to mention miraculous, every VA hospital throughout the land has Alpha-Stim devices available to qualified Veterans. These accomplishments are worthy of presidential Medals of Valor and no less. To state that Dan and Tracey are the epitome of national heroes and patriots unmatched anywhere or by anyone, is the millennium’s understatement.

As if all of these incredible deeds are not sufficient to even begin to pay homage to this man of such immense greatness (and to Tracey as well), the creation of the First Responders Program was also the brainchild of Dan and Tracey. This enabled the provision of Alpha-Stim devices to the law enforcement community for multiple police departments from Texas to Nevada to Ohio and beyond. In October of 2018, Dan and Tracey introduced this program to the Southwest Ohio community at the Dayton Fraternal Order of Police Lodge, donating



100 devices to officers and dispatchers from numerous police departments. These visionaries have made it possible for those exposed to the devastating impact of dreadful cumulative trauma to live so much

better lives with the terrible burdens they carry for the duration of their careers. Add to this, their bequest of ample devices for those police officers who fired their weapons to apprehend the shooter who took 9 lives, injuring 17 innocents, during the Oregon District Massacre in Dayton, Ohio in August of 2019. There has never been any limit whatsoever to the call of duty for the Kirsch’s, no matter what the tragic circumstances or numbers of first responders, Service Members, or of those in any kind of need, regardless of reason. Never. They are on scene with endowments before the needs of the masses are even identified.

I owe Dr. Dan and President Tracey a debt of gratitude that can never be paid in full. They are again, national heroes of a caliber never to be seen again in the healthcare industry. They are irreplaceable. They are the best friends for which a body could ever ask. Our friendship can only continue to grow and blossom from this point on, a gift that continues to multiply geometrically. In the meantime, Dan, I am nominating you for president. Watch for signs.

Sista Kathy

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The End of the War in Vietnam

August 15, 1973

By LTC (RET) John E. Norvell

I was a warrior who now found that I missed the war. When we were in combat every day, it seemed as if we had really accomplished something. We had a mission and we did it well. Now every day was filled with mundane and for the most part, boring tasks. There may have been a bit of survivor's guilt in the way I was feeling. I always felt that I had not done enough in combat over in Cambodia when so many others had been called upon to do so much more.



I have thought about combat now for nearly 50 years. I have worked through in my mind about my time in combat and read extensively about the experiences of others. It's hard to compare combat experiences. There are many commonalities, but every man or woman has a different story to tell.

There is an old saying about combat: "If you've been there you understand, if you haven't, I can never tell you about it." One can look at the history of a battle, but never really know what the combatants felt. One can attempt to bring logic to something that is of itself not logical; to bring order to a construct of chaos; to bring light to what is rightly called, "the Fog of War." This is usually done after the fact. To the men and women in combat, the events are not clear and what is happening defines them for the rest of their lives.

The World War I British poet Siegfried Sassoon described it in his poem *The Dreamers*¹ this way:

*"Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land,
Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows..."*

While his poem can be interpreted in many ways, to me, the first stanza always meant that in combat, there was only the moment to focus on the past; the future held no sway.

Sassoon later writes in the poem:

*"Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin.
They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives."*

In this I disagree with him. It is when the guns cease that thoughts of home grow strong. In battle, one thinks only of the combat at hand; there is no thought of home for the moment.

The moments in combat had been the center of our lives for many months. Now that was passing. Now we would try to move on. Other thoughts would take the place of war, but these thoughts would never be alone. In death's grey land, there is a threshold that one passes over, and sometimes the return from that place is hard. Sometimes events and thoughts linger for years.

In *The Great Santini*, Pat Conroy tells the story of Marine Lt Colonel Bull Meacham, a fighter jock, who needed a war but had none to fight. In the absence of a war to fight, he engaged in self-destructive behavior - fighting his own personal war with his family and the Marine Corps. He had been trained to be in combat; it was the centerpiece of his life and defined him. It was not easy to be a warrior.

While I was not Santini, my behavior after the war mirrored his. I was a warrior who now found that I missed the war. When we were in



combat every day, it seemed as if we had really accomplished something. We had a mission and we did it well. Now every day was filled with mundane and for the most part, boring tasks. There may have been a bit of survivor's guilt in the way I was feeling. I always felt that I had not done enough in combat over Cambodia when so many others had been called upon to do so much more.

I often wished I had participated in the air war over North Vietnam. For nearly 50 years "Going North" has been a siren song in my mind. The men who went north were called upon to do their jobs under the most

demanding conditions. If we had gotten the order to go north so long ago, my friends and I would have gone. We would have flown and fought to the best of our abilities. We were experienced combat F-4 crews and ready to go into battle immediately if called upon to do so. But we never flew combat again.

The air war was over, but it would never leave me. For the rest of my life, I would think of those times in the sky over Cambodia when I was most alive. It was the great adventure of my life.

Reference

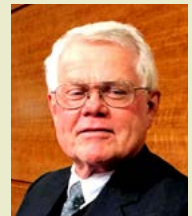
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LTC (RET) John E Norvell is a graduate of Hobart College, Geneva NY, with High Honors in American History (1966) B.A. He is a member of the Druid Society, the Senior Honor Society of Hobart College. He earned a M.A. from The Maxwell School at Syracuse University in 1968. He is a former Assistant Professor of American Social and Military History at the US Air Force Academy, retired Air Force Lt. Colonel, and decorated air combat veteran of the Vietnam War. He is a Master Navigator and Weapons System Officer with over 1,000 hours in the F-4 Phantom II and 400 as an Instructor Navigator in other jet aircraft.

As a member of the 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron stationed at U Dorn RTAFB in 1973, he flew on the last "unofficial" F-4 fighter bombing mission of the Vietnam War to launch from that base. Before his retirement, he served as the Executive Officer for the Historian of the United States Air Force in Washington, DC. After his retirement from the Air Force, he served as Director of Alumni Relations at Hobart College from 1993-2002. He has also written for various newspapers including the Washington Post, and history journals around the country.

He is a member of The Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia, The Company of Military Historians, The Air Force Navigator Observer Association, The F-4 Phantom II Society, The Red River Valley "River Rats" Association and The Order of the Daedalians, Flight # 61st (George "Bud" Day).



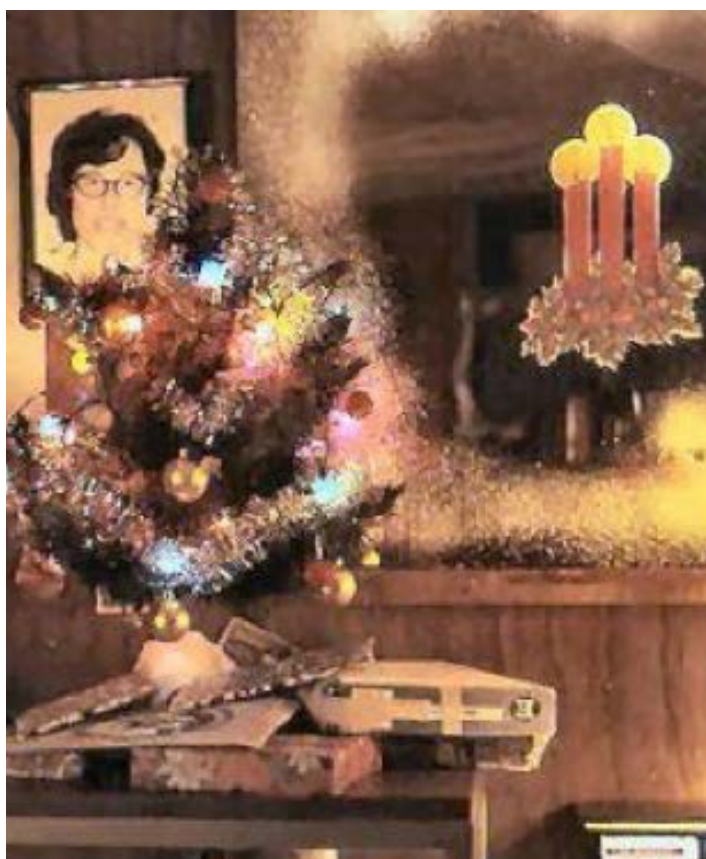
Christmas in War Time

By LTC (RET) John E. Norvell

This was originally posted in 2015, but as many American men and women remain in war zones, I offer it again as I do each year at Christmas time.

Christmas is such a family time, it's easy to forget that there are folks who will not experience it with loved ones.

For me that occurred during the Vietnam War. My wife and I had not even been married a year, when I went off to combat.



The small tree my wife mailed to me so long ago.

It was hard for her and it was even harder for me. The family sent me a care package and my wife mailed me a box with a Christmas tree in it. The photo of the tree ties me to that day so long ago, but I have very few memories of

Christmas. Note the fake snow sprayed around the mirror - why the PX had fake snow for sale is beyond me. Behind the tree is a photo of my wife that - and the fake snow - tied me to home. The only other reminder of that Christmas is the Squadron Christmas Card, which I kept.



13 TFS Christmas Card

From the standpoint of the ground soldiers, our time in combat was very limited, maybe 5-10 minutes or if you engaged with a MIG fighter maybe longer, although each mission could be as much as 5 hours long. You dropped your bombs and then went home.

Since we were in Thailand, the poinsettia trees on the base were in bloom, another reminder of the holiday, but like shiny tinsel on the tree, they only suggested Christmas. The calendar said December 25, but we hardly felt like celebrating. In those pre-email, internet, and cell phone days, we really were isolated.

On Christmas Day we aimlessly wandered the base. I had it easy, if you contrast it with others in my family. My Dad was in WW II and Korea, missing several Christmases. My uncle who died last year spent Christmas 1944 in the Battle of the Bulge. This was a particularly grim episode of the war. The army had expected a quick push and when the advance stalled, the men were ill prepared for the December weather. Though he never, ever talked about his time in combat, he did admit that it was tremendously cold and that there were great losses. I don't think he even celebrated Christmas.



Poinsettia trees at Udorn.

My third great grandfather, Lt. Lipscomb Norvell, spent Christmas 1780 as a POW of the British. Enough said on that - but he did survive.

All these Christmases were terrible. There is no such thing as a good Christmas in war. The men and women who find themselves swept up in war try to cheer themselves up in whatever manner, but it is very, very hard to do.

When I say that we restlessly wandered the base on Christmas, it was just that. It was like we were disconnected. We were rootless and we didn't really understand why.

This year, many young Americans will again find themselves far from home. They will try to be happy, but the joy will be missing. They will be rootless and not know why, cut off from family and friends and all the

things that make Christmas special.

Please keep them in mind and think about all that they do for you to keep you safe.

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PTSD and the Neurology of Learning How Stress Robs Us of Understanding

By Jeff Jernigan, PhD, BCPPC, FAIS

Gill is 27-year-old former Army Ranger and combat Veteran. He walked into my office at the hospital one day and announced that his wife had sent him to see me; unorthodox, but effective. When I asked Gill why his wife thought I should see him, he responded with a list of her complaints: he was boring, had difficulty getting things done, especially if they involved more than just a few steps; evidently couldn't learn from his mistakes,

and couldn't remember the last conversations they had about his changed behavior. Here is the interesting part: Gill had exited active duty nearly two years previously, had sought treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder before leaving active duty, and felt the treatment was effective and that he was doing well. This was until about six months ago, when things went south in

his relationship with his wife. And now he was unemployed and just as exasperated that he was getting worse, not better, as was his wife.

Further evaluation determined that Gill had been in multiple combat actions, suffered from a concussive head injury including brief loss of consciousness, and experienced a number of symptoms that did not go away entirely after



his earlier treatment. These included difficulty in concentration, focus, memory, and decision-making, which helps explain his wife's description of his symptoms. The oddity was her comment about him being boring and not being able to learn from his mistakes. These were; however, the most important clues of all.

Prolonged stress breaks down neural pathways, resulting in loss of concentration, focus, memory, and decision making.¹ This is true for all of us and isn't necessarily related to PTSD. In fact, some Soldiers return from combat even stronger as a result of positive emotions, engagement with their work, a core of close relationships, meaning in their work and lives, and a sense of accomplishment.² When this is, however, associated with a closed head injury, active learning can be impaired.³ Active learning takes advantage of the cross-talk between various structures in the brain that involve how we create, evaluate, understand, and remember. These complex functions are tied to biological processes in multiple regions of the brain.⁴

Learning involves changing the brain. More literally, it requires the building and repair of neural pathways. For the brain to produce new brain cells (neurons), it needs stimulation. Mild stress provides the stimulation, while moderate to high stress and trauma can "lock up" the brain due to the effects of introducing epinephrine into the bloodstream (adrenaline). That is when hyper-vigilance, elevated heart rate, and a sense of foreboding distract us from learning. In the case of closed head injury, structures in

the brain can actually suffer physical injury. The process of converting perceptions into longer term memories, a key part of learning, comes to an end. Active learning requires involvement in activities that stimulate multiple connections in the brain. If the mind is impaired due to stress and/or injury, learning does not happen.

The Stella Center, experts in helping trauma victims, followed 487 patients treated in 2017 through 2019, all diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and found that 61 percent

had problems with concentration, 54 percent had problems with memory impairment, 49 percent had problems with cognition, and 25 percent had problems

Prolonged stress breaks down neural pathways, resulting in loss of concentration, focus, memory, and decision making.

with mental confusion.⁵ This is not exactly a great learning environment inside their heads. This is the reason Gill seemed unable to learn from his mistakes and lost interest in anything that required focus or concentration. His wife's impression was that he had slowly become a boring and forgetful husband.

So, how do we get Gill back on his feet, active, engaged, energized, and healthy? We work on the biological and psychological sphere of his life including nutrition, exercise, sleep, and engage his brain in a therapeutic workout routine.

Beyond the basics of nutrition and brain health, there is something specific to watch out for with people who forget to eat (memory), leave the table with their meal half eaten (focus), and because they are hungry after meals, tend to eat junk food. Too many

carbohydrates, too much processed sugars, too much red meat, and not enough vegetables can create a number of biological conditions like hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), which also mimics depression. Leaky Gut Syndrome (LGS) is another nasty byproduct of poor nutrition.⁶ The meats we eat often contain antibiotics fed to animals to keep them healthy. The vegetables we eat may contain toxins from the insecticides sprayed over the fields to keep insects away. These can destroy the good bacteria in the stomach needed for digestion. Over time, the lining in our intestines can break down, causing leakage into surrounding areas, which may lead to all kinds of problems.

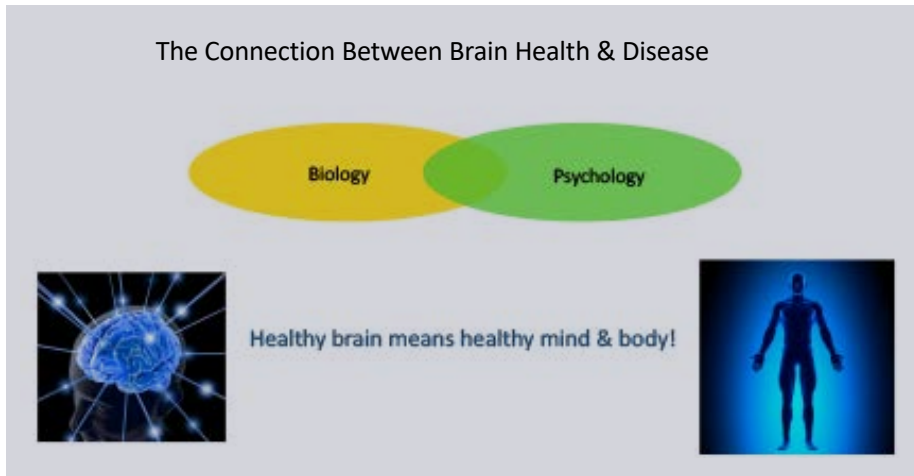
This is important to understand. The inside of our intestinal tract is as large as

three tennis courts.⁷ 90 percent of the total number of bacteria in our body is located in our intestinal tract, along with 60 percent of our body's total immune cells.⁸ Together, these form a microbiome of friendly bacteria in our body called "Gut Flora."⁹ Gut Flora digests our food, neutralizes toxins, generates vitamins, creates neurotransmitters, strengthens our immune system and protects the lining of our gut.

Antibiotics we absorb from the meat we eat kills the good bacteria in our gut. Too much sugar promotes the growth of unwanted parasitic gut microbes. Toxins from food preservatives and artificial sweeteners contribute to the deterioration of our gut lining until it is breached, releasing this chemical cocktail into our body. Poor digestion, poor vitamin production, poor neurotransmitter production, and autoimmune



The Connection Between Brain Health & Disease



conditions can result. When it comes to brain health, LGS

has a devastating effect. The neurotransmitters our brain needs for the various structures in the brain to talk to one another are created in our body from the food we eat. This process breaks down with LGS, killing off the good bacteria. This can shut down cognitive functions, appearing like a traumatic brain injury. Clinical depression and anxiety can result from this biological effect, as easily as it can from psychological effects.¹⁰ Gill did have problems with his diet, especially when he was left alone at home all day while

his wife went to work. Not surprisingly, he was diagnosed

with LGS, which was eventually resolved with a change in diet.

This brings up an interesting issue: the integration of our biology with our psychology. Mental health is not just tied to our psychology, but to our biology as well.¹¹ It is a two-way street, mind impacting the body and the body impacting the mind.

In Gill's case, his physical condition (LGS) was contributing to his mental health condition and his PTSD was contributing to his physical

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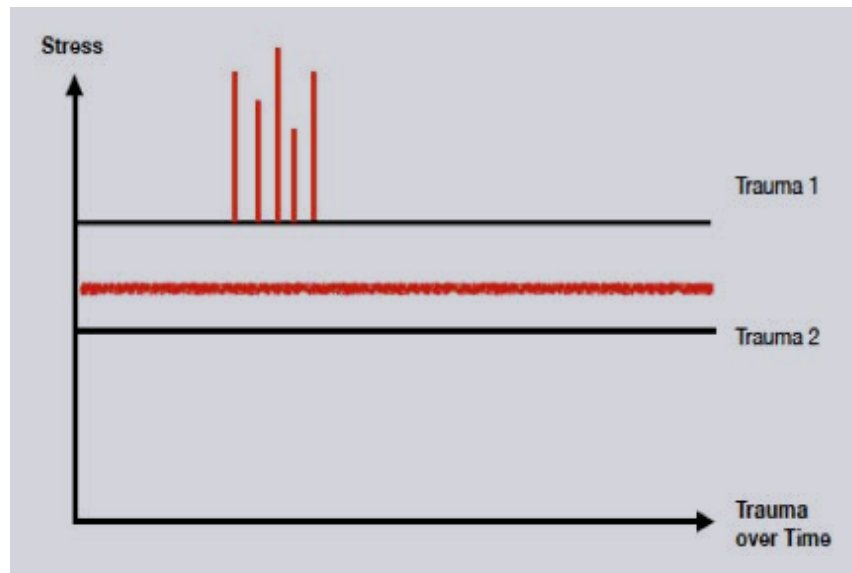
condition. Both conditions required treatment, the goal being the restoration of a healthy brain. Our brain interactively controls everything psychologically and physiologically within us.

Exercise is key to brain health. When we exercise with some degree of intensity several times a week a protein, β -hydroxybutyrate, is produced in our muscles and travels to the brain, where it triggers the production of a Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF).¹² BDNF is crucial to learning and memory. In addition, it triggers the replacement and repair of neural pathways and brain cells.¹³ However, this does not happen unless you are sound asleep. This is when BDNF goes to work. Gill was exercising

regularly and reported no problems with sleep disturbance.

Sleep is an important issue when dealing with PTSD. Sleep impacts safety, weight, and overall health.¹⁴ 6,000 fatal car crashes a year are a result of falling asleep at the wheel. Higher levels of the hunger hormone, ghrelin, and lower levels of the appetite-control hormone, leptin, lead to more cravings for sweet, salty, and starchy foods, as well as a 50 percent higher risk for obesity. Depression, irritability, anxiety, forgetfulness and fuzzy thinking are a result of sleep disturbances. Sleep deprivation can age our brains 3 to 5 years and increase our risk of dementia by 30 percent.¹⁵





Gill had not experienced another head trauma. Closed head injuries can take up to six months to

a year to resolve; but he did report growing anxiety and stress over his unemployment and the resulting financial pressure on himself and his wife. Prolonged pressure over a long period of time can trigger stress-induced injuries, especially in the presence of PTSD. Gill had improved dramatically during his treatment for PTSD and thought he was cured. Unfortunately, he didn't understand that PTSD lasts a lifetime.

Though symptoms decrease over time, we have understood for a while there is always a vulnerability which remains.¹⁶ During this time, Gill also received

news that a former battle buddy had committed suicide. This triggered a struggle with shame and self-blame for not being there for him, anger and grief over the loss, and further isolation from his wife and friends.

It became apparent that Gill was experiencing tremendous stress, not only from the trauma experienced in combat, but from the prolonged stress of the ongoing struggle to find healing physically and psychologically. This is a situation involving Trauma 1 (a traumatic event or cluster of traumatic events) and Trauma 2 (prolonged trauma from unrelenting stress). Both types can produce the same physiological and psychological injuries to the person diagnosed

with PTSD. The chart illustrates the relationship between Trauma 1 as a cluster of traumatic events (red vertical bars)

and Trauma 2 as an unrelenting ongoing lower level of stress (red fuzzy line).

If learning impairment, discussed previously, is determined to be a component of Trauma 1, it must be mitigated prior to interventions for Trauma 2. The treatment of Trauma 2 requires learning new habits, new boundaries, and new ways of being present in the moment for oneself (mindfulness). If learning has been impaired

by a Traumatic Brain Injury or some other mechanism of injury, simultaneous efforts to treat Trauma 2 will be much less effective than treating them

Sleep is an important issue when dealing with PTSD. Sleep impacts safety, weight, and overall health.

somewhat consecutively.¹⁷

Attention was also focused on Gill's psychological health. In conversation with Gill and his wife, it became apparent Gill lacked emotional agility and the ability to connect with his wife on the level of feelings. For Gill, this was a matter of maturity. He grew up an only child and had only been married for about two years. His inability to communicate his feelings had to do with emotional intelligence, a skill that can be learned, which frustrated his wife because he seemed not to learn from his mistakes or remember the conversations they had in that regard.¹⁸ Their arguments only produced more stress and less memory. The learning part of this

dynamic was something we could repair.

Gill responded well to a suggestion to get involved with a project that encompassed steps of varying complexity. He decided to build furniture, since he liked working with wood. The instructions were detailed, and we encouraged Gill to refer back to the directions often and avoid worrying about forgetting something from one moment to the next. The goal was to engage his mind with complex processes that involve a greater number of neural connections and stimulate a number of areas of his brain promoting memory. In other words, this would result in reconnecting neural pathways and making new ones. Reconnection is an important part of PTSD therapy and the same structures of the brain involved in learning are also involved in reconnecting with a positive self-identity, healing from lost attachments like the loss of his battle buddy, and reconnection with friends and community.¹⁹ The key to this mind therapy was



the repetitive nature of the activity. Finish one step, go on to the next one, consult the directions as often as needed. What we encounter repeatedly shapes us inevitably. The repetition was stimulating the creation

of new learning pathways.

Nutrition, exercise, sleep, practicing a new skill (emotional intelligence), and repeating complex tasks brought Gill around to a place of new confidence and hope. This was ten years ago. Gill and his wife are still together, have two children, and he is enjoying a career in a US government intelligence agency, still serving his country and protecting us all.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Jernigan, PhD, BCPPC, FAIS is a board-certified mental health professional, hospital administrator, and engineer. These describe Jeff's 30-year career, focused on influencing change in people and organizations by capitalizing on growth and change through leadership selection and development. Jeff is the Regional Life Science & Healthcare Practice Director for Stanton Chase.

Jeff's work in life sciences, healthcare, engineering, and higher education has taken him to 38 countries around the world. As an internationally recognized thought leader and educator on the prevention of burnout and self-directed violence associated with mass violence and disasters, Jeff has also worked with military and government agencies on three continents.

Jeff has been the recipient of the prestigious Workforce Optimas Award for Financial Impact, the Gallup National Healthcare Excellence Award for Culture Change, Gallup World Class Manager President's Club Award, and the Saratoga Institute's Global Best Practice Award for financial growth.

Jeff has been featured in *Healthcare Executive*, *Workforce*, *Business Finance*, and *Church Executive* magazines for business leadership excellence; and is a Contributing Editor to *Combat Stress* magazine, addressing stress fatigue and PTSD in the military. Jeff is a Subject Matter Expert for stress fatigue and stress disorders with the Wellness Council of America, rated by them as one of the top one-percent of wellness experts in the country.

Jeff also serves as CEO and Medical Programs Director for a major international non-profit organization providing healthcare, education, and leadership development in the wake of mass disaster and violence on three continents. As adjunct faculty or visiting professor, Jeff continues to teach the fundamentals of intervention following mass disaster and violence in National Universities in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and Africa.



Soldier for Life: One Veteran's Perspective and Beliefs in Why Service to the Nation is Important

By COL (RET) DJ Reyes, US Army

The other day a good friend asked me to do a favor for him. As a fellow Veteran, he was asked to support a school project for the child of a co-worker. Although clearly able to respond to the questionnaire, my friend thought it more informative if I would consider responding to the questionnaire. I agreed to help out my friend, but as I read thru the myriad of questions, I realized that the theme focused on my military experience and my service to the nation. It also

compelled me to take a deeper look at my own journey - similar and different to our many Veterans of past and present - and to acknowledge certain important points along the way. I responded in the following manner below and I hope that my own thoughts may hopefully resonate with others reading this piece. Enjoy!



Background

Pre-Military

I grew up as an "Army brat." My dad was a 25-year Army combat Veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. I was born on the island of Oahu, Hawaii (a US Territory at the time) at Tripler Army hospital. As a child, I moved around military posts in CA, NJ, VA and overseas (Kaiserslautern, Germany). After high school, I graduated from the University of Notre Dame and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, US Army via the Army ROTC program in 1979.

Military Service

My primary "job" was in the field of Military Intelligence. Through the years, I received "intelligence training" in different fields, to include all - source analysis and counterintelligence. Years later as a brigade commander, I commanded a joint site signals intelligence organization that leveraged electronic systems (on the ground, in the air and space) to obtain "intelligence" on the enemy that our units were fighting at the time. Finally, I attended training in the Army's special operations community and served in several airborne and special forces units.

In addition to serving on various military bases throughout the USA, I have had overseas assignments in Korea, the United Kingdom, and Germany. I also deployed on multiple combat tours that included Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey, Syria, North Africa, Bosnia and Kosovo.

I received multiple unit and individual awards including 3 Bronze Stars for combat operations.

During these combat deployments, I served as my Commander's Senior Intelligence Advisor and supported the following missions:

1. Find and capture or neutralize terrorist organizations who threatened our US and Coalition Forces.



2. Stabilize the host nation, its government, and its population.

In my earlier deployments, our communications were not very good - in many instances I could not contact home, other than writing letters (i.e., snail mail).

On some deployments, we were not quite sure when they would end. One that I will always remember was the invasion of Iraq on 19 March 2003 (my 46th birthday, by the way). We were not told we were returning home until late January 2004 - and we re-deployed back to the USA on 4 February 2004. Given the sudden notification of our pending re-deployment to the actual re-deployment just two weeks later, you can imagine how that degree of uncertainty can affect Soldiers, both mentally and emotionally.

Some thoughts about Combat that I Learned Along the Way

1. Soldiers with a strong Faith in God, with good friends, and with a supportive family back home, tend to do better and cope more effectively under combat conditions.

2. No matter how hard or long you train for combat, you never know what to expect - and you never know how you will react. Think about being on a sports team (e.g., baseball, football, and the like) and practicing all week long. Then you board a bus and travel to another school location for an away game, and to another field, a different crowd, and another team you have never competed with before. Your heart pumps really fast and the excitement builds. Your coach is trying to calmly talk to you as the crowd is yelling and the band is playing very loudly. No matter how hard you practiced, you can never really replicate the "real conditions" you are facing right before the referee blows the whistle to start the game.

3. Your buddies with you are your reason to survive and make it back home to your own families. You don't care who your buddies are, what color skin they have, where they're from, or what their political beliefs are because all you care about is that they will protect you if you are being attacked. And they expect the same from you.

4. There are some very long days and nights – and in the desert – very hot days and nights. There are periods of boredom. Then suddenly you can get fired upon or attacked with mortars, rockets, RPG’s (rocket propelled grenades) or IED’s (improvised explosive devices). This requires you to respond very quickly. It can be emotionally and mentally exhausting. This is why we all kept calendars in our caps, helmets or notebooks – crossing off each day that passed and one day closer to getting back on the "Freedom Bird" home.
5. There is no greater feeling then when you are flying back home from a deployment and the pilot says "We are now entering US airspace. On behalf of a grateful nation, Welcome Home!"

Post-Military

I retired from the Army in 2013 and performed one short assignment as a Department of Defense Civilian (Intelligence) at the US Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB.

I decided to then focus my energies on public service and helping others in need. I specifically focus on three groups:

1. Veterans in trouble with the law
2. Special needs/disabled children of military families
3. Victims of human trafficking/human smuggling

I identified these areas that are both personal and meaningful, and of which I believe we all must try to lend a hand in any capacity that is possible.

Final Thoughts

1. If our Nation goes to War, it must be for all the right reasons. Our government has outlined our national priorities in a

document called the National Security Strategy (NSS). The Department of Defense’s supporting document that further translates and defines the NSS is the National Defense Strategy (NDS).

2. If our Nation decides to go to War when the benefits outweigh the risks – then we must go forth and give 110 percent. We must go to WIN, for in War, there is no substitute for Victory.
3. We must always remember who actually fights our Nation's Wars. These are our National Treasures. It is comprised of our dads and moms, our husbands and wives, our brothers and sisters, our friends from high school and college, and so on. It is our citizens in our local communities across this great Nation. We must never forget and must ALWAYS HONOR those who paid the costs of war... including the ultimate cost.
4. For those families of the fallen, every day is Memorial Day. It is not just one day in a year.
5. There is an old saying: "You can take the Soldier out of the Army, but you can't take the Army out of the Soldier." For many, "Service to the Nation" does not end with shedding the uniform. The US military teaches all Service Members the ethos of selfless service, of a higher calling, greater than oneself. Do not be surprised to see Veterans volunteering their own time and resources to help "the least among us" in a variety of community or neighborhood projects, local schools, parishes, and youth organizations. Thank them for their continuing service! It is incumbent upon us who have worn the uniform to find ways to continue to serve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DJ Reyes is a retired U.S. Army Colonel with over 33 years of faithful service to our great Nation. Earning his bachelors, masters, and juris doctor degrees from the University of Notre Dame, the U.S. Naval War College, and Temple University School of Law, DJ also commanded or served in primary staff positions in special forces / operations, military intelligence, infantry, airborne, air assault, Joint/ Interagency, and Multi-National organizations. His combat and contingency deployments included tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, North Africa, Bosnia, Kosovo and Haiti. In addition to providing independent consulting for organizations supporting Veterans, military families with special needs, and victims of human trafficking, DJ previously served as a Department of Defense contractor assisting local Florida Veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities. DJ currently sits on the following advisory boards: National Veterans Court Alliance, Washington DC; U.S. Congresswoman Kathy Castor (D-FL 12th) U.S. Service Academy Nomination Committee; U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL 14th) Veterans Advisory Committee; Florida Department of the VA Executive Director Danny Burgess' "Forward March" Veteran Program Legal Sub-Committee; and Legislative Chair, Florida Veterans Council, Orlando. Finally, DJ devotes significant time and energy in his community service role as senior military advisor and mentor to the 13th Judicial Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court, or VTC. The VTC identifies those Veterans in trouble with the law resulting from some disorder or disability incurred during military service, obtains the necessary medical treatment and therapies for them, assists in the rehabilitation process, and promotes their successful reintegration back into the Veterans' local communities. Within Tampa Bay, DJ was recognized in 2014 with the Tampa Bay Business Journal's "Heroes at Work" Award for his continuing public service as a Veteran-owned business consultant supporting both military and special needs communities. In 2016, DJ was awarded with the Hillsborough County Bar Association's highest award - the Liberty Bell Award - for his exemplary efforts in promoting, and advocating for, the legal judicial system and process as it supports the local Veterans and special needs communities. The Hillsborough County's Sheriff's Hispanic Advisory Council also announced DJ as the 2016 recipient of the Raymond E. Fernandez Award. This award is presented each year to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the criminal justice system. In January 2020, (NHL) Tampa Bay Lightning Owner Jeff Vinik's Foundation announced DJ as this year's recipient of the Tampa Bay Lightning Community Hero Award. Finally, the Notre Dame Club of Greater Tampa Bay recently announced DJ's nomination for the 2020 Father Corby Award for Distinguished Military Service.



Yellow Journalism's Struggle

By LTC (RET) Charlie Bass, MD, PhD, FAIS

So it is that the weakest candidate the democrats have ever fielded and who campaigned the least and received the most votes of any presidential candidate in U.S. history – in the most suspicious election America has ever held – was sworn in under the heaviest National Guard force ever to assemble for an inauguration. At 20,000 troops, there are more uniformed and armed forces on peacekeeping duties in our nation's capital than there are in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Incidentally, President Trump's January 6th address, which so inflamed Speaker Nancy Pelosi (noting that she enabled the lethal, destructive rioting through the summer and fall), concluded after rioting broke out in the Capitol a mile away from the site of the speech.^{1,2,3}

Even the left-leaning NBC news concedes, "Trump's speech is probably defensible in every court."⁴

Thanks to this election effort going largely to American news sources that provided the one-sided political opinions and influences

that lionized Joe Biden and demonized Donald Trump, public opinion itself has become far less a factor than personal experience. This political "enlightenment" run by the liberal news media can also be termed "propaganda."

In the words of another writer from almost a century ago:

"Whatever definition we may give the term 'public opinion,' only a very small part of it originates from personal experience or individual insight. The greater portion of it results from the manner in which public



Accounts from protesters on the ground in D.C. on January 6 paint a picture of peaceful patriotism, unlike how they were portrayed by the mainstream media.

*matters have been presented to the people through an overwhelmingly impressive and persistent system of 'information.' By far the most effective branch of political education, in which this connection is best expressed by the word 'propaganda,' is carried on by the Press. The Press is the chief means employed in the process of political 'enlightenment.'"*⁵

Returning to the matter of the early-January rioting in the capitol, it seems the comments of people on the ground at the time of the rioting are running along largely parallel lines. Rioters disguised as pro-Trump supporters infiltrated an otherwise peaceful gathering and worked their damage in a move reminiscent of the incident in Gliwice, a town near the border between Germany and Poland, of 31 August 1939. Named "Grossmutter gestorben" (Grandmother died) by the Nazis, the false-flag operation was made to frame Polish anti-German saboteurs. That would give the Nazi party a *casus bello* - a reason to go to war - against Poland. To do this, the Nazis (Reinhard Heydrich of the SS and Heinrich Müller of the Gestapo) executed several Polish prisoners they were holding at the concentration camp at Dachau, dressed their bodies in Polish military uniforms, and laid them around a radio tower from which the Nazis had broadcast anti-German messages in Polish.

The week before the incident, the Nazi leader - Führer - issued the following statement to his generals,

*"I will provide a propagandistic casus bello. Its credibility doesn't matter. The victor will not be asked whether he told the truth."*⁶

The next day, a German blitzkrieg advanced

from the north, south, and west of Poland. Great Britain and France quickly declared war on Germany, and the Second World War began.



The radio station in Gliwice, Poland, was the scene of a Nazi attempt to frame Poland for provoking war.

Coming back to 2021, President Trump has been the target of the longest political lynching in our nation's history. The press demonized him early, even before his 2016 election, trying hard to make his domestic affairs seem horrible or to criticize his every action, whether public, political, or personal. The consistent mantra of the press seems to be that no Republican has ever done anything right and no Democrat has ever done anything wrong. In four years of news, has even one story emerged from the major media outlets saying something good and positive about a president who remains immensely popular among his 70+ million supporters?

It might also be said this way,
"...[the Press] would not rest until they had sniffed out some petty item which would be used to destroy the reputation of their victim. But if the result of all this sniffing should be that nothing derogatory was discovered in the private or public life of the victim, they continued to hurl abuse at him, in the belief that

some of their animadversions would stick, even though refuted a thousand times. In most cases it finally turned out impossible for the victim to continue his defense, because the accuser worked together with so many accomplices that his slanders were re-echoed interminably.”⁷

The playbook that the liberal news media follows today seems to be stated already, thus: “[The] primary rules were: never allow the public to cool off; never admit a fault or wrong; never concede that there may be some good in your enemy; never leave room for alternatives; never accept blame; concentrate on one enemy at a time and blame him for everything that goes wrong; people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it frequently enough people will sooner or later believe it.”⁸

How many times have we heard the news use the word “baseless” in conjunction with suspicions of voter fraud? From the Texas coast, the media has used the word so many times it sounds like seagulls swarming a plate of french fries. However, the media actually believes that if you repeat a lie frequently, the people will eventually believe it. This is called the “Big Lie.”^{9, 10}

Another tactic we see repeatedly is shouting down of free speech, particularly notable for anyone who has tried to speak on a conservative issue on a college campus in the last four years. Bully gangs appear, shout down the speaker, then portray themselves as the victims. The university security and leadership simply shrug their shoulders and disavow any knowledge of inviting the conservative speaker to the campus. This is analogous to the, “... approach to organized masked black-clad thugs that Italian authorities took to Mussolini’s

Brownshirts and Weimar Republic authorities took to Nazi Brownshirts.” Fascist violence is running unchecked and unpunished on America’s college campuses.¹¹



Students at Berkeley, California, protest to block conservative speaker Milo Yiannopoulos in February of 2017.

To implore the reader, please evaluate the source of news information. When you read an article or listen to the news, ask if the news is presented as fair and balanced. Does the story demonize one side or lionize another? Is there even a window open for each voice to be heard?

President George Washington gained a reputation as having an even-keeled approach to government. He would have Alexander Hamilton present his opinions on a political issue, then have Thomas Jefferson present the other side. Alexander Hamilton - the northern industrialist who favored big cities, manufacturing, and rapid growth - would always present a view starkly opposed with that of Thomas Jefferson - the quiet, Southern agrarian who favored conserving the status quo. President Washington showed his political adroitness, managing his cabinet, “...in almost the same way that he had consulted with his staff of generals during the Revolution. He solicited each person’s opinion, opposed as they might be, considered his options, and made a decision.”¹²

When hearing a news report, ask, "Am I really getting both sides of the story here?"

These tactics of the liberal news media are all well-known to history and are part of what is now termed "cancel culture" that attempts to wash from memory anything that conflicts with their narrative of how the world should look, much like when the German Student Union (an arm of the Nazi party) burned 25,000 "morally objectionable" books in May of 1933, ushering in the Nazi book burning campaign to suppress thought and to "synchronize" the culture with their twisted ideology.¹³



Nazis burned books in 1933 Germany as a way of erasing thought contrary to their own agenda.

The current opinion of Robert Unanue, Goya Foods President and CEO would be relevant here. The media tried to demonize and cancel him, with Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) denouncing Mr. Unanue after he expressed admiration for Donald Trump's entrepreneurialism. Incidentally, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez rose to her highest honor in December of 2020 when she was named "employee of the month" by Goya Foods after her call to boycott the Goya food label resulted in ten times higher sales, according to Mr. Unanue.¹⁴



Robert Unanue, CEO of Goya Foods, was the target of an attempted boycott of his company's products after expressing admiration for President Donald Trump in July of 2020.

Need more evidence? Ask author Andy Ngô, who faced days of riots outside Portland, Oregon's, Powell's bookstore in early January after publishing his book *Unmasked* about how Antifa plans to destroy American democracy.¹⁵

Does it really matter that 350 million Americans and the rest of this planet's people are being fed false information from the media sources? Does it really matter that every extended quotation in this article and every propagandistic tactic portrayed is either by Adolf Hitler or about him? In the words of Hillary Clinton, "What difference, at this point, does it make?"¹⁶ To the reporters and editors of the liberal news media, stop lying to the American people. Yes, the American people can handle being lied to and we're used to that. We have pretty sophisticated sensors for the lies we hear. However, we must insist that you stop using Adolf Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* as a playbook. Doing so insults the American public and denigrates the people of the nation's press.

To the savvy reader, please remember this. If they can vilify and run down a private citizen who simply has an opinion different from the mainstream, if they can bully people into speech and thought submission, and if they can take away the right to due process and a fair hearing from the President of the United States today, they can take it away from WE THE PEOPLE tomorrow.

Never forget.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlie Bass, MS, PhD, MD (Lt. Col., U.S. Army, Retired), assisted and served in the aftermath of hurricanes, a tornado, a terrorist bombing, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan during 28 years with the U.S. Army. In 2014, he retired with his wife to Corpus Christi, Texas. He and his wife wish to remind readers to vote in the November election.



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The Crying Woman with The Blind Mother - An Iraq Story - How a Small Act of Compassion Restored My Humanity

By Tom McMurtry, DAIS, Police Officer (RET), CPT, US Army, Special Forces (RET)

Binary Thinkers

Soldiers and police officers tend to view the world in binary terms. I know because I've been both. We're at war or we're at peace. A suspect is under arrest or they are free to go. Shoot or don't shoot. This all or nothing way of thinking and training exists within these professions because it simplifies the life and death decision making process. Many decisions of lesser importance follow the same pattern of training and reacting. Rules of engagement are created to clearly list those behaviors that will be tolerated and behaviors that will not. This allows groups of Soldiers and police officers to move and to work as a unit without individual instructions. Subtlety, nuance and individuality were not taught at the Infantry School, nor in my police academy.



Hold the Perimeter

My story begins on a hot day in the summer of 2003. I was in the western Iraqi desert, serving the leader of Tactical Psychological Operations Team attached to the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. My team had a loudspeaker mounted on top of our HMMWV truck. This was used for surrender appeals, crowd control or anything else that the cavalry might need to tell the Iraqis. The 3rd ACR

had been given a search and seizure mission on a large family compound near the town of Habbaniya. This was going to be a daylight raid, so visibility would be better; but there was still an increased risk that our presence would draw a crowd. The approach went well. The compound was quickly surrounded and all the adults inside did what our loudspeaker broadcasts told them to do. Most of the raiding party started searching the compound and interviewing the adult men.

A smaller group of us were given the task of holding the outer perimeter. Our orders were simple. Nobody gets in and nobody gets out.

"I am the Oldest Daughter!"

The perimeter was established using tracked vehicles, young men with rifles and yellow plastic tape.

I positioned the loudspeaker truck and myself where the perimeter crossed the main road in the village. A crowd had already started to gather there. I had the loudspeaker broadcast a standard "stay back" message. A middle-aged woman worked her way into the front. She started shouting and waving, trying to get my attention. I ignored her, avoiding eye contact behind my dark sunglasses; but she would not be deterred. She recruited some of the men around her to join in trying to get my attention. This worked. I approached her and between my limited Iraqi and her much better English,



I came to understand that she was the oldest daughter of the man who owned the compound and that her mother was inside and was blind. I acknowledged this but told her that she would still have to wait until the search was over. This caused her great distress and she was crying as I walked away.

This situation was common enough with crowd control in Iraq. Someone would come forward and explain that the rules didn't apply to them because of who they were; yet she was not like the others. She was not trying to cross the line because of her wealth or social status. If she was to be believed, she just wanted to be with her blind mother, who was probably

terrified. Also, being the oldest daughter meant she was almost certainly the one who had the primary responsibility for caring for her mother and the other women of the household. I thought about this and felt bad for her. Maybe I could ask permission to let her in. At this point in the war, Soldiers did not have individual radios. Only vehicles had radios. I looked back toward the compound to see if there was someone I could talk to, but there was not.

This oldest daughter was apparently a woman of importance, because she started giving orders to the men of the village. In a few minutes, an Iraqi man in a white shirt and tie came to the front and called to me in perfect

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English, with a British accent. I went out to talk to him and the crowd pressed forward to hear. The man introduced himself and explained that this woman was the oldest daughter of the man who owned the compound and that her mother was blind and that therefore, she must be allowed in. I could feel the tension in the crowd of perhaps 200 people. I needed to say no in such a way that I would not be asked again. I needed to use my command presence and a firm adult voice to convey my unwavering determination. Anything less and the crowd could turn ugly. I had been trained for moments just like this and was ready. Still, I hesitated.

Maybe I could let in just this one person, just this one time. There would not be any real security breach if I walked this woman through the perimeter into the compound. The war effort would not suffer any real harm. The crowd would probably relax. I felt real compassion for this crying woman, who just wanted to be with her mother. I looked over my shoulder toward the compound again. No help. This was going to be all on me. I made my decision.

I took off my sunglasses, stepped forward and tried to look surprised. "Oh," I said. "She is the oldest daughter?" I spoke as if I had not understood before. "It is her mother who is blind?" Turning to the woman who was now looking relieved, I said. "Please tell her I am sorry. I had not understood. Of course, she can come in. I will escort her myself." The man with the British accent began translating my words into Iraqi, but those who understood English were already reacting in a positive way. When he was done, there were cheers. I turned to find my fellow perimeter guards looking on with great interest. In a loud voice, I said "Sergeant Brown,

you have the perimeter. I'm walking one in." I waited until Sergeant Brown acknowledged me and positioned himself in the center. Then I lifted the yellow tape and gestured for the woman to follow me.

A Gun, Under Your Dress?

It was perhaps a twenty-five-yard walk to the main gate of the compound. As I walked away from the protective weapons and men on the perimeter, I realized I could be in big trouble. Was this woman a suicide bomber? Things like that had happened. Did she have a gun under her dress? That very thing had happened to me before. I had found an AK-47 with a loaded 30 round magazine under the long flowing dress of a woman in a house we were searching a few weeks earlier. It was a very tense moment. The woman with the gun under her dress had not been searched. She could have killed me or any of the Americans at the cost of her own life. Her husband realized she was hiding his rifle and told her to turn it over to us. Everybody survived that night.

With that incident in mind, I clearly could not just walk this woman in without ensuring the safety of the Americans. She had to be searched. I also could not search her in view of the crowd. Americans touching Iraqi women for any reason tended to send Iraqi men into a fury, as though we had just killed one of their own. The American Soldier that had been at the front gate was no longer there, so we just walked on in. I immediately looked for some place to conduct the body search. I saw a small room on the side and motioned toward it. This was the home of the woman I was escorting, and she indicated that this was the wrong direction and began to

step away. I firmly indicated that she was to go into the small room.

American Soldiers in full battle gear can be a scary looking bunch. She looked at me with real fear for the first time. I realized that she probably thought that this was where she would be sexually assaulted by me and other Soldiers, yet she went where I told her. Once inside, I tried to explain that I had to search her before we could go any further. She did not understand the words I was using, so I asked her "Gun?" pointing at the assault rifle I was carrying. "Under your dress?" pointing at what she was wearing. She understood and with a look of humiliation and pain began to lift her dress. "No, no." I said, with a downward motion of my hand. "Just hold still." I walked behind her and quickly pulled her loose clothing tight. If she was carrying anything that would hurt me, it would show. It only took a minute and she was safe. "Okay. Let's go." I said, with my hand pointing to the way out of this small room. She looked surprised and relieved as she walked out and headed toward the open courtyard in the middle of the compound. There were American guards there watching over a group of women and children. I didn't want to try to explain why I was there, so as we approached, I called to the nearest guard and simply said, "One more." He looked resigned and gave a head nod toward the group he was guarding.

It was almost over. I indicated to the oldest daughter that she was free to join the others. She had not yet been seen and when she stepped into the courtyard, there were cries of joy. The blind mother held out her arms to the open air until her oldest daughter filled them. The whole group of perhaps 20 women and children were

all laughing and crying and talking at the same time. The guard looked at me as though this was both unhelpful and clearly my fault. It was time for me to go. I gave a shrug and a nod, and I headed out of the compound and back to my place on the perimeter.

Within an hour or so, we were packing up and rolling out. The raid was a marginal success and ended without incident. Once back at the staging area, there was a mandatory after-action review. I waited anxiously to be asked why I let someone through the perimeter. I was prepared to explain my actions in strictly tactical military terms. The woman was harmless and letting her in quieted the crowd. But the question never came. Although my prepared response was true, the real reason I broke the rules for the crying woman with the blind mother was that I felt compassion for her. It had been a while since I had felt that emotion.

Restoring My Humanity

Back home before the war it was easy to be compassionate, sympathetic, and generous to others. Then my reserve unit was activated for the invasion of Iraq and I transformed into a hard and stoic Soldier. There were enemies to be found and neutralized. The Iraqi civilians were in the way and were treated as such. When the shooting war was over, my unit's deployment was extended to become part of the hard pivot into an occupation. Suddenly instead of war fighters, we were peacekeepers and nation builders. Unfortunately, the American Soldier at that time was neither trained nor equipped to do either. All we had were war fighting tools and war fighting skills. These often did not serve us well while working with groups

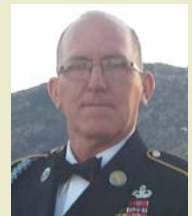
of confused and angry Iraqi civilians. I worked hard to ensure that my Soldiers maintained their professional demeanor; being neither kind nor cruel, being understanding, but not sympathetic. Unsurprisingly, there were times when I knew we were not behaving like the good guys. As weeks turned into months, I could tell that my cold-hearted behavior was taking a toll on my humanity. Our work was once described as herding sheep, while watching for wolves. Neither group was perceived as human.

At the time of the raid described above, it was a hundred days into the occupation and nothing seemed to have improved. Then I met the crying woman with the blind mother and this time I saw her as a fellow human being under great distress. She had done nothing to bring this on herself. The raid was not her fault. The war was not her

fault. The situation was also not my fault but there we were looking at each other across the yellow tape. Her pain was raw and real and I could help. So, I lifted the tape and walked her to her mother. It was not a big deal in the overall war effort, yet that small act of compassion briefly restored my humanity. I thought back on it for days. I still faced more than two hundred days in Iraq before my unit would rotate home, but the insight I gained that day carried me through the tough days that remained. If the situation permitted it, I would allow myself to feel and show the emotions I was experiencing. This in turn, and in a way I can't fully explain, caused me to feel much less overall stress, even in a combat zone. The challenge is in fighting back against the ugliness of war so as not to lose sight of what makes and keeps us human when the day is done.

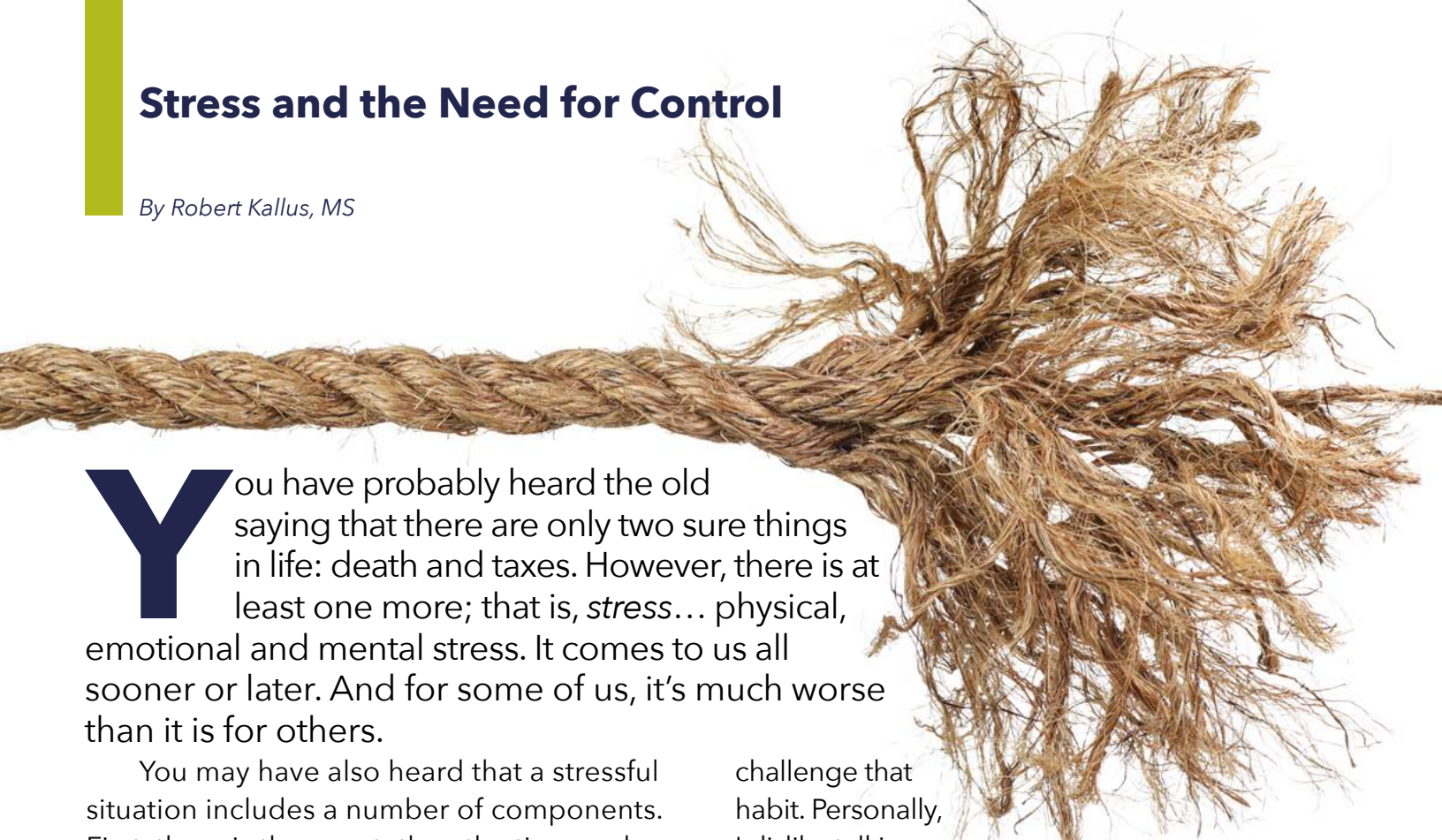
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom McMurtry, DAIS, Police Officer (RET), CPT, US Army, Special Forces (RET) has spent most of his adult life serving others. He joined the US Army at the age of nineteen, volunteered for and completed Infantry, Airborne, and Special Forces training. After three years serving on a Special Forces HALO Team Tom became a Reservist. He remained in the Special Operations Reserve for twenty more years. He was recalled to active duty for the invasion of Iraq as a Psychological Operations Specialist, during which he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. After his combat tour Tom returned home and entered the police academy at age 49. He served as a patrol officer for 15 years and received the Distinguished Action Award for his response on the night of the Dayton mass shooting in the Oregon District. Tom retired at the age of 65 but was recalled to part time duty by his department at the height of the pandemic to help cover for fellow officers who were sick. All of that aside, Tom will tell you that he takes greatest pride in his 45-year marriage to my wife, Holly, along with our five children and ten grandchildren.



Stress and the Need for Control

By Robert Kallus, MS



You have probably heard the old saying that there are only two sure things in life: death and taxes. However, there is at least one more; that is, *stress*... physical, emotional and mental stress. It comes to us all sooner or later. And for some of us, it's much worse than it is for others.

You may have also heard that a stressful situation includes a number of components. First, there is the event; then the time and place, the circumstances and the people who are involved. We call those "stressors." There is your perception of what happened, your interpretation of its meaning, and your attitude towards it. Finally, and most importantly, there is your response to the stressors.

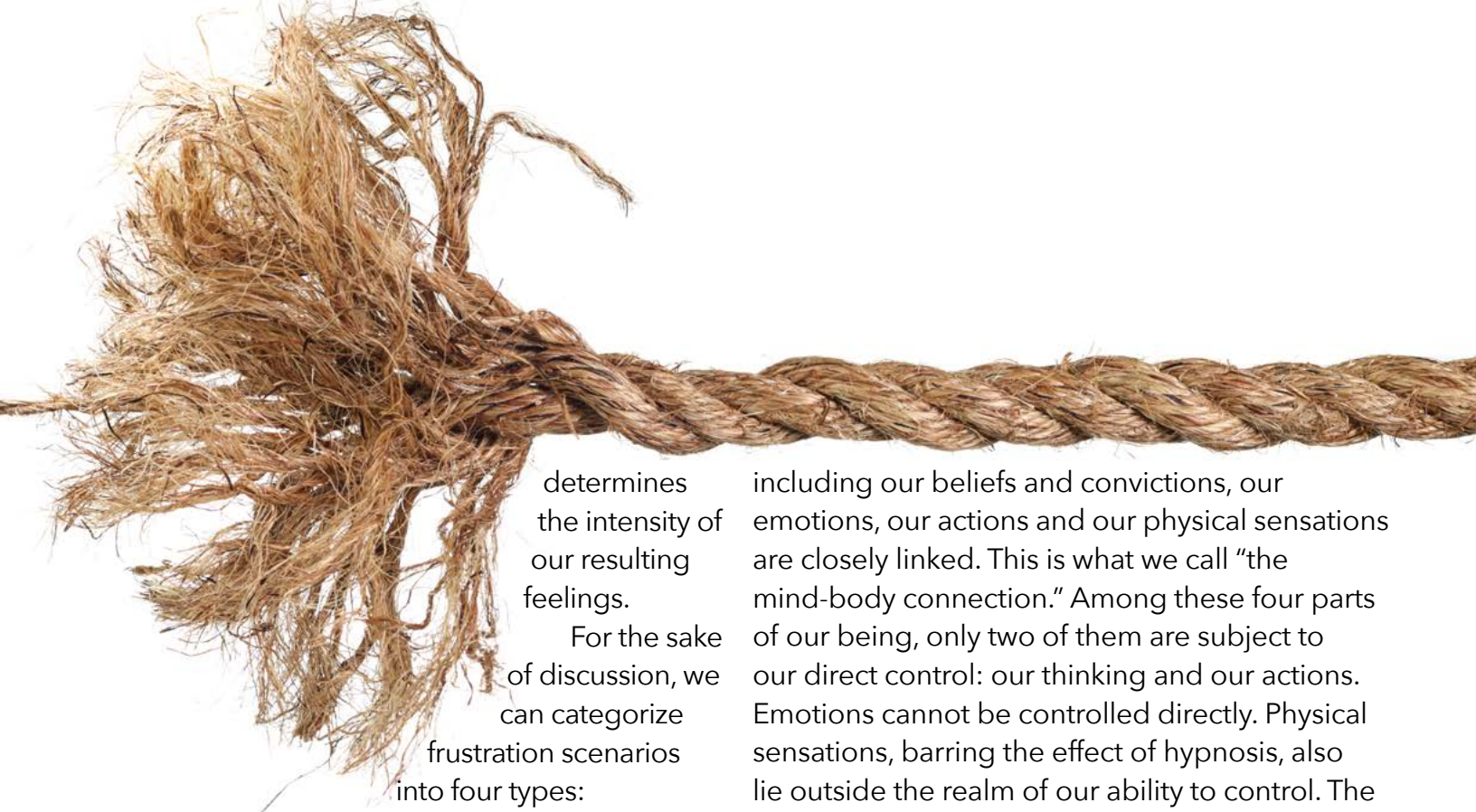
Any source of frustration, disappointment and failure can become a stressor. Finances, all things work-related, unhealthy family dynamics, politics, and so much more can contribute to our levels of stress. It is important to know that the common factor among these stressors is that so many of them are beyond our ability to control. Even when we are aware of that fact, we are at risk for allowing such situations to "stress us out."

The most glaring current example of a situation over which we have little control is the COVID-19 pandemic. It has increased stress levels dramatically and the isolation we are experiencing in our efforts to stay safe has compounded the problem. Since isolation fosters depression and anxiety, this is no time to wait for others to contact you. If you're not the type to reach out to people, it may be time to

challenge that habit. Personally, I dislike talking on the phone. But, if we're going to stay calm and balanced, we can't depend on others to reach out to us. So, I prefer to initiate human contact rather than sit around feeling sorry for myself. If you take the time to reach out, you might be surprised at the positive response you'll receive.

Further evidence of the pandemic's impact has shown up in my psychotherapy practice. Requests for couples' therapy have risen greatly. This might not come as a surprise, if we consider the tension that any two people might feel if they are not accustomed to being confined together for such extended periods of time. As for children and adolescents, one of the major issues seems to be boredom. Think back to your teen years. Do you remember the stress of monotony? In fact, boredom and tedium are some of the highest stressors that teenagers face. Combined with the tension between mom and dad and the constant presence of parents, the outcome will not always be rosy.

Now we come to the purpose of this article. I would ask you to consider the proposition that our response to frustrating and stressful situations



determines the intensity of our resulting feelings.

For the sake of discussion, we can categorize frustration scenarios into four types:

1. You want to acquire something, to accomplish something or to achieve something, but you can't obtain it or you can't do it.
2. You get a result that you do not particularly want.
3. You have a desire to communicate something important, but you are not able to do so; you don't know how to express yourself or you're afraid of doing so. Perhaps you believe nobody would listen or you have no one to speak to whom you can sufficiently trust.
4. You have a legitimate expectation that something positive will happen, but it doesn't.

All of these situations can produce frustration that leads to unwanted thoughts, actions, sensations and emotions. Let's look at two major points that will help you improve your ability to manage stress effectively.

First, it is essential to understand that all these parts of our humanity - our thinking,

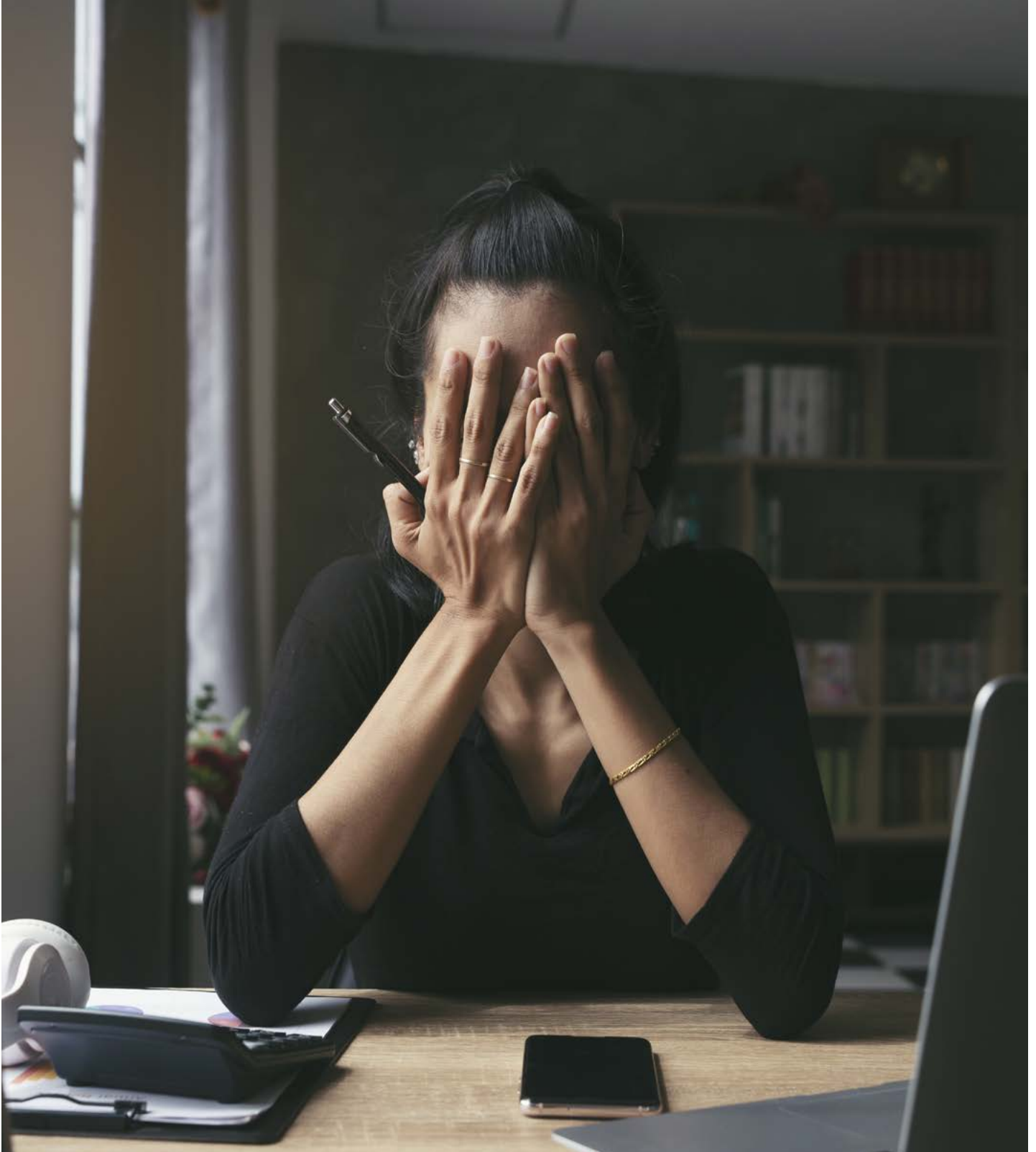
including our beliefs and convictions, our emotions, our actions and our physical sensations are closely linked. This is what we call "the mind-body connection." Among these four parts of our being, only two of them are subject to our direct control: our thinking and our actions. Emotions cannot be controlled directly. Physical sensations, barring the effect of hypnosis, also lie outside the realm of our ability to control. The good news is that when we exercise control over the two aspects we can control - the actions of our mind (negative self-talk, self-limiting, self-defeating beliefs), as well as our actions, habits and behaviors - difficult emotions and unwanted physical sensations can also change.

It is essential to understand that all these parts of our humanity - our thinking, including our beliefs and convictions, our emotions, our actions and our physical sensations are closely linked.

Secondly, the person, situation or events that we consider "stressful" are not the real problem. The problem lies in the manner in which we respond. When stress accumulates and we feel helpless, confused or overwhelmed, our response can

involve all four aspects of our being: our thinking (including attitudes), emotions, our physical sensations, as well as our overall health and our behavior. These, in turn, will affect our social lives and our personal relationships.

Think about the way you respond when stressors appear. Do you have dark thoughts? Do you react on impulse, without thinking? Do you



experience physical symptoms, such as tightness in the chest, agitation, shaking or muscle tension? Please keep in mind that any one of these responses can affect all of the other responses. For example, an emotional response will affect your speech and behavior; a mental response, such as thinking, "Who does he think he is?" will affect your emotions. A "killer" tension headache will definitely impact your attitude and emotions. It is not difficult to see that trying to handle stress without the proper understanding of the nature and elements of stress can affect every aspect of one's life. It can destroy a career, ruin a parent-child relationship, lead to physical conflict, divorce and be the cause of compulsive and criminal behaviors and addictions... the list is practically endless.

Fortunately, there is good news. Since it was discovered, nearly one hundred years ago, that outside stressors influence physical and mental health, many treatment options have been developed. Among them are the use of supplements like vitamins and herbs; electromedical devices, such as the Alpha-Stim AID, good nutrition and exercise. We are learning more about the importance of a good night's sleep and the unlimited benefits of meditation, prayer and other activities that can improve our outlook.

Of course, medication may be indicated, but it need not always be the first choice. The use of medication in the management of stress-related

problems is a controversial one. It is not a black-and-white issue. For some people, medication has been proven safe and effective. Some even believe they can't live without it. Others have had bad experiences with psychoactive medications. Among them are extremely unpleasant side effects and the fact that the body can develop a tolerance for the medication, requiring an increase in dosage and/or the addition of other medications. Furthermore, so many mental

health medications are available today that only a highly experienced medical professional is equipped to prescribe accurately. As often as not, it becomes a trial-and-error process. Additionally, not everyone has easy access to a good

psychiatrist. So, while medications may play an important role in the management of stress-related problems, it's not always wise to rely on them alone. Medication without therapy may have limited benefits.

In addition to these options, here is an idea that might help you re-think the very idea of stress. I propose that our experience of stress - physical, mental, emotional, behavioral - is directly linked to our need to be in control. The more control we demand, the more we are liable to feel frustrated and stressed. On the other hand, when we are willing and able let go of situations we can't control, we do better. Consider the story of Senator John McCain of Arizona. During the War in Vietnam, he was held

Since it was discovered, nearly one hundred years ago, that outside stressors influence physical and mental health, many treatment options have been developed.

as a prisoner of war for more than five years, much of that time living in a small cage. In some way, he was able to let go of the bitterness and hatred he must have felt and to go on to live a productive life of service. Perhaps an even more dramatic example is that of Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned for some twenty-seven years because of his fight against apartheid in South Africa. As he tells it, he never held anything against his captors. Not long after his release he was elected President of South Africa. How much differently might these men's lives have turned out if they had remained bitter and hateful?

Is it easier said than done? Absolutely. We are bound to face obstacles. One obstacle is

the product of our own minds. Our ability to handle stress effectively could be hampered by just one self-defeating belief; that is the belief that letting go leaves us vulnerable, foolish or weak. Ask yourself if the thought of letting go would violate your self-image. Few of us wish to relinquish that control, especially not someone who has been trained to dominate and to conquer. The go-to attitude becomes one of holding on to the need for control in every situation, including relationships. The outcome here is rarely desirable.

The belief that letting go exposes us to discomfort is just one of numerous distorted beliefs that contribute to personal problems. A

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few other examples of distorted beliefs include: this is just the way I am and I can't change... you can't trust anyone... as long as I'm not drinking, gambling or cheating, you can't tell me what to do... kids ought to fear their fathers. This is just a brief list of the erroneous thoughts and beliefs that can literally destroy a life. Fortunately, multitudes of people have proven themselves resilient enough to get past all that negativity. People can, in fact, change their ways of thinking. All kids have had the experience of changing a deeply held belief. Once upon a time, we believed in the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. We are all capable of changing our thoughts and thought patterns. If you're interested in that, you might do a search for the topic of neuroplasticity. This is the concept that the human brain remains open to change through every stage of the life cycle, even into old age.

If you were to dig a little deeper into the question of letting go, you might encounter a paradox: contrary to one's expectation, letting

go is actually a way to maintain control. Bruce Lee, the legendary martial artist, described what he did as, "Fighting without fighting." In fact, the more you hold on to negative energy, such as jealousy, envy and anger, the more those emotions control you and the less free you become. There is so much more to say than one article can cover. You may wish to further explore the philosophical nature of this discussion, using the vast resources of the internet.

We will probably never perfect the ability to handle stress optimally in every situation. Since we are all flawed individuals, incapable of absolute perfection at all times, aiming for perfection as a result should not be the goal. Rather than thinking "result," think "process." Growing in maturity and self-control is a continuous and life-long process, which requires your attention with every dawning day.

If you would like to increase your ability to handle stress, why not start right now by reminding yourself every morning of the "The

Serenity Prayer," written by the great theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. The following is the famous abbreviated version.

*"God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference."*

The wisdom to know the difference is the key.

Regardless of your spiritual beliefs, just for today, if a stressor should appear, take the time to notice whether this is something you can or cannot control.

In the latter case - another person's bad behavior, for example - you can choose to remind yourself that you can do nothing about that person's negative attitude and actions. Remind yourself to be grateful that you can stay positive and not allow their energy to undermine yours.

Another very important point: one of the best things you can do for others is to take care of yourself. If you have ever flown on a commercial airplane, you know that just before take-off, the flight attendant instructs all passengers, "In case of a loss of oxygen, a mask will drop down in front of you. If you are traveling with someone who needs help, place the mask on your face before you place a mask on the person who needs help." If we are unable to cope with a stressor and are in the grip of the fight-flight-freeze response, we are incapable of making wise decisions and acting responsibly. In other words, we are of no help to others.

*"God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference."*

Now here is something that should grab your attention. Strong evidence exists that people who fail to manage stress effectively, often operating in a fight-flight-freeze response pattern, are at high risk for developing early onset memory loss and dementia. I was recently told of just such a case by a client who indicated that his angry and abusive father had passed away at the age of sixty-three. Long before that, he had suffered early onset dementia. To learn

more, do an internet search of "cortisol memory loss."

If we utilize current knowledge about the brain, a fate such as that of

the angry, abusive father can be averted. While we still have much to learn, the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and other stress-related problems has improved greatly in recent years. Any individual who is grappling with these issues can now choose from a broad menu of treatment options.

I have been fortunate to be able to use cranial electrotherapy stimulation (CES), delivered by the patented and unrivaled Alpha-Stim AID device. The relief that I have observed in my clients has been nothing short of miraculous. The research proves - as matched in my practice - that more than 80 percent of those who use this device obtain quick relief from anxiety and insomnia. Relief from depression requires three to six weeks of daily use. In addition, I have found that using eye movement desensitization and reprocessing

therapy (EMDR), which is also rigorously researched, has been highly effective in helping people recover from traumatic events. As a member of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and having practiced meditation since 1971, I have taught meditation and self-hypnosis to many of my clients. Most of them find these practices to be a revelation. These are just a few of many therapies from which one might select.

Practice gratitude daily and you will notice how it tends to neutralize stressful thoughts, attitudes and feelings. Start with one little

change to your thinking and your attitude and then evaluate how this affects the quality of your day. Here is how: when you lie down to sleep, turn your attention to three things that you are grateful for - any three things, big or small. Do this every time you go to sleep. Then notice what happens to your attitude as the days and weeks go by.

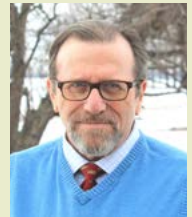
Finally, to our Veterans and those on active duty: God bless you, thank you for your service and love of America, your respect for the legacy of our founders, and for honoring the sacrifices made by all patriots throughout our history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Kallus, MS is a licensed psychotherapist, practicing in Valparaiso, Indiana. He is an active member of The American Institute of Stress (AIS), The Chicago Society of Clinical Hypnosis (CSCH) and The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH), America's oldest organization for licensed professionals who practice hypnosis. Mr. Kallus employs evidence-based approaches, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Hypnotherapy, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation (CES). Trauma treatment includes Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR) and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). Mr. Kallus has practiced transcendental meditation since 1971 and teaches mindfulness meditation to his clients.

In 2004, while serving as a therapist at a residential treatment center for teens, Mr. Kallus led his colleagues in creating workshops on communication, conflict resolution and stress management for families and their children. Later, as the director of this program and as Program Director of the facility itself, he wrote workshop manuals, hired and trained a team of workshop presenters, and taught thousands of people in hundreds of workshops given at the treatment center and at churches, schools and camps.

Further information about the author is available at his website: www.robertkallustherapy.com.

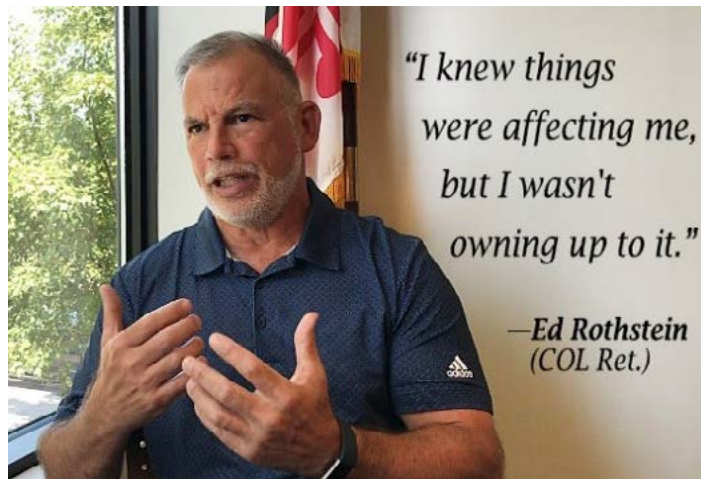


Silencing the Stigma

By COL (RET) Ed Rothstein

Silencing the stigma remains a relentless problem for those who have worn the uniform. The influx of urgent information and the reality of disturbing situations create stressors that our Service Members know all too well and it's unending. While Department of Defense employees and civilian contractors are not immune to absorbing the complex weight of keeping our nation safe. As the former Fort Meade Garrison Commander, I knew

that my decades in uniform took some kind of toll on me. I also hesitated to reach out. Like so many other Service Members and civilians, I was confronted with the stigma of asking for help. With my experiences as a Soldier assigned to



Fort Meade and NSA, as well as deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, I was no stranger to the many sides of this stigma. It wasn't until my 2011 assignment as the Fort Meade Garrison Commander, however, that I unexpectedly found myself referring some of my Service Members to resources for drug and alcohol treatment, stress management, treatment of depression, instruction in healthy living and family counseling.

For a while, some of the situations didn't make sense to me and until I delved deeper into why some Service Members acted the way they did. I had an "ah ha" moment, realizing that most Service Members don't have the opportunity to decompress. This accumulates over time. This was the beginning of our discussions about building the anticipated Education and Resiliency Center. The Education and Resiliency

Center, currently under construction at Fort Meade's Kuhn Hall, will serve as a community hub, providing vital resources, services and programs for Service Members, their families and the Department of Defense (DoD)

community across the Fort Meade Region. This collective scope is also known as Team Meade. The Center remained a capstone project for me during my Command at Fort Meade from 2011 to 2013, as I continued to do my utmost to support the needs of Team Meade.

There are two types of intensities our Service Members and the DoD community experience that warrant a human need to decompress: the visible Soldier physically deployed into harm's way and those serving in agencies and organizations who conduct discreet operations for national security. While the contexts are wildly different, each are on the frontline and carry a unique tension few understand. They are different battlefields, but the need to decompress is critical in both scenarios. In many ways, I identify with both.

Shortly after my retirement from Fort



In 2010 with a handful of colleagues on outskirts of Kabul taking the opportunity to highlight USA and teamwork.

Meade in 2014 and during a routine medical exam, a Veterans Administration physician recognized the impact that 30 years as a Service Member had on me psychologically. I never processed my experiences from the many times that I was in harm's way. Add to that the stressors associated with continuous stateside and other sensitive operations, it all just built up. Honestly, it was just time to talk about it and to let it go.

Without support, Service Members often shut down internally. Family members see it first, yet they also don't know what to say or do in response, especially should the situation escalate. Oftentimes, I isolated myself without others realizing it. My wife of 27 years and kids were impacted the most. I wasn't always readily

available for them because I was shut down and I wasn't aware how I was affecting the people around me. I couldn't engage with the people I love the most.



In 2011 on UH-60 enroute to Kandahar.

In 2012 throwing out first pitch for Orioles baseball game on Memorial Day Weekend. Met the wounded warrior that morning and brought him on the field with me giving him the ball to throw to me and then I finished the throw. "One Team, One Fight"



Today, I do obtain mental health intervention. I take time to process my experiences with people who understand, with people whose business it is to help me work through and walk through my trauma. I feel a whole lot healthier today in every aspect of my life, my relationships, and my community. Have I crossed the finish line? No, as this will take a lot more time, but I have turned a corner from a pretty dark place.

I have a unique perspective – Soldier, leader, recipient – on the importance of resiliency programs. This fuels my ongoing passion to see the Education and Resiliency Center become a reality. As a current FMA Foundation board member, I am also committed to bring awareness

to the fact that resiliency programs reach far beyond the installation, as the 57,000 plus employees who work there are also members of surrounding communities. We all need to be aware of what our Service Members go through and to help pick folks up by the bootstraps and

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be sure they are ready and healthy to take care of their families and serve our Nation. A majority of the Fort Meade workforce lives outside the fence line, and we want them and their families to be healthy and ready to do the job they are being asked to do.

Resiliency resources are currently available for Service Members and no one has to wait until retirement to use them. Unfortunately, these important resources are also limited and spread both outside and inside the installation. Fragmented lives cannot be supported well

with fragmented resources. In fact, a scattered geography of resources often makes it easier to hide amidst the hustle and bustle, thereby fostering the unwanted stigma. As we continue to move toward having resiliency resources and programs under one roof, not only will the opportunity to expand existing programs arise, but the Education and Resiliency Center itself will become a symbol of silencing the stigma.

Click here to watch Silencing the Stigma on [Vimeo](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

COL (RET) Ed Rothstein - While attending Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, Ed enlisted in 1983 and was assigned to 1/314th Mechanized Infantry (USAR) while also completing ROTC. He was then commissioned in 1985 and upon graduation in 1986 began his active duty career as a Chemical Officer assigned to 6-3 ADA (Patriot) in Kaiserslautern Germany for the next four years. In 1990 Ed transitioned to the Military Intelligence Corps where he spent the rest of his career through retirement in 2014. During that time, he had multiple assignments in staff and command positions from tactical, operational, and strategic with duty stations that included Fort Ord, California; Fort Meade, Maryland; Heidelberg, Wiesbaden, and Stuttgart Germany; Fort Carson, Colorado. Some of these assignments included Company Command 743rd MI BN, Battalion S2, 4-17 IN and S3, 743rd MI BN, Division G2, 7ID, Army Staff (DCSINT Staff), multiple tours at the National Security Agency and prior to retirement, Garrison Commander at Fort Meade Maryland. In addition, Ed has served multiple tours in combat supporting OIF and OEF operations from tactical to strategic. Ed attended both resident Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth along with the Senior Staff College (ICAF) at the National Defense University. Currently, Ed serves in an elected position as the President of the Board of Commissioners for Carroll County Maryland while also giving back to the community through serving on multiple non-profit boards and running ERA Advisory LLC. Ed is blessed with his wife ongoing 27 strong years and two amazing kids, Emily and Sam.



How the Best Handle Stress - A First Aid Kit

Scoring Best on All Life's Tests by Using Your "Whole Brain"

By Ron Rubenzer, EdD, MA, MPH, MSE, FAIS



If stress is sand in the machinery of thought, then relaxation is the oil.

Advice from the world's-highest IQ holder: repetition and relaxation (R & R)

Scoring best on tests – from one who has scored best on tests: In line with Dr. Richerson's tip to repeat what has to be learned, Marilyn vos Savant, who possesses the highest recorded IQ of 228 (average is 100) echoes this advice, that repetition is the best way to learn. Repetition even helps improve understanding, just like seeing a movie more than once, helps us pick up more details and remember what happened better.

1. Why do well on tests?

Tests are here to stay.

One-hundred-million standardized tests

are administered for elementary and middle school children yearly, according to Dr. Peter Cookson, Director of the Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation. Doing well on tests is an area of increasing concern both for students and educators. Since tests (which are better than guessing what a person might know) are obviously here to stay, we might as well learn how to master them. Other important reasons to do well on tests follow.

Enjoying a successful 12-year career

Tests are "success benchmarks" during everyone's 12-year academic career. Used correctly, tests actually serve as "success stepping-stones" rather than as stumbling blocks. Enjoying "test success" both satisfies basic self-concept/ achievement needs and motivates a student to strive for personal excellence.

Triumphing over fear of failure

Fear of academic failure was the leading “most difficult problem” American teenagers faced, according to a 1994 Gallup Poll. Equipping students with proven “test-taking tools” results in real success experiences to triumph over imaginary fears. The confidence built from doing well on tests can then be carried into life’s arena with its many other challenges.

“Proving your knowledge” is power to succeed.

The ladder of success is built with small but measurable steps. A famous scientist once said nothing is really that hard, there are just a lot of little parts. Tests can help measure readiness for the next step toward goals. Also, knowing someone has “proven her knowledge” through testing raises the level of trust in her. The days of self-proclaimed experts are gone. Who would trust a “self-proclaimed” surgeon?

A 100-point SAT score increase: the bottom line for reducing test anxiety.

According to a Columbia University study conducted by Dr. C. H. Faigel, a 100-point gain in taking the SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test) was realized by students whose test anxiety level was clinically reduced. Numerous other studies demonstrate score gains as test anxiety is reduced. As stated above, Ms. Savant lists anxiety as the leading cause of doing poorly on tests even when you have the knowledge.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a great resource for keeping a calm and cool classroom climate is *Inspiring Tranquility: Stress Management and Learning Styles in the Inclusive Classroom*, by Rebecca Nunn and Janet Gallaher. The National Education Association, (NEA), the major clearinghouse for educational materials,

endorses this book which can be ordered at www.nea.org/books or 1-800-229-4200.

(“Stress-smartness” – keeping your whole brain working smoothly by relaxing.)

Tips For Helping Students and Adults to Become “Fact-Smart”

(Mastering what needs to be known, a left-brain skill.)

- 1. Make meaningful memories by connecting to students’ current interests (e.g., teach how percentages work for predicting rain/snow days).** Let them know why they are learning something. (Learning to take tests will help them pass their driver’s license test.)
- 2. Teach memory mechanics.** The basic rule is repetition, repetition. Teach students that understanding a fact is not the same as mastering a fact, (e.g., one can understand how to shoot baskets without being able to do it). If you want to remember someone’s name, repeat it to yourself several times and then write it down.
- 3. Play tricks on your mind with games.** Make liberal use of word games, crossword puzzles. If you have the time, take courses having nothing to do with your main course work or job.
- 4. Require students to develop their own flashcards and stack the deck with only the memorized facts.** Have them submit flashcards as an assignment immediately before the test.
- 5. Encourage notetaking while students are reading or listening, especially if the test requires written responses.** Teach them “The palest ink is better than the best memory.” Use “post-its.” Develop as many helpful routines

as possible, and even leave yourself notes or voicemail. Regarding routines, always put your car keys in the same place.

6. Divide and conquer information overload by encouraging students to study several short sessions over several days/weeks rather than cramming the night before.

Suggest a study calendar and weekly “progress check points” for students. Provide positive feedback on study progress.

Tips on Improving “Test-Smartness”

Facts are necessary but not enough for top performance. Approved practice on such tests as the SAT can improve performance by 500 points. This 500-point improvement was realized by a young man who took the SAT over nine times since the age of twelve, finally achieving a nearly perfect SAT score of 1530.

Developing “test-specific” skills improves test performance by drawing attention to small but important details. Multiple-choice tests all vary greatly on how learned facts and skills are to be used. If you are unsure about the design of tests to be given this year, see your test coordinator. Some general guidelines are:

- 1. Answer the question.** Answer the core question, without being tripped up by “word traps” (irrelevant details) or generalizations (always, never, everywhere).
- 2. Teach students to “pace not race” through test items.** Encourage students to answer those questions they feel they know, marking those difficult questions to return to later.
- 3. Emphasize that multiple-choice tests are not multiple-guess tests.** Teach students to choose, not to guess on multiple choices. This requires mastering problem-solving

skills. When offered multiple choices, anticipate the most correct answer before reading available choices. Then look for the best answer among those provided. If all the choices appear to be correct, select the most correct answer by eliminating wrong answers. Develop reasons why the other answers are wrong. Again, students should mark and return to these most difficult questions after answering the more obvious questions. Teachers might effectively demonstrate or model this technique using examples.

An excellent resource is the book dedicated to all aspects of test-taking entitled, *Teaching Test Taking Skills: Helping Students Show What They Know*, by Scruggs and Mastropieri.

- 4. Be clerically correct.** Develop the habit of having students build in enough time to check for wrong answers simply due to marking the wrong answers or misreading the questions the first time through.
- 5. Provide “test rehearsals” if appropriate.** All great performances start with rehearsal. Practice any and only those approved practice tests weeks before the actual test takes place. See your test coordinator for approved pre-test activities. As stated, above Kaplan, Inc. now provides actual practice test sessions for the GRE and LSAT.
- 6. Study groups.** There is some evidence that hard-working study groups actually work in helping high school students improve test scores. At the high-school level, conscientious study-group students will study harder to contribute to the group and will be exposed to more questioning than they might have thought of on their own. Advanced Placement

students have found study groups to be most helpful. Be sure, however, to avoid having students develop “test-banks” by not allowing previous examinees to provide questions they had memorized from actual exams.

Tips to Building “Stress-Smartness”

(An emotional, right brain skill)

Relaxation is oil in the machinery of thought.

Just like your car engine, your brain will soon “freeze-up” or “burnout” without the oil of relaxation. Strong emotions affect clear thinking. Calm, clear thinking is the key to “best test performance.” Over a half-century of test-anxiety research reveals that excessive stress impairs test performance. Relaxation is a “must” for test-score improvement according to a test preparation corporation that guarantees results (up to seventeen-percentile point increase). This is the difference between high average performance and gifted performance.

Herbert Benson, M.D., Harvard researcher who coined the term, “relaxation response,” states that students inducing the “relaxation response” immediately before exams do better. He also found that professionals who relax immediately before brainstorming generate more solutions to problems than those who do not relax. As said before, scared students can’t be smart students.

Preparation for the “big day.”

Also, allow children to wear their favorite school outfit to the test. Have them eat fruit right before the test (Sugar is food for thought). Have them drink a bit of water to speed up the breakdown of the fruit to fructose, which is food for thought. Honey is an excellent source of fructose. Have your child eat toast with honey before they leave for the test site. Caffeine is

at best a double-edged sword. Only if you are already a “caffeinist” (Caffeine is the most popular drug in the U.S.) will caffeine help your mental performance. While it can sharpen your thinking (no more than two cups of coffee), you pay for it with caffeine jitters. If you don’t use caffeine, don’t start. Avoid having children drink sugary drinks or eat candy bars right before testing because of the unsteady flow of sugar provided by these foods.

The following suggestions may be useful to reduce excessive stress:

Weeks before the test:

1. Conduct a “reality checklist” of what the student can expect in the testing situation.

This will reduce stressful “surprise or shock reactions.” (Always follow pre-test restrictions on what can be shared with students prior to testing.)

2. Prior to the testing situation, provide a “relaxed exposure” to these “test reality conditions” as much as possible. That is, see your test coordinator on legitimate practice materials, and have students relax just before and during the “test warm-up” sessions.

3. Accentuate the positive: Expect your best but respect the test. Think of the test as a reward to show off your hard work and knowledge. It is important for the student to have a positive attitude, but this attitude must be combined with positive action, (i.e., thorough study beforehand).

4. Positive peer pressure: Use the power of peer pressure to develop a “pregame” winning spirit toward an upcoming test. Students could create posters on the rewards for doing well on tests. Have students bring in appropriate cartoons about test-taking.



5. Good modeling by all adults: Students will catch adults' anxiety about tests and this "secondary stress" can hamper their peak performance. Even the tone of voice used in reading pre-test and test instructions will raise or lower test anxiety. Modeling "grace under pressure" in front of students will show it is possible to stay calm and succeed under stressful conditions.

6. Relaxation training: See your mental-health professional on relaxation training tips or methods to identify children at risk for excessive test anxiety. It typically takes several weeks to learn how to relax under testing conditions.

The best way to learn relaxation is through biofeedback. Biofeedback works like training wheels to help you keep your balance when you are first starting. Biofeedback gives you live, scientific feedback on whether you are "centered" in terms of relaxation. HeartMath, in Boulder Creek, California, provides the best personnel, training and tools to teach and learn biofeedback. Other forms of relaxation training, such as progressive relaxation, breathing relaxation, autogenic training, systematic desensitization, visualization

and other techniques are available from appropriately trained mental-health personnel. It usually takes several weeks for your muscle memory to learn to relax, so if a test is given in October, start teaching relaxation in September. Think of relaxation training as learning an athletic skill. Just because you understand the concept doesn't mean you have mastered the skill.

7. Pre-test checklist.

General Tips for Helping Students to Become "Fact-Smart"

- Make these tips part of each student's study habits by introducing them at the beginning.
- Get the "big picture" (Overview first, read end of chapter questions first).
- "Seeing is believing" for most students. "Teach smart" (visually). See "Anti- Boredom 'Whole-Brain' Balanced Approach to Curriculum, (p. 207).
- Make meaningful memories.
- Teach memory mechanics. Repeat info at least seven times.
- Students develop flashcards. Submit flashcards as an assignment immediately before the test.
- Encourage notetaking while students are

reading or listening.

- Divide and conquer information using more frequent, shorter, study periods spread over time.
- If appropriate, provide a test-specific diagnostic survey.
- As a reward, have students play “not-so-trivial pursuit” by making up their own questions about material.
- Celebrate “sticking to their test-prep schedule.”

Tips for Improving “Test-Smartness”

- Answer the questions (Multiple-choice tests are not multiple-guess tests, but use creative problem solving if needed).
- Be clerically correct.
- Provide practice sessions (with time limits) if appropriate.

Building “Stress-Smartness”

Weeks before the test:

- Conduct a “reality checklist” of what the student can expect to avoid shock on test day.
- Prior to the testing situation, provide a “relaxed exposure” to these “test reality conditions.”
- Positive attitude: Expect the best but respect the test. The test is the reward to prove your knowledge. “Inch by inch anything’s a cinch.” “Yard by yard, life is hard.”
- Use positive peer pressure: Bring in cartoons about testing stress – I took an IQ test and the results were negative.
- Good modeling by all adults.
- Relaxation training (See your mental-health professional. Clear this with administration first).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Rubenzer, EdD, MA, MPH, MSE, FAIS is a Contributing Editor with The American Institute of Stress. He holds a doctorate and two master’s degrees from Columbia University in New York City. He won a doctoral fellowship to attend the Columbia University’s Leadership Education Program. While serving as a school psychologist at Columbia, he won a national student research prize of the year for an article written on the brain. Dr. Rubenzer worked at the Washington DC Office of Education. Also, while at Columbia University, he wrote an article for New York Magazine on enhancing children’s development of their full potential. He has devoted his career to specializing in “reducing stressing-during testing” for better outcomes. He has worked as a stress manager for a hospital based cardiac/stroke rehabilitation facility and their Employee Assistance Program. He also coordinated a wellness program for a large school system. He is a fellow with The American Institute of Stress and writes focus articles on “using stress to do one’s best” at home, work and school.

He has also conducted speaking engagements for conferences and presented for a number of television shows.

His latest book is *How the Best Handle Stress – Your First Aid Kit*

<https://www.amazon.com/How-Best-Handle-Stress-First/dp/1731056508>



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