

The American Institute of Stress

CONTENTMENT

Connecting the Relationship Between Stress, Health and Longevity

Volume 12 Number 4

Winter 2023-24



Enjoy Your Holidays: Effectively Managing Holiday Stress

Inside: Enjoy Your Holidays: Effectively Managing Holiday Stress, By Josh Briley • COVID and the Immune Mechanism, By Lewis S. Coleman

• Harmonizing “Emotion-Stress” in Calm, Move, Eat, Connect, and Sleep Pillars of Health, By Evian Gordon and Donna Palmer

• Our Projector of Life: Accessing Feelings of Peace and Wellbeing Through the Three Principles of Resilience, By Carla Hay-Perdue

• The Science and Need for Friendships, By Linda Penkala • Some of My Favorite Recent Finding Contentment Podcasts, By William C. Heckman



The mission of the nonprofit American Institute of Stress is to improve the health of our community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, AIS educates healthcare practitioners, scientists, and the public. AIS is the only Institute in America solely dedicated to providing information, training and techniques to prevent and reverse human disorders related to stress, and to improve the quality of life and increase longevity through building resilience to stress. Credentialed AIS members provide leadership to the world on stress related topics.

Your source for science-based stress management information

CONTENTMENT

We value opinions of our readers.

Contentment is a quarterly magazine published in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter with news and advertising designed with the general public in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. *Contentment* magazine is indexed by EBSCO and archived online at stress.org. Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

Editor In Chief:

Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, FAIS

Editor:

Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, FAIS

Managing Editor:

Kathy Schoop

Creative Director:

Michael McMahon

AIS Daily Life and Workplace Stress Board

The role of this board is to develop initiatives and communications to serve the stress management needs of all people.

Josh Briley, PhD, BCMAS, FAIS

Heidi Hanna, PhD, FAIS

William C. Heckman, MS, NBCT, DAIS

Sharon Montes, MD, FAIS

Andrew Pleener, MD, FAIS

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

Copyright © 2023 The American Institute of Stress (AIS). All rights reserved. All materials on AIS' website and in AIS' newsletters are the property of AIS and may not be copied, reproduced, sold, or distributed without permission. For permission, contact editor@stress.org. Liberal use of AIS fact sheets and news releases is allowable with attribution. Please use the following: "Reproduced from The American Institute of Stress website [or magazine], © 2023 AIS"

Contributing Editors Board

Richard Citrin, PhD, MBA

Alex Bekker, MD, ABHIM, FAIS

Teena Evert, MA

Rozina Lakhani, MD, MPH

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

James C. Petersen, PhD, FAIS

Jacinta M. Jiménez, PsyD, BCC, FAIS

CONTENTS

Volume 12 | Number 4

Winter 2023-24

4

Editor's Message

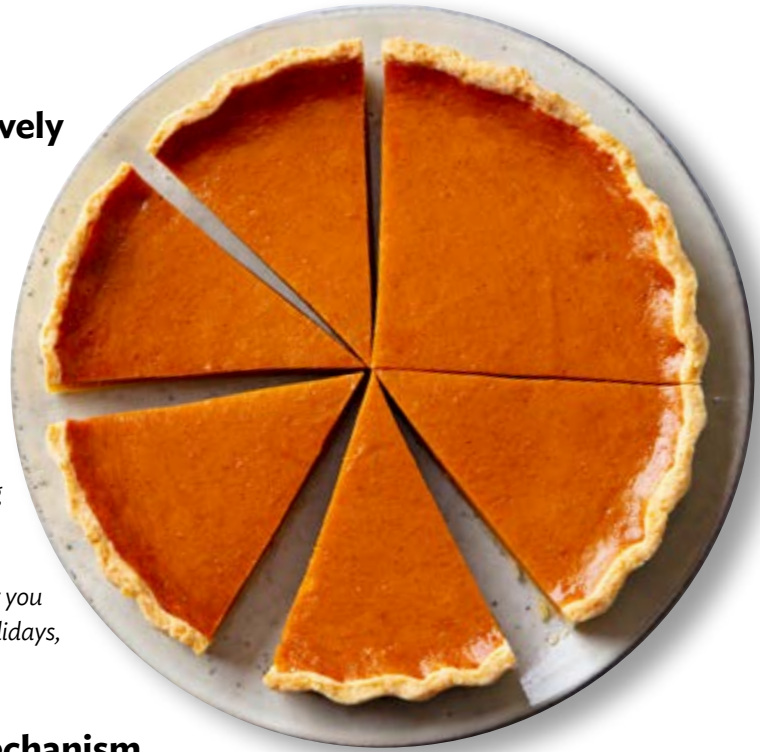
By Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, FAIS

8

Enjoy Your Holidays: Effectively Managing Holiday Stress

By Josh Briley, PhD, FAIS

The holiday season is fraught with potential stressors that are unique to this time of year. However, the stressors do not have to steal the joy we want from celebrating time with friends and family. Planning ahead and budgeting finances, time, and effort, looking for good things that are happening all around us rather than focusing on the negatives, being flexible and patient with unexpected occurrences, and gently and patiently checking in with yourself to see how you are doing are keys to not just surviving the holidays, but enjoying and thriving in them.



20 COVID and the Immune Mechanism

By Lewis S. Coleman, MD, FAIS

In the absence of an understanding of the stress mechanism, doctors assume that immune mechanism hyperactivity, which is present in all forms of disease, causes harmful disease effects. Thus, doctors have invented the term “autoimmune disease” to imply the cause of chronic illnesses. They assume that the immune mechanism somehow explains inflammation, chemotaxis, edema, sclerosis, and other manifestations of chronic disease, but these effects are caused by the stress mechanism.

26 Harmonizing “Emotion-Stress” in Calm, Move, Eat, Connect, and Sleep Pillars of Health

By Evian Gordon, MD, PhD, FAIS and Donna Palmer, PhD

Emotions trigger stress. At your brain’s “safety first” core, emotion neural networks automatically, rapidly (in a fifth of a second), and continually identify environmental and body language cues to help ensure that you avoid threats and identify possible rewards. The “Emotion-Stress” continuum is central to shaping the five key pillars of health: calm, move, eat, connect, and sleep. The goal in stress reduction does not need to be the elimination of stress but rather a plan for how to regulate stress and harness the techniques and tools that work for you in all the interconnected pillars of health. Working these techniques into your daily routine is key. Just 5-10 minutes per day as a regular practice quickly becomes a daily built-in stress-coping practice.

CONTENTS

Volume 12 | Number 4

Winter 2023-24

34 **Our Projector of Life: Accessing Feelings of Peace and Wellbeing Through the Three Principles of Resilience**

By Carla Hay-Perdue, DNP, APRN, FNP, ANP-BC, NC-BC

We live in a thought-based universe and our feelings are a barometer of our thoughts. You are only one thought away from happiness, sadness, or anxiety. Thought can be seen as the reel of the film of life. It is how we interpret our world in our movie. And you can change films at any time.

38 **The Science and Need for Friendships**

By Linda Penkala, LMT

The depth and breadth of the impact friendship has on the health and longevity of the body, mind and soul, sets a new standard and paradigm for connections. This reciprocal bond of caring and affection is the cornerstone of a balanced life of friends, family, community, along with spirituality. Making intentional time to invest in friendships, especially after the pandemic, comes with a deep need to connect once again, despite the stress, loss, grief, and hardships the pandemic gave so many.



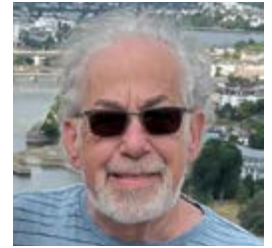
44 **Some of My Favorite Recent Finding Contentment Podcasts**

By William C. Heckman, MS, NBCT, DAIS

Finding Contentment is the official podcast of The American Institute of Stress. This podcast focuses on stress and stress-related issues featuring interviews with healthcare practitioners, stress experts, and professionals with expertise in stress research and management. In this article Finding Contentment host Will Heckman describes some of his favorite recent podcasts.

Editor's Message

Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, FAIS
Editor



I would like to start this issue with a thank you to **Dr. Stephanie Ross** for her contributions as editor of the last three issues of *Contentment* magazine. Dr. Ross has contributed greatly to the general fund of knowledge in understanding and managing stress throughout this year.

Typically, when someone calls me editor of this publication, I tend to correct them in that I serve as editor-in-chief, which I define as publisher. I tell my editors that it's their magazine. I remain available for advice or second opinions, but ultimately the responsibility of what to publish and how to edit it falls on the editors. However, I am actually editor of this issue as I did not want to rush into hiring a new editor and anyway it's always good to roll up your sleeves once in a while and do the work yourself so you can appreciate it more. I did and I do. And doing so reminded me how much of a privilege it is to be trusted by our contributing authors to enshrine their hard work within the pages of this important publication.

Like many, if not most magazines this time of year, we would be remiss if we didn't start with an article about holiday stress. After all, most people already live in a stressed state of mind leaving little room for a month or so of additional stressors and responsibilities to somehow squeeze into their schedules. The winter holidays are a wonderful time of year for children of all ages, and those who like to shop or make gifts for their loved ones. It doesn't have to be stressful. Frequent

contributor and leading AIS Fellow **Dr. Josh Briley** has written the ultimate guide to enjoying the holidays. He warns of the special stressors accompanying the season and guides us through managing them with practical advice to actually enjoy the holidays. Of the hundreds of holiday stress articles I have read over the years, this is the best. Don't skip this one!

A spillover from the previous issue of *Contentment* focused on the immune system, our leading scientist and AIS Fellow **Dr. Lewis Coleman** once again explains how many of the assumptions of medical sciences are wrong. In past issues of *Contentment* and in his seminal book, *50 Years Lost in Medical Advance: The Discovery of Hans Selye's Stress Mechanism*, Dr. Coleman details the mammalian stress mechanism as a physiological paradigm overlooked by medical science. However, the stress mechanism is able to explain physiological processes not generally understood, and armed with that information, it is able to predict kinder and far more effective treatments for all ailments, including and especially the major killers of heart disease and cancer. In this issue's article, Dr. Coleman debunks the theory of autoimmune disease for the much more intricate and correct understanding of disease based on the stress mechanism.

Another AIS Fellow and frequent contributor to *Contentment* magazine, **Dr. Evian Gordon** founded the first standardized International Brain Database (over 1 million datasets) to discover the most effective insights and

behavioral habits in stress, mental health, wellness, and peak performance. His analysis of that database has resulted in over 250 peer-reviewed scientific publications by Dr. Gordon. In this issue of *Contentment* Dr. Gordon and coauthor **Dr. Donna Palmer** explore the “Emotion–Stress” continuum as central to shaping the five key pillars of health: calm, move, eat, connect, and sleep. From that they devise a plan to regulate stress and harness the techniques and tools that can work for you in these interconnected pillars of health with just 5-10 minutes a day of regular practice.

Dr. Carla Hay-Perdue’s thought provoking inaugural contribution to *Contentment* is about taking control of framing and interpreting our thoughts. She shows how the Universal Mind provides the energy and intelligence to consciously see thought as the reel of the film of life to be in the present moment, decreasing feelings of stress and increasing feelings of peace and wellbeing. And most importantly, Dr. Hay-Perdue teaches us that you have the power to change films at any time.

Another new contributor to *Contentment*, **Linda Penkala**, author of *The Pause to Relax Ladies for Robust Heart Health*, reminds us about the stress of loneliness and social isolation and how making intentional time to invest in friendships has positive effects on improving stress and mental health. In fact friendship is one of the most common answers to the question of what makes life meaningful. It is friends that add to the

spice of life and allow the connection of the hearts to enhance longevity, wellness and health. This is especially true after the pandemic, with a deep need to connect with others once again, despite the stress, loss, grief, and hardships the pandemic caused for so many.

In the final article of this issue of *Contentment* magazine, this institute’s executive director and the host for our *Finding Contentment* podcasts, **Will Heckman**, describes some of his favorite recent podcasts. The ultimate goal of this podcast is to empower people to take control of their stress levels, develop resilience, and lead happier, healthier lives. Stress is both a constant companion and a formidable adversary, but by shedding light on its various dimensions and offering a platform for open discourse, *Finding Contentment* podcasts help individuals not only cope with stress, but also thrive in the face of life’s challenges.

Our authors have come together to make this an informative and fascinating issue of *Contentment* magazine for you. It has truly been a pleasure to function as editor of this remarkable issue. In the next issue of *Contentment*, The American Institute of Stress Fellow and frequent contributor to this magazine and our sister publication, *Combat Stress*, board-certified mental health professional **Jeff Jernigan, PhD, BCPPC, FAIS** will be taking over as editor. Dr. Jernigan’s lifetime focus on humanitarian service is reflected in Jeff’s role as the Chief Executive Officer and co-founder, with his wife Nancy, for the Hidden Value Group, an organization

bringing healing, health, and hope to the world in the wake of mass disasters and violence through healthcare, education, and leadership development. Together they have completed more than 300 projects in 25 countries over the last 27 years. Jeff currently serves as a Subject Matter Expert, Master Teacher, Research Mentor, or Fellow in the following professional organizations: American Association of Suicidology, National Association for Addiction Professionals, The American Institute of Stress, International Association for Continuing Education and Training, American College of Healthcare Executives, and the Wellness Council of America. I very

much look forward to his stewardship of *Contentment* magazine.

Thank you for reading *Contentment* magazine. If you haven't done so already, please subscribe, it's free. And although it's free to read, it does cost money to produce. Please consider donating at [stress.org](https://www.stress.org).

Warmly,

Dan Kirsch

Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, DAAPM, FAIS
*Editor of this issue of Contentment,
and President,
The American Institute of Stress*



REDUCE YOUR STRESS.

Grow your happiness.

Is stress dragging you down physically and emotionally? The comprehensive, online “Stress to Joy” program, taught by bestselling author and board-certified psychiatrist Rozina Lakhani, MD, MPH, FAIS, gives you the tools you need for a return to joyful living. Dr. Rozina shares her proven stress management techniques in a way that’s both practical and inspirational. The program includes a workbook with step-by-step guidance, and it takes just 15 minutes per day for about three weeks. Make this powerful investment in your health and happiness – and turn the corner from stress to joy.

**CLICK
TO GET
STARTED**



Enjoy Your Holidays: Effectively Managing Holiday Stress

By Josh Briley, PhD, FAIS

For many people, their attitude toward the holidays is aptly summed up in Billy Crystal's quote from *When Harry Met Sally*, "Boy the holidays are rough. Every year I try to get from the day before Thanksgiving to the day after New Years."¹ This movie was released in 1989, and neither our daily lives nor the holidays have gotten easier during the past almost 25 years.

According to the most recent Gallup Global Emotions report,² the Negative Experience Index remained at record highs for the second consecutive year. This means record numbers of people reported having some type of negative experience (worry, sadness, anger, stress, or pain) on the day before answering the survey. Forty-one percent of adults worldwide reported experiencing worry, and forty percent reported experiencing stress. In other words, on a typical day, almost half of the world's population has some type of unpleasant emotion related to stress.

The results of this poll highlight the magnitude of the stress we feel in our daily lives. One way to think about feeling stressed is when we believe we do not have the resources to meet demands. Often, we feel we do not have enough time, energy, money, or emotional capacity to successfully accomplish all the things we need or want to do. The result is feeling stressed. Simply enduring this stress, rather than managing it effectively, saps a person's remaining

physical and emotional resources, which decreases the resources available to meet new and existing demands, and thus potentially starts a downward spiral.

The holiday season, while intended to be a time of contentment and enjoyment, is often anything but. There are specific and unique demands placed upon us at this time of year, that if not managed appropriately, can further exacerbate the downward spiral described above. These demands come at us from almost every aspect of our lives. As a result, rather than having fun with our family and friends, we are more likely to lose our tempers, feel rushed and anxious, and even begin to dread not only each individual event, but also the holidays as a whole.

In this article, we will examine some of these unique stressors and explore methods to effectively manage holiday stress. These are not methods of eliminating the stress from these demands, that is not a feasible goal. The techniques in this article are not intended to replace any positive stress management techniques you may already practice. You should continue engaging in these practices, and possibly even utilize them more frequently, during the holiday season. The techniques in this article are designed to supplement any healthy stress management techniques you currently utilize. If you do not regularly practice healthy stress management, these techniques can be a good starting point to building a more comprehensive and effective method of managing stress in your daily life.

The holiday season, while intended to be a time of contentment and enjoyment, is often anything but.

The holidays are not a time to initiate stress management techniques that require significant time and effort, such as beginning a new exercise regime or a new diet plan.

Note, the holidays are not a time to initiate stress management techniques that require significant time and effort, such as beginning a new exercise regime or a new diet plan. While such changes are necessary to maximize managing the normal, daily stress we experience, trying to initiate significantly new behaviors and habits during the holiday season only adds to the already overwhelming stress most of us experience during this time of the year. Rather, use this time to plan for such changes when the New Year begins.

Let's explore some of the unique, or exacerbated, stressors related to the holidays. We will discuss some of the specific stressors we all typically encounter, which may individually or collectively contribute to feeling overly stressed and interfere with our ability to enjoy the holidays. Then, we will discuss some common sense, but not necessarily simple, approaches to effectively managing holiday stress.

Crowds

Holiday activities mean more people are out more often. Whether you are at a restaurant, shopping, or traveling, there are significantly more people engaged in the same activity at the same time. The result is that available resources are overwhelmed, leading to longer wait times, reduced availability of items, and possibly even less room to move about in. As a result, both customers and employees often feel impatient as if they have little or no control over the situation. This combination of factors results in a "powder keg" of irritability, anger, and frustration that most often is unleashed in full in response to a relatively insignificant stressor. The resulting conflicts not only add to the tension in already stressful situations, but also increase the wait times of other customers and perpetuate the cycle of impatience and frustration.

Traffic and Travel

Related to the crowds that are prolific during the holidays, traffic congestion is also significantly increased, especially around large shopping centers. But traffic congestion is also increased during holiday travel, whether it is on the highways for road trips or in airports. Traffic jams contribute to the same sense of impatience discussed above, and the constant honking from frustrated and irate drivers adds to the cacophony, and therefore the environmental stress, of the holidays. As a result, "road rage" is more likely, leading to more aggressive driving that may cause further traffic difficulties.

Additionally, inclement weather can have an adverse impact on travel. Driving can become difficult, if not dangerous, due to unexpected inclement weather or storms that were more severe than anticipated. Inclement weather can also cause flight delays or cancellations. Weather conditions can result in travel delays, unplanned overnight stops, or even damage to a vehicle or injury from an accident. Weather is something that is out of our control, and dealing with the increased difficulties caused by inclement weather can have a negative impact on our mood and attitude surrounding the holidays.

Holiday Activities and Celebrations

The holidays are a busy time of the year. In addition to the shopping and arrangements for travel discussed above, there are activities that are unique to this time of year that add to the already busy schedules of our lives. There are holiday parties for work, and in households with two or more incomes, there may be parties for each job. Not to mention holiday parties at our kids' schools, the programs schools or churches may put on that require additional



time for rehearsals if we are participating in them. Friends and families may gather for celebrations that require not only time to attend, but often for us to prepare food to bring to the gathering. These additional obligations, while hopefully enjoyable, contribute to a sense of being overwhelmed and too busy during the holidays.

Finances

The holidays are expensive. We buy gifts for our children, our spouses, parents, family members, coworkers, and friends. We may buy specialty themed clothing for parties or perhaps matching outfits for holiday photos or family traditions. We buy groceries for large family dinners, food for holiday parties, and may eat at restaurants more often due to the increased demands on time for shopping and holiday activities. There are also the additional financial aspects of travel that was mentioned earlier. The financial stress of the holidays can negatively impact not only our enjoyment of the season, but it is also a stressor that can reverberate throughout the year as we attempt to climb out of any financial

situation that may have arisen because of the holidays.

Health and Physical Stress

The increased level of activity, celebrations, travel, and time spent in crowded situations has a toll on our physical wellbeing during the holidays. Often, when we have overscheduled ourselves, the first aspects of self-care that get set aside are sleep and nutrition. Because we have so many things to do and no additional time to do them, you may notice that you are staying up later and/or getting out of bed earlier in the mornings to try to accomplish everything. The busier than usual schedules leave little time for healthy meal preparation, and holiday parties rarely have healthy food choices. Therefore, during the holidays we are more likely to eat foods that are high in fat, sugar, and calorie content, but low in nutritional value. Due to holiday meals and other celebrations, as well as “stress eating,” we may also consume more of these unhealthy food options than normal. This pattern of overeating high calorie, low nutritional foods results in feelings

BODY ELECTRIC

Electroceuticals and the Future of Medicine

A documentary film to revolutionize the way we think about health and the human body.

The American Institute of Stress is an executive producer of Body Electric: Electroceuticals and the Future of Medicine, a documentary film aimed to revolutionize the way we think about health and the human body. This 68 minute movie, by British producer/director/writer Justin Smith, is available online and on DVD for purchase through AIS.



Now available for free at stress.org



www.stress.org

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS, YOU HAVE TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

Click
to get
started

For so many Americans, “mysterious” problems ranging from mild to severe are caused by that scourge of modern life – stress. That realization is the first step toward healing, but it often raises many more questions that must be addressed. How is stress affecting my life? My relationships? My work? My happiness? What can I do to reduce or better cope with it? Our Stress Mastery Questionnaire – an easy and confidential online self-assessment that comes with our Stress Mastery Guide and Workbook – can help you find answers. And life-changing solutions.



of bloating, fatigue, emotional instability, and a general malaise.

In addition, people may tend to drink more heavily than usual at holiday parties or as a coping mechanism for the stressors we have discussed above. As a result, they are likely to feel the negative impact the next day (hangover) or lead to problematic levels of alcohol consumption. Alcohol may not be the only substance abused more frequently during the holidays. As more people are turning to substances such as marijuana (either legally obtained or not), and other illicit or prescribed medications, the adverse effects of such substance abuse negatively impact their daily functioning. Frighteningly, often the person abusing the substances is unaware of the extent of the negative impact on their lives, and loved ones are reluctant to address the topic with them.

Due partially to the decrease in quality sleep and nutrition, the use of substances to celebrate at holiday parties or as a coping mechanism, but also due to being in crowds of people more often during the holiday season, physical illnesses such as the common cold, the flu, COVID, and others seem to be more prevalent during this time of year. Often, instead of heeding the illness and getting some rest for a few days, we “push on” and work from home, continue trying to accomplish everything we need for the holiday season, and further exacerbate the physical stress on our bodies.

Expectations

The stressors we have discussed so far in this article are, for the most part, beyond our control. We can manage the stress and stressors, as we will discuss techniques for doing so in the next part of this article, but these stressors are,

for the most part, unavoidable. The one stressor that is completely avoidable, and yet probably the most intense stressor for many during the holiday season, is the expectations we put on ourselves, our loved ones, and others to have the “perfect” holiday. More than any other time of the year, traditions are emphasized and treated with an almost sacred reverence. New trends are quickly adopted in the fear of “missing out” or not giving our children the same experiences as their classmates.

We remember the holidays of our childhood with rose colored glasses, remembering everything as going smoothly, the food being perfect, the presents neatly wrapped and labeled, and everything looking like a Hallmark movie. In reality, it is highly unlikely any part of our childhood holidays was as idealistic as we remember. But we put unnecessary pressure on ourselves to try to recreate these unrealistically idyllic holidays. Or, quite the opposite, we remember very conflictual, stressful holidays with dysfunctional family members, and we put undue pressure on ourselves to ensure our children’s holiday memories are happier.

Managing the Additional Stress of the Holidays

Any of the aspects of holiday stress discussed above would significantly add to stress levels. When these stressors are combined, our ability to manage the additional stress can be significantly compromised. However, it is possible to establish a stress management plan with approaches that can be done before the additional stressors of the holidays begin, during the midst of the holiday chaos, and finally at the end of the holidays. These approaches may supplement any healthy stress management techniques you practice in your daily life. However, these

It is possible to establish a stress management plan with approaches that can be done before the additional stressors of the holidays begin, during the midst of the holiday chaos, and finally at the end of the holidays?

Once you have a strong plan for managing your time, finances, celebrations, and other obligations, it is important to stick to it, with some degree of flexibility.



commonsense approaches are good to implement even if you do not have a current healthy stress management regimen.

Plan Ahead

Most people are familiar with the saying, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” This logic can be applied to approaching the holiday season. As chaotic as the holidays can be, many of us engage in roughly the same activities every year and can plan for them. Making a plan and sticking with it regarding finances, scheduling, the effort you are able to expend for each activity, and even how much you will eat and drink at celebrations, will alleviate much of the stressors discussed above before the season even begins. Decide ahead of time how much money you can spend on the additional demands for the holidays, including gifts, contributions to celebrations, groceries for meals, and budget accordingly. Similarly schedule the time needed for each task to be completed. Give yourself extra time to deal with traffic congestion, crowds, and unexpected inclement weather. If you are planning to travel, get to the airport early to give yourself time to comfortably navigate through the crowds at the check-in, at security, and at the gate. Plan games to play, download movies and shows to watch, or take something to read to help make the time you are waiting more enjoyable. Similarly, if taking a road trip, plan additional time to accommodate unpredictable obstacles such as traffic congestion, inclement weather, and construction. Planning for this additional time helps eliminate the stress of worrying about whether you will “make it,” and thus helps you enjoy the holiday activities, instead of trying to rush through them. Also, develop a strategy regarding celebrations that allow you to enjoy yourself, while not overdoing it.

Finally, manage expectations regarding holiday plans. What traditions are

important for your family to continue? Are there any that typically cause stress and frustration that can be retired or replaced? What activities can be delegated to other family members? What tasks can be substituted with easier to accomplish goals? For example, if you do not have time to bake homemade cookies for your children’s holiday parties, check into local bakeries that can deliver the homemade



taste and texture without spending hours in the kitchen that you may not have. Obviously, saving this time will mean an additional financial expenditure that should be budgeted for, and striking a balance in budgeting time and finances is especially important during the holidays.

Manage in the Midst

Once you have a strong plan for managing your time, finances, celebrations, and other obligations, it is important to stick to it, with some degree

of flexibility. The unexpected occurs, and being able to adapt and adjust to changing situations is important. In the midst of the holiday chaos, things often feel out of control, and it is easy to become overwhelmed and upset. But one thing you can control is what you choose to give your attention to. It is easy to get swept up and overwhelmed by everyone hustling for a spot in traffic, or people complaining about the wait times in line, or the people who are being rude and selfish. Focusing on such things will only serve to exacerbate your own sense of frustration and impatience and increase the stress you feel. Instead, deliberately look for the good. Find the couple that are laughing and smiling in their conversation together, the children who are being polite and helpful to their parents and other adults, the employee who greets each customer with a genuine smile. Listen closely to the

holiday music and the cheerful melodies and lyrics, maybe even hum or sing along quietly. Make it a practice to pleasantly greet everyone you encounter, you never know when a sincere kind word can make someone's day, and as a bonus, you will feel more joy yourself.

If you feel yourself becoming upset, anxious, or impatient, take a moment to decompress. Take a few slow, deep breaths to calm your heart rate slightly. Ground yourself by looking around and focusing on enjoyable things such as those described above. Engage your senses, look at the holiday decorations around you, listen to the music, smell the candles and other holiday aromas, maybe you have a hot beverage that you can feel the warmth of and enjoy the flavor.

Finally, check your attitude. We rarely respond to the actual events around us. Rather, we respond to our interpretation of

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR ANXIETY



FEEL LIKE YOURSELF AGAIN

Alpha-Stim is the drug-free, clinically proven treatment to alleviate anxiety, insomnia, and pain.

Get dramatic relief fast. Alpha-Stim is an FDA-cleared, easy-to-use handheld prescription medical device that treats anxiety without lasting side effects or risk of addiction. Get started at alpha-stim.com.



© 2023 Electromedical Products International, Inc. All rights reserved. Alpha-Stim and the Alpha-Stim logo are registered trademarks of Electromedical Products International, Inc. Read a full disclosure of the minor and self-limiting risks here: alpha-stim.com/frisk.

the events around us and to our mood. For example, you can sit in congested traffic and allow yourself to get angry at the idiots on the road that cannot drive. Or you can use the time to have a conversation with those in the car with you, listen to your favorite songs, make more progress in the podcast or audiobook you may be listening to, or simply turn off what you have been listening to and take a few moments of relative quiet and allow yourself to decompress. Learning to be flexible in handling the stressors of the holidays is one of the most important factors in successfully managing holiday stress. A favorite saying of mine when working with clients, or to remind myself, is that the things that go wrong are the funny stories you tell later. Therefore, when the unexpected happens that has a negative impact on my plans, I start mentally rehearsing how I will tell the story later and trying to see the humor in the situation. This approach almost always changes my mood.

After the Holidays

Assessing how the holidays went and how well your plan worked is important. Be honest with yourself, in which areas have you done well and in which areas did things go awry? It is important to be gentle with yourself during this assessment. This exercise is not to criticize yourself for what did not go as planned,

Josh Briley, PhD, BCMAS, FAIS is the Clinical Education Director for Electromedical Products International, Inc., the manufacturer and distributor of Alpha-Stim devices. Dr. Briley is a licensed clinical psychologist who earned his doctorate in clinical psychology in 2003 from the University of North Texas. He began his career at the Federal Bureau of Prisons, where he focused on drug treatment, crisis intervention, and anger management and was quickly appointed leader of the Crisis Support Team and Regional Assistant Team Leader. He went on to work in an outpatient clinic for the Veterans Health Administration specializing in individual and group therapy for PTSD, depression, anxiety, and chronic pain treatment. Dr. Briley has also owned a private practice, taught online undergraduate and graduate level courses, and conducted teletherapy for [Betterhelp.com](https://www.betterhelp.com). He is a board member and Fellow of the American Institute of Stress.



but to see where you succeeded in better managing your holiday stress and where you need to make improvements for next year. This is also a good time to review your overall stress management system and make plans to implement a healthy strategy for managing stress or improving your current strategy. If you find the increased stressors of the holiday are easily overwhelming you, or old difficulties have been brought to light, then reach out to a qualified professional for help in coping with these struggles.

Navigating the holiday season is fraught with potential stressors that are either unique to this time of year or are exacerbated. However, the stressors do not have to steal the joy we want from celebrating time with friends and family. Planning ahead and budgeting finances, time, and effort, looking for good things that are happening all around us rather than focusing on the negatives, being flexible and patient with unexpected occurrences, and gently and patiently checking in with yourself to see how you are doing are keys to not just surviving the holidays, but enjoying and thriving in them.

Reference

1. When Harry Met Sally. Directed by Rob Reiner, Columbia Pictures, 1989.
2. Gallup Global Emotions Report 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/349280/gallup-global-emotions-report.aspx>. October 22, 2023

If you find the increased stressors of the holiday are easily overwhelming you, or old difficulties have been brought to light, then reach out to a qualified professional for help in coping with these struggles.



THE COST OF STRESS.

The more we learn, the more vital our mission becomes.

The American Institute of Stress is the only organization in the world solely created and dedicated to study the science of stress and the advancement of innovative and scientifically based stress management techniques. AIS provides the latest evidence-based knowledge, research and management techniques for stress and stress-related disorders.

Groundbreaking insights and approaches. World-changing mission.

Hans Selye, MD, PhD (1907-1982), is known as the father of stress research. In the 1920s, Selye coined the term “stress” in the context of explaining his pioneering research into



the signs and symptoms of disease curiously common in the majority of people who were ill, regardless of the diagnoses. Selye’s concept of stress was revolutionary then, and it has only grown in significance in the century since he

began his work. Founded in 1978 at Dr. Selye’s request, the American Institute of Stress (AIS) continues his legacy of advancing the understanding of stress and its enormous

impacts on health and well-being worldwide, both on an individual and societal level.

A forthcoming AIS initiative – called

Engage. Empower. Educate. – will leverage the latest research, tools and best practices for managing stress to make a difference in a world increasingly impacted by the effects of stress out of control. We hope you will consider supporting this critical outreach campaign.



[Click to view The American Institute of Stress Case Statement](#)

A campaign to Engage. Empower. Educate.

The AIS campaign will support three key initiatives:

Engage communities through public outreach



Improve the health and well-being of our communities and the world by serving as a nonprofit clearinghouse for information on all stress-related subjects.

The American Institute of Stress produces and disseminates a significant amount of evidence-based information, but there is a need to share this material with a wider audience in the U.S. and around the world.

Support for this initiative will provide funding to expand the organization's public outreach for its website and social media, documentary films, magazines, podcasts, blogs and courses.

Empower professionals through best practices



Establish credentials, best practices, and standards of excellence for stress management and fostering intellectual discovery among scientists, healthcare professionals, medical practitioners and others in related fields.

AIS provides DAIS (Diplomate, AIS) and FAIS (Fellow, AIS) credentials for qualified healthcare professionals.

The AIS seal means a practitioner has training and experience in stress management and access to the latest stress research and techniques. It designates their practices as advanced treatment centers for stress-related illnesses.

Support for this initiative will provide funding to continually update best practices in the field.

Educate all through the development and dissemination of evidence-based information



Develop and provide information, training and techniques for use in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Some of the research-based information AIS develops and disseminates includes:

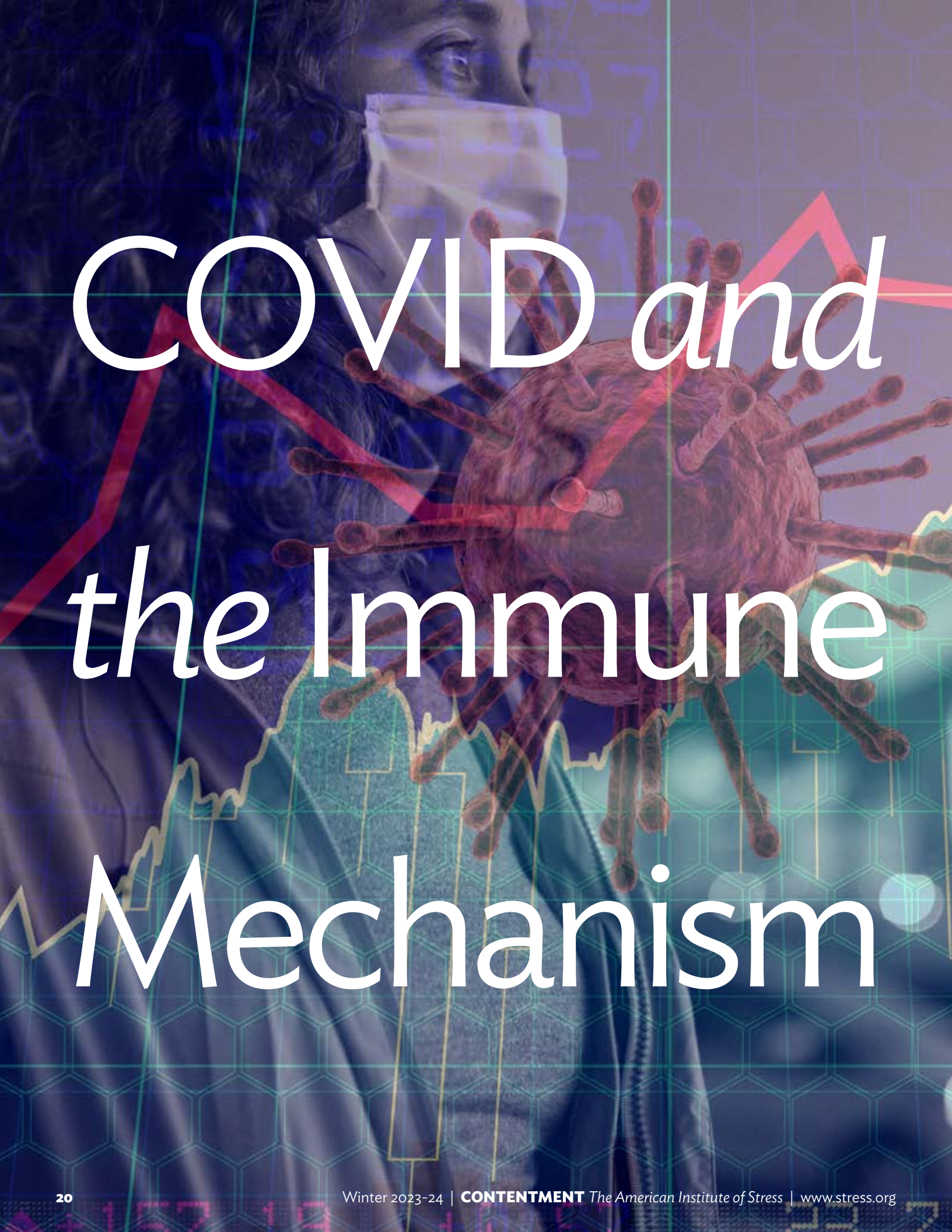
- Productions – *Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress*, a six-part documentary featuring some of the world's leading experts on stress. Released in March 2021.
- Publications – *Contentment* magazine and *Combat Stress* magazine for service members, veterans and first responders.
- Podcasts, webinars and website resources – The free podcast series *Finding Contentment*



The American Institute of Stress

The American Institute of Stress is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. Your tax deductible gift allows us to continue helping you along with Service Members, Veterans, First Responders and civilians navigate stressful situations to have a healthier, more rewarding life. © 2021 by The American Institute of Stress. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

[Click to make a donation now!](#)



COVID *and* *the* Immune Mechanism

By Lewis S. Coleman, MD, FAIS

The Immune Mechanism

Ohio State researchers Bruce Glick and Anthony Chang discovered that the “Bursa of Fabricius” activates immune cells in chickens shortly before I became an undergraduate there.¹ The thymus gland performs this function in humans. Orthodox medical journals refused to publish their discovery, so they finally published their revolutionary paper in a poultry journal, where it was belatedly discovered by medical researchers many years later.

The mammalian stress mechanism (MSM) energizes and regulates immune activity. I have previously published a description of the MSM in this magazine.² From the perspective of stress theory, there are four elements of immune activity:

1. The mammalian stress mechanism (MSM) regulates thrombin generation in all body fluids and tissues to energize and activate the cell and enzyme activities that repair tissues and regulate organs, including immune activity.
2. Complement cascade blood enzymes generate thrombin to energize immune activity that kills invasive bacteria.
3. Humoral immunity, which consisting of immune proteins called “antibodies” that are produced by plasma cells in response to foreign substances called “antigens,” including invasive bacteria and viruses. The antibodies bind to antigens to facilitate the ability of

immune cells to attack and destroy the antigens.

4. Cellular immunity, consisting of immune cells that attack, engulf, and destroy antigens to rid them from the body.

Complement cascade thrombin generation causes harmful systemic inflammation during sepsis, but there is no evidence that immune cells or immune antibodies attack body tissues or cause tissue damage, disease, or organ transplant rejection. Nevertheless, in the absence of an understanding of the stress mechanism, doctors *assume* that immune mechanism hyperactivity, which is present in all forms of disease, causes harmful disease effects. Thus, doctors have invented the term “autoimmune disease” to imply the cause of chronic illnesses. They *assume* that the immune mechanism somehow explains inflammation, chemotaxis, edema, sclerosis, and other manifestations of chronic disease, but *these effects are caused by the stress mechanism*. They ignore the observation that immune activity is elevated in critical illnesses, but they do not attribute critical illness to immune activity. To make matters worse, doctors treat chronic illnesses with toxic substances that suppress immune activity, with predictably poor results. This careless reasoning becomes even more preposterous in the case of cancer, where some doctors presume that immune system hyperactivity causes cancer, while others presume that inadequate immune activity causes cancer. They can’t have it both ways.

In the absence of an understanding of the stress mechanism, doctors assume that immune mechanism hyperactivity, which is present in all forms of disease, causes harmful disease effects.

The “novel” coronavirus is normally confined to the it causes viral pneumonia that is seldom lethal except in older patients with pre-existing disease

Stress Theory and the Immune Mechanism

The mammalian stress mechanism (MSM) generates thrombin in all body fluids and tissues to continuously energize and regulate tissue repair and organ function. MSM hyperactivity generates harmfully excessive and defective quantities of its products, which are thrombin, soluble fibrin, and insoluble fibrin, in response to excessive and unremitting combinations of environmental stresses, including trauma, surgery, toxic substances, excessive radiation, and emotional adversity. This manifests as disease. Thrombin energizes and elevates immune activity, which normally functions to fight infection. *Thus, immune activity is the result rather than the cause of disease, and “autoimmunity” is a false concept.*

COVID and the Immune Mechanism

Iam unaware of any evidence that the immune mechanism can react to either DNA or RNA. If it could, it would invite a lethal “autoimmune” reaction, because DNA and RNA are both ubiquitous in cells throughout the body. Besides, as mentioned before, there is no evidence that the immune mechanism causes tissue damage or harm of any sort. Pharmaceutical company experts and their government allies have suspiciously ignored this issue when they proclaim that mRNA injections induce immunity to the “novel” coronavirus that causes COVID. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the COVID injections confer useful immunity to COVID or anything else. All they do is induce a transient elevation in nonspecific immune activity that is most simply explained by MSM activity activated by the injection toxicity. Nevertheless, drug

companies have seized upon this useless immune activity to advocate multiple COVID immunizations, even though each successive COVID injection increases the risk of dangerous “side effects” including sudden death.³

The “novel” coronavirus is normally confined to the lungs, where it causes viral pneumonia that is seldom lethal except in older patients with pre-existing disease. The COVID mRNA “vaccinations” are far more dangerous because they bypass the lung and inject the mRNA from the “novel” coronaviruses as well as toxic preservatives such as mercury into peripheral tissues, where they enter systemic circulation. The viral mRNA hijacks the cells of the vascular endothelium to produce viral particles that spread throughout the body, causing widespread damage to organs and tissues including myocarditis and loss of smell, taste, and hair. The damaged vascular endothelium releases von Willebrand Factor (VWF) into systemic circulation and allows increased “leakage” of tissue factor (TF) into systemic circulation. The combined elevations VWF and TF progressively increases blood coagulability and induces systemic inflammation via MSM “positive feedback.” Victims whose microcirculation is compromised by age and disease often suffer impaired tissue perfusion and oxygenation that causes the fatigue, malaise, mental fog, muscle weakness, and stubborn infections that characterize the “Long COVID syndrome.” Young, healthy patients with healthy microcirculation seldom exhibit any symptoms until blood coagulability rises above a critical threshold, whereupon spontaneous “Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation” (DIC) begins in small peripheral arteries, which causes sudden death by disrupting

oxygen transport and delivery.⁴ Thus, COVID and its injections cause all their confusing symptoms and manifestations by inducing abnormal MSM hyperactivity. The immune mechanism neither causes these problems nor can cope with them. It cannot counteract the dangerous proliferation of the viral mRNA materials that are introduced directly into systemic circulation, which never occurs in nature.

immune reaction. However, the COVID injections contain viral mRNA that the drug companies claim to have rendered harmless. Unfortunately, it has proved to be anything but harmless because the injections have caused catastrophic combinations of miscarriages, infertility, sudden death, Long COVID, myocarditis, organ damage, and loss of hair, smell, and taste. Nevertheless, drug companies



I am unaware of any evidence that the immune mechanism can react to either DNA or RNA.

COVID misinformation and disinformation has thoroughly confused the public about the nature of these COVID “immunizations.” Pharmaceutical propaganda claims that the immunizations introduce a “spike protein” that allegedly induces an effective immune response. The “spike protein” is only a part of the viral “capsid” (the protein shell that encloses harmful viral RNA). It is incapable of enclosing and transmitting harmful viral RNA by itself, and there is no evidence that it induces an

and their government allies continue to forcefully impose these dangerous injections on health care workers, government employees, and even pregnant women and defenseless infants.

Summary

The mammalian stress mechanism clarifies immune mechanism activity by explaining how, where, and why immune activity is energized and activated by combinations of MSM and complement cascade activities. The simplest explanation,

COVID misinformation and disinformation has thoroughly confused the public about the nature of these COVID “immunizations.”



Maryland University of Integrative Health | **PCE**
Professional and Continuing Education

The four courses below are available through a partnership with MUIH Professional and Continuing Education (PCE) and are certified by The American Institute of Stress. PCE provides advanced, superior quality, skills-based offerings leading to relevant credentials and real-world application. As a PCE learner, you can quickly expand your knowledge and distinguish yourself as a leader in your field. Additionally, various professional organizations and boards may accept these courses for continuing education requirements. **CLICK TO LEARN MORE.**

The Physiology of Building Stress Resilience

The Physiology of Building Stress Resilience
A Continuing Education Masterclass



Psychoneuroimmunology - How Thoughts Impact Disease

PTSD in Client Relationships
A Continuing Education Master Class



The Philosophy and Science of Wellbeing Masterclass

The Philosophy and Science of Wellbeing
A Continuing Education Masterclass
Maryland University of Integrative Health | PCE



PTSD in Client Relationships Masterclass

Psychoneuroimmunology
MUIH Lecture Series



AIS members receive 10% OFF all MUIH courses. If you are a member, contact us for a promo code to enter at checkout.



based on available evidence, is that the SARS, MERS, COVID, and COVID congeners are the product of military “germ warfare” research in the United States that discovered how to exaggerate the virulence of the normally innocuous coronavirus around 2010.^{5,6} Thus SARS, MERS and COVID differ from one another only in the degree of their virulence. The researchers who achieved this triumph feared that it could be used by “terrorists,” but they probably never imagined that the “terrorists” might be domestic pharmaceutical corporations and their government allies.

Conclusion

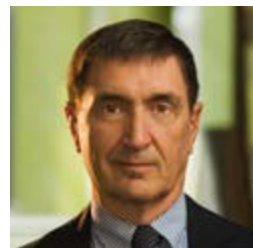
The American government has violated its only legitimate purpose, which is to protect the public. That hardly includes destroying the health and fertility of the population, even including defenseless infants and small children. The government has created corporations that enjoy more rights, privileges, and protections than a living human

being and live forever unless they are deliberately destroyed. Pharmaceutical corporations and their government allies have exhibited alarming contempt for public welfare that invites the conclusion that the COVID contagion represents deliberate mass murder. If ever there were a call to constrain corporate power and privilege and punish the malfeasance of corporate owners and agents, then surely this is it.

References

1. Ribatti, D., Crivellato, E. & Vacca, A. The contribution of Bruce Glick to the definition of the role played by the bursa of Fabricius in the development of the B cell lineage. *Clinical and experimental immunology* 145, 2006, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2249.2006.03131.x>
2. Coleman, L. S. The Mammalian Stress Mechanism. *Contentment*, 11:1 Spring 2022. <https://www.stress.org/wp-content/themes/Avada-child/lib/3d-flip-book/3d-flip-book/?mag_id=50392&token=36882>.
3. Coleman, L. S. The Mammalian Stress Mechanism Explains COVID, Long COVID, and Sudden Death. *Combat Stress* 12:2, Summer, 2023. <https://www.stress.org/wp-content/themes/Avada-child/lib/3d-flip-book/3d-flip-book/?mag_id=77461&token=72126>.
4. Coleman, L. S. (ed Jeffrey Walden) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efigv86isSw&t=117s> (YouTube, YouTube, 2022).
5. Interlandi, J. Contagion: Controversy Erupts over Man-Made Pandemic Avian Flu Virus, <<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/contagion-controversy-erupts/>> (2011).
6. Interlandi, J. A man-made contagion, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22295668>> (2012).

Lewis Coleman, MD, FAIS is a board-certified anesthesiologist who completed his BS degree in biology at Ohio State University, earned his MD degree from New York Medical College, and completed his surgical internship and anesthesiology residency at UCLA, followed by 40 years in private practice. Coleman’s basic sciences instruction at NYMC miraculously coincided with the two-year sojourn of Dr. Johannes Rhodin, a famous Swedish pioneer of electron microscopy who was retained by the school to upgrade its curriculum. Dr. Rhodin was an expert on the stress theory of Hans Selye. His stress theory lectures devastated the dogma of classical physiology and convinced Coleman that stress theory represented the future of medicine. Many years later, these lectures miraculously enabled Coleman to identify Selye’s long-sought stress mechanism. Thus identified, the stress mechanism enables Selye’s “Unified Theory of Medicine” that promises a new era of health, longevity, and freedom from the eternal curse of disease. Its implications exceed the bounds of medicine and confer a “unified theory of biology” that explains embryology, extinction, evolution, ethology, intelligence, anatomy, taxonomy, the Cambrian explosion, and dinosaurs, and resolves the disparities of Darwin, Lamarck, Baldwin, and saltation. Its distant implications reside in the realm of science fiction. His website <http://www.stressmechanism.com> is dedicated to stress theory and offers relevant materials free of charge. His book, *50 Years Lost in Medical Advance: The Discovery of Hans Selye’s Stress Mechanism*, is available on Amazon.



Harmonizing “Emotion-Stress” in Calm, Move, Eat, Connect, and Sleep Pillars of Health



By Evian Gordon, MD, PhD, FAIS
and Donna Palmer, PhD

The Emotion-Stress Continuum: from Attitude to In-the-Moment to a Lifestyle Habit.

At your brain's "safety first" core, emotion neural networks automatically, rapidly (in a fifth of a second), and continually identify environmental and body language cues to help ensure that you avoid threats and identify possible rewards.¹

Emotions also drive your stress feelings. Emotions and feelings are different but complementary. Feelings are your body's physical responses to emotions. Emotions are the cause. Feelings are the effect.

Feelings such as stress create a conscious awareness in your body through changes in heart rate, sweating, breathing, and "gut" activation.

At a brain-behavior level, stress occurs when negative demands exceed your capacity to consciously cope effectively. The gap between demand and capacity can be acute in the moment or can become *chronic* over time. There is an acute-chronic continuum. It is very well established that chronic stress is toxic to your body's health, mental health, and performance. The "Stress Response" to any actual or perceived threat induces a fight-flight response. Some stress is helpful, such as getting you out of immediate danger or helping you focus on completing a task. But when stress is

overwhelmingly negative or continually triggered and becomes chronic, it derails performance and increases the likelihood of mental disorders and chronic disease.

It is now evident that the sooner stress is stopped "in the moment," the more effectively you will control the overall cascade of stress effects. A positive attitude and calm mindset set the foundation tone and priming for any stress state and your likelihood of being present in the moment and rewiring a calm state into a habit.

These processes underpin your core brain-body homeostasis, which Dr. Lewis Coleman has proposed as the mechanism underlying the Stress Response. He highlights the importance of stopping any "overreaction" to stress.² Stress over-reaction disruption of homeostasis results in a cascade of toxic negative impacts that "produces a bewildering blizzard of destructive disease effects that disrupt physiology and damage organs and tissues."³

At the opposite end of the spectrum to the stress response is the "Relaxation Response," which induces a calm, more flexible brain and associated body state. The Relaxation Response helps you cope effectively with your life's demands.

Daily life is an ongoing fluctuation and balance between your stress and relaxation responses.

Your effectiveness at managing stress is increased by understanding what emotion triggers your stress and how effectively you put a brake on your stress response and boost your relaxation response.

At a brain-behavior level, stress occurs when negative demands exceed your capacity to consciously cope effectively.

Figure 1. Emotional threats to our safety trigger the fight-flight stress response within a fifth of a second. An array of proven techniques will help Personalize what works for you to activate your relaxation response.



This central Emotion-Stress dynamic shapes many of the approximately 50,000 thoughts you have daily. It is also the basis of your intuition, biases, mental health, well-being, and peak performance.

A range of techniques (summarized in Figure 3) have been shown to stop the activation of the stress response and activate the relaxation response *Attitude - In the moment - Habit continuum*.

The Stress Impact on Calm, Move, Eat, Connect, and Sleep Pillars of Health

All five main pillars of health – Calm, Move, Eat, Connect, and Sleep, are impacted by long-term stress and also themselves can either help or exacerbate problems with stress coping.

Taking a holistic brain-body system approach to the five pillars of health and their relationship to stress is the most effective way to establish a successful Stress Coping Strategy. This isn't just about managing stress, but the extended brain-body impacts of toxic stress. Figure 2 demonstrates the objective and explicit relationship between stress and the five pillars of health using data from the first standardized International Brain Database that we set up four decades ago.

Calm. An example of a brain-based stress intervention is Resonant Breathing (around 6 breaths a minute – breathing in for 4 seconds and out for 6 seconds), which puts a brake on the fight-flight stress response and induces a brain-body calm state. Each technique to activate the reward system listed in Figure 3 activates calm brain networks and benefits every pillar of health.

Move. Exercise is known to impact the mental resources you have available to help cope with stress. Exercise creates new neural connections in the brain via neurogenesis and neuroplasticity and releases endorphins, which boost activity in the happiness and reward-related emotion brain networks. Any amount of exercise is beneficial for improving stress, with regular daily exercise being the most effective pattern for improving stress and sleep quality (with better sleep quality also having a flow-on effect of improving stress coping.⁴ Even taking a short daily walk during lunch can significantly impact mood and help reduce work-related stress.⁵

Eat. Being in a state of high stress leads to poorer eating habits. Higher stress makes it harder to think clearly or focus, reduces patience tolerance levels and the ability to plan ahead and follow through on that plan. In an additive effect to this, the heightened negative emotion brain state associated with stress leads us to seek out “rewards” in our food choices, and together, these influences lead to selecting poorer food choices in times of stress. The influence between stress and food also goes back the other way, with poor diet choices such as high sugar content and fast foods leading to poorer mental resources for stress coping. Sugar creates a spike in blood sugar levels, which, as they then rapidly fall, makes you irritable and stress intolerant on the way back

down. Inflammation can also occur due to poor food choices, causing stress and worsening existing stress. Mindful food choices, a calm brain state, and slow eating with presence and gratitude are powerful antidotes to mitigate the unintended consequences of sugar, oil, salt (SOS) addictive eating.

Connect. Social connection and social bonding directly impact stress, as socially connecting with others releases oxytocin, decreasing the stress hormone cortisol. Being socially connected and having a social support network can play an important role in coping with stress. Having a social support network that is substantially smaller or poorer quality than what you would like to have is associated with higher stress and a poorer ability to cope with that stress level. Conversely, being highly satisfied with the social connections and support around you promotes better stress coping. Exercise also has a synergistic effect

on socialization, with any amount of regular walking or other physical activity being associated with higher energy and socialization with others.

Sleep. Sleep and stress have a bidirectional relationship. High levels of stress lead to ongoing heightened brain vigilance and thus, difficulty getting to sleep. This is an effective mechanism to keep us safe when a real physical threat is close by but does not help us cope with the types of stress that exist in modern life. Poor sleep leads to much poorer stress coping mechanisms due to reduced emotional tolerance, increased irritability, and poorer cognitive capacities for focusing and planning. This bidirectional relationship can easily lead to a spiraling of increasing stress, poorer emotional coping, and ongoing poor sleep. One way to break this cycle is to practice resonant breathing, listen to brain entrainment music, use Alpha-Stim cranial electrotherapy stimulation technology, and do a body scan



High levels of stress lead to ongoing heightened brain vigilance and thus, difficulty getting to sleep.

STRESS: Bidirectional Impact on Calm, Move, Eat, Connect, and Sleep

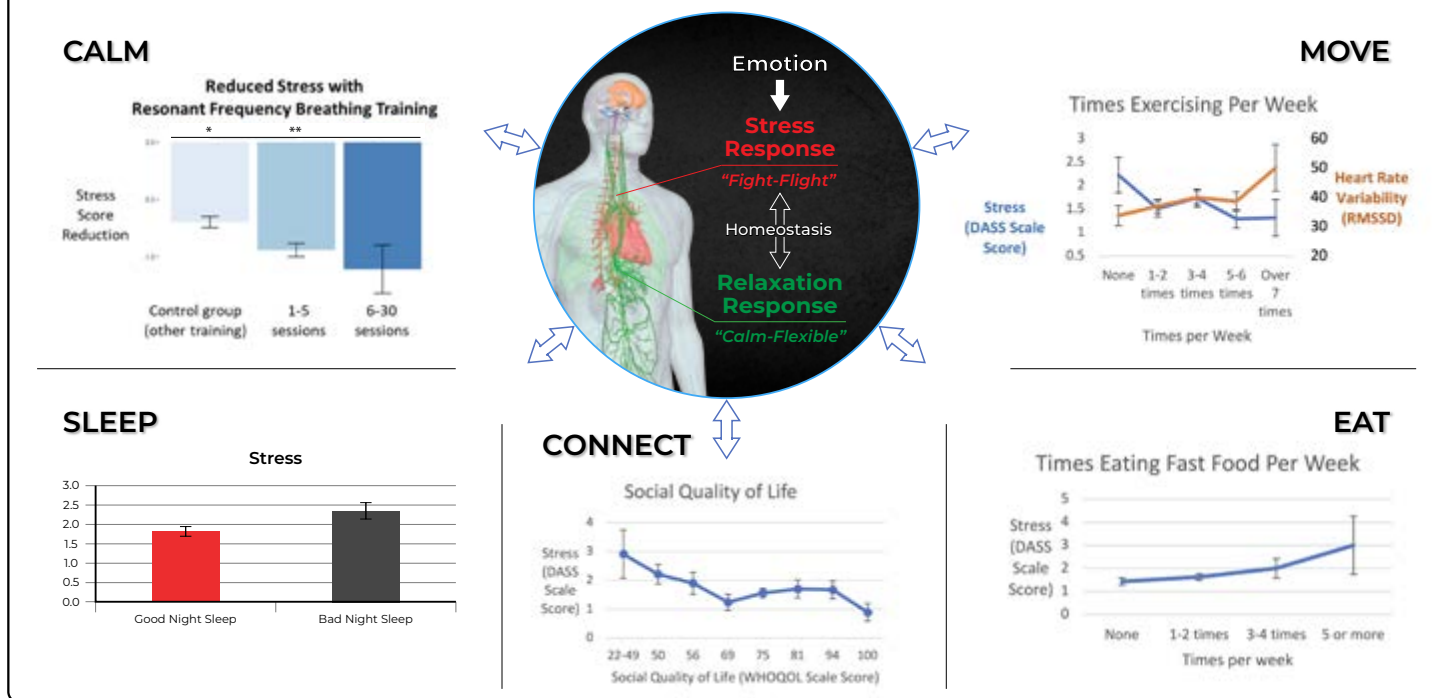


Figure 2. Heightened stress impacts, and is impacted by, the five pillars of health. Calm: Resonant breathing practice increases calm and reduces stress in a dose-response manner (more training – calmer). Move, Eat, Connect, Sleep: lack of exercise, poor food choices, lower quality of social connectedness, and lack of sleep significantly increase stress. Data from a variety of studies from the first Standardized International Brain Database.

relaxation before bed. Find what works for you to reduce pre-sleep stress and induce an optimal onset of sleep and better sleep quality throughout the night.

Figure 2 shows evidence-based data examples of the relationship between Stress and the 5 pillars of health. This research and data are being expanded in collaboration with the American Heart Association’s (AHA) online ThinkHeart! Program (www.thinkheart.totalbrain.com) to achieve peak brain-body healthy habits. The research will also systematically integrate stress measures, inflammation, genetics, gene expression, and the full spectrum of continuous biometrics, including HR/HRV, EEGs, and arousal in stress and all the pillars of health.

3 Ways to Reduce Emotion-Stress and Induce Calm in Your Life.

The five pillars of health and how they interact with stress are relevant to how you think about using the three key stress

reduction techniques below. Even though each has merits, each has implications for impacting all the other pillars of health.

1. Repetition.

Repetition of ANY Stimulus. Dr. Herbert Benson discovered something groundbreaking that can be applied to every pillar of health. Put: “any repetition technique will break the train of everyday thought.” For example, a repetition of slow breaths, saying a meaningful word or positive affirmation, repeating musical sounds or repeating yoga or tai chi movements, or chanting in meditation all will generate a calming relaxation response.^{3,6}

2. Presence.

Induce presence by focusing on your breath and senses. Use your surroundings to bring your awareness to this moment. What do you see, what do you hear? Ask yourself a simple question, “Am I fully present?”

Your brain can primarily focus on one thought at a time. Switching your focus to your physical surroundings can induce calm in your body. You can practice being present

during a range of daily routines - while you are walking in nature or along the street, making coffee, or just sitting at your desk. Pay heightened attention to all sounds you can hear around you for a short time. Welcome all sounds without judgement and be open to exploring them with a child's curiosity. You can do the same thing with what you can feel or what you can smell. This simple practice induces your calm-in-the-moment response and lets your brain stop being caught up in the typical flow of overwhelming thoughts, worries, and to-do lists. Focusing on your senses is a quick and simple way to become present in all of the pillars of health.

Mindfulness meditation is also effective for switching your brain to focus on the present moment. Mindfulness meditation has been directly shown to decrease activity in the amygdala, a key brain structure involved in heightened vigilance and alertness to potential danger.⁷

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) techniques can also be used to take control of persistent negative or worrying thoughts that distract from other tasks that you need to focus on. One such technique is to take one minute to sit with the distracting thought. You can acknowledge that it might be an important issue causing problems in your life, but also then decide to put it to one side for right this moment (and visualize

doing so if you want to, so that the thought sits beside you instead of between you and the task you are completing), and decide that you are choosing to put it to one side for now and to focus on the task at hand in this moment instead. It is still important to think or talk through these thoughts and deal with them at an appropriate time, but this technique can be used for you to take back control of when you address these thoughts and not be hijacked in the moment by a negative worry spiral in a way that you have no control over. In this way, you can have a Strategy for what you will do the next time a worrying thought occurs to you.

3. Positivity.


Visualization and Positive Affirmations “nudge” your brain into a calmer and more

positive state of being by visualizing a symbol or scene with high emotional meaning. You can also repeat a word that inspires and motivates you into a positive state or purposely seek out and pay attention to even small positive things in your day. For example, something your child or partner says to you, someone bringing you coffee or an element of nature or an animal that you pass by. Because your brain's stress and relaxation responses are triggered in a second, by purposely noticing positive things, even for a moment, you are consciously nudging your core


The five pillars of health and how they interact with stress are relevant to how you think about using the three key stress reduction techniques below.

ACTIVATE YOUR RELAXATION RESPONSE


Attitude - In The Moment - Habit

 **1 - Repetition**

- Resonant Breathing - 6 BPM
- Brain Music & Alpha-Stimulation
- Biofeedback & Neurofeedback

 **2 - Presence**

- Being Fully In The Moment
- CBT Negative into Positive Context
- Mindfulness Meditation

 **3 - Positivity**

- Positive Affirmations
- Positive Visualizations
- Curiosity
- Humor
- Aromatherapy
- Attention to others
- Gratitude Journal

Figure 3. List of established techniques to have a positive attitude, reduce stress in the moment, and create a calm habit in the long run.

brain networks responsible for calmness and positivity to become more active. Having a more active calm-brain network also means that future stress events will likely trigger a smaller stress response and lead to quicker stress recovery. This will also train your brain to start noticing other positive things and paying attention to them, rather than only noticing the stressful or threatening things and ignoring all the positive nudges you encounter.

Working these techniques into your daily routine is key. Just 5-10 minutes per day as a regular practice quickly becomes a daily built-in stress-coping practice. Try out different types of the options described in Figure 3, and then continue with and MAGNIFY the ones that work best for you and, most importantly, that you want to and will continue to include as a daily practice.

You need a strategy and a plan for tackling stress like you would for any other life goal you want to achieve.

The goal in stress reduction does not need to be the elimination of stress but rather a

plan for how to regulate stress and harness the techniques and tools that work for you in all the interconnected pillars of health.

This understanding will help you select and use these tools more effectively and better adopt the emotion-stress reduction techniques that work best for You.

Suggested Readings

1. Gordon, E. The BRAIN: From Knowing to Doing! Franklin Media, 2022.
2. Coleman, L. How emotional stress can kill you. Contentment, 10(4) Winter Edition, American Institute of Stress Press, 2021.
3. Benson, H & Klipper, M.Z. The Relaxation Response. Avon, New York, 1976.
4. Dolezal, B. A., Neufeld, E. V., Boland, D. M., Martin, J. L., & Cooper, C. B. Interrelationship between Sleep and Exercise: A Systematic Review. Advances in Preventive Medicine, 1364-1387, 2017.
5. Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C., Loughren, E. A., Kinnafick, F. E., Taylor, I. M., Duda, J. L., Fox, K. R. Changes in work affect in response to lunchtime walking in previously physically inactive employees: A randomized trial. Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 25(6), 778-787, 2015.
6. Gordon, E., Palmer, D.M., Liu, H., Rekshan, W., & DeVarney, S. Online cognitive brain training associated with measurable improvements in cognition and emotional well-being. Technology and Innovation, 15: 53-62, 2013.
7. Desbordes, G., Negi, L.T., Pace, T.W.W., Wallace, B.A., Raison, C.L., & Schwartz, E.L. Effects of mindful-attention and compassion meditation training on amygdala response to emotional stimuli in an ordinary, non-meditative state. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 6:292, 2012.

Dr. Evian Gordon is the Founder, Chairman and Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Total Brain. He founded the largest standardized International Brain Database (over 1 million datasets) to discover what insights and behavioral habits are most effective in stress, mental health, wellness and peak performance. He also founded <https://www.totalbrain.com>, an online mental health and performance platform to empower users to self-monitor and support self-care of their mental health, wellness and peak performance. Having published over 250 peer-reviewed scientific publications, Dr. Gordon is a Fellow of The American Institute of Stress (AIS) and featured in the Institute's 2021 documentary, *Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress*. Dr. Gordon is a recipient of the inaugural Royal Societies Eureka Prize for Interdisciplinary Scientific Research. He hosts the Total Brain Podcast with key opinion leaders around the world on Behavior Change. Publication details at: <https://www.dreviangordon.com/>



Dr. Donna Palmer is a cognitive neuroscientist specializing in emotional brain functioning and integrative neuroscience. Dr. Palmer is the Chief Scientific Officer at Total Brain and a Research Affiliate of the Brain Dynamics Center, Westmead Millennium Institute and Sydney Medical School, The University of Sydney.



Produced by The American Institute of Stress

MISMATCHED: YOUR BRAIN UNDER STRESS

6-part documentary series exploring stress and what we can do about it

FEATURING SOME OF THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPERTS ON STRESS

Stress is literally the spice of life. It has been said If you don't experience stress you're not alive. Stressors are everywhere. They come at you from the environment you live, work and play in, from other people and mostly, from inside your own mind. Stress is defined as our reactions to change. Like everything else, you can learn how to master your stress to live a more peaceful, productive and happy life. Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress will tell you how.

[CLICK HERE TO ORDER](#)



MEMBERS WATCH FOR FREE:

Become a member of AIS for \$95 and get Mismatched viewing access for FREE, along with The Body Electric: a documentary film to revolutionize the way we think about the human body, recorded webinars with the industry's leading stress researchers and practitioners, A Personal Appraisal of Hans Selye and the Origin and Evolution of the American Institute of Stress ebook, and many more member benefits!

Turn the tables on stress.

*Identify it,
lower it –
even put it to
work for you.*



Stress – our age's great destroyer of health and happiness – is so hard to fight because it's invisible and insidious. The Rosch Stress Profiler exposes the stress in your life and its impacts while giving you the tools to fight back. Developed by legendary stress researchers, this fast and easy online self-assessment takes only fifteen minutes, but it can change your life. **Click here** to get started!

Order now and get two free gifts – A Day Away from Stress audiobook and the Stress Management Journal – both filled with stress-fighting tips and tricks.



Rosch **STRESS** Profiler



**Our Projector of Life:
Accessing Feelings of
Peace and Wellbeing
Through the Three
Principles of Resilience**

By Carla Hay-Perdue, DNP, APRN, FNP,
ANP-BC, NC-BC

What if we could decrease our chronic stress and tap into a feeling of peace and well-being? The good news is, we can! In 2017, I began studying a different paradigm used in psychology that has made all the difference in quelling chronic stress. This paradigm is known as Health Realization, The Three Principles, or the Principles of Resilience. This paradigm has three components: The Universal Mind, Thought, and Consciousness.

In the 1970s, a man named Sydney Banks experienced insights that changed his life experience. When he realized how much these simple insights changed him, he began to share his knowledge with others. After a few psychologists and psychiatrists learned this, they saw things differently. Psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and coaches now teach the principles worldwide.

I like to use the metaphor of a movie projector to explain this paradigm. I like movies. Adventure movies are my favorite. When Indiana Jones dropped into the pit of snakes, my feet came up on the couch. When The skeleton popped out of the wall, I yelled. My heart and breathing quickened with the desert chase. Because of my thoughts, it was as if I was there, and I triggered a stress response.

How our psychology works – The projector of life

I am the movie projector of my life. You are the movie projector of your life. Each of us has our own movie theater, complete with a power source, projector, and screen. The movie is our life as perceived by us. Just as three components make up our psychology, there are three main components of this projector.

1. The Power Source is called the Universal Mind. It is the energy and intelligence of all things. It is our spiritual roots. We have access to this connection from birth to death. It provides the knowledge for Monarch butterflies to fly from Canada to the same area in Mexico year after year. You are trying to solve a problem all day long and getting more frustrated, so you go for a walk, and the answer pops into your brain during the walk. What happened is you quieted your personal thoughts, accessed the Universal Mind, and wisdom, insight, and answers came through. “There is one Universal Mind, common to all; wherever you are, it is always with you.”¹ It is constant and unchanging for everyone and plays like a quiet violin when we plug into this power source and listen.
2. Thought is the reel of the film of life. It is how we interpret our world in our movie. We live in a thought-based universe. You are only one thought away from happiness, sadness, or anxiety. We create thought 24 hours a day, seven

You are trying to solve a problem all day long and getting more frustrated, so you go for a walk, and the answer pops into your brain during the walk.

When people grasp the connection between their thinking and their feelings, perceptions, states of mind and behavior, they gain perspective on life.

days a week. Thoughts come so fast we are not aware of many of them. We all experience good, bad, funny, or even evil thoughts. We do not control the thoughts, but they are our creation. “Thought is the creative agent we use to direct us through life.”² Every thought we have produces a feeling 100% of the time. Our feelings are a barometer of our thoughts. In other words; “the principle of thought points to the fact that we live in the experience of our thinking and, as it most often seems, not in a direct experience of the outside world.”³

3. Consciousness – Consciousness is the lightbulb of the projector. It illuminates the screen in our personal movie theater. It shines a light on the awareness of information that comes to us through our five senses as interpreted by thought. I drive in the country, and the light bulb of consciousness can illuminate deer, a lake, ducks on the lake, or even wild hogs. If I am lost in the thoughts of what I need to do or if I am focusing on the past or future, then these items do not make it in my movie. To me, they are not there.

How does this work?

Right now, I am writing this article. I am enjoying the challenge of this part of my movie. I can change films at any time. I can rewind time to past events like the last campout and visualize kayaking on the calm lake. I feel peaceful. I could also remember the past when my husband was in ICU. Now, I create a feeling of sadness. Oops, I am not here! I am missing what is going on now.

I can even use my thoughts to fast forward to the future. Thoughts of what could happen with war and plagues and thoughts anticipating a freezing winter

create an anxious feeling. What if there is insufficient electricity or gas for heat, resources, or food? OOH! My pulse and breathing increase, and my muscles tense. I am having a stress reaction. It is like watching that Indiana Jones movie! I will change the film back to the present. In the present, I can connect with the Universal Mind and deal with each problem as it comes up. I know I have all the resources I need when I need them if I stay in the present. Being in the present moment decreases my feelings of stress.

Learning this paradigm of psychology has increased my awareness that:

1. I am always connected to a higher power that has my back if I quiet my mind and listen.
2. I have the gift of thought. Through thought, I perceive the world and the people around me.
3. Others perceive their world through thought. They think differently, so we live in separate realities. They have a different life movie.
4. We have inside-out thinking, which means that feelings are 100% of the time caused by our thoughts in the moment. If we do not latch onto the thought, it will pass and another will take its place.
5. The future is an incomplete equation. We do not have the information needed to predict the future. Trying to predict increases anxiety and stress.
6. We can handle anything that occurs now, so there is nowhere else to be.
7. When outside-in thinking disappears, there is a feeling of peace and well-being. It is our default setting.
8. Sometimes we see it, and sometimes we don't. We all have that feeling that doesn't look like it comes from thought. It seems to originate from circumstances, relationships, health, etc.

It always comes from our thought in the moment.

“When people grasp the connection between their thinking and their feelings, perceptions, states of mind and behavior, they gain perspective on life. Shifts in their experience show up as ‘thought events’ rather than effects of external circumstances or how others treat them.”⁴

Knowing these principles decreases our tendency to latch on to stressful

thoughts and increases our feelings of peace and wellbeing.

References

1. Banks, S. The Missing Link. Vancouver (BC) Lone Pine Publishing: p. 30, 1998.
2. Banks, S. The Missing Link. Vancouver (BC) Lone Pine Publishing: p. 36, 1998.
3. Kessel, A., Neill, M., Marmur, E., Malik, R. A superpower? An educational initiative? Or something else. Journal of Public Mental Health. 16 (4): 169, 2017
4. Kelley, T., Pettit, W., Sedgeman, J., Pransky, J. Psychiatry’s pursuit of euthymia: Another wild goose chase or an opportunity for principle-based facilitation? International Journal of Psychiatry in Clinical Practice, 25 (4): 334, 2021.

Carla Hay-Perdue has been a registered nurse since 1976 and a family nurse practitioner since 1993. She served as the nurse practitioner for Palo Pinto Rural Health Clinic in Gordon, Texas for 25 years. Carla earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Texas Tech University in 2015.

Carla holds a certification as a Nurse Coach through the American Holistic Nursing Credentialing Corporation. She also completed the training and has been teaching the Three Principles of Mind Thought and Consciousness since 2017. She is recognized as a practitioner with the Three Principles Global Community. She currently works as an Adult Nurse Practitioner and the Health and Wellness Educator/Coach for Palo Pinto General Hospital.





less stress
more peace

“Meditation is the best form of stress management and this is the best meditation course.” - Dr. Daniel L. Kirsch, President of The American Institute of Stress

**The Nuuarria Method® Course,
plus free membership**

[LEARN MORE](#)



90-DAY RESULTS

- 65% reduction in anxiety
- 72% reduction in frustration and overwhelm
- 67% reduction in stress
- 70% reduction in despair and hopelessness

The Science *and* Need for Friendships

Assurance for Improved Heart Health, Less Stress and Mental Balance



“In the face of life’s challenges, having a close friend to turn to seems to be a buffer or protective factor against some of the negative outcomes we might otherwise see.”

– Catherine Bagwell, PhD

By Linda Penkala, LMT

As I look back on my life as a child growing up with three younger brothers and one older sister in Queens, N.Y. as a tomboy, I had some girl friends in the neighborhood, including Girl Scouts and friends at school. But there were always times when simply playing wire ball, football, or stoop ball, was a key social component to my life, and many times with the boys! There were moments when I had a hoot with my girlfriends, but I also appreciated my time with the guys. Never did I imagine that there was a benefit to friendships back then, that could possibly affect my health as it was all pure fun. But now the light shines bright on this Vitamin F, and it becomes evident we have to take it to heart.

Friendships and Mental Health

For health and mental wellbeing, the compelling research on the value of friends is deep and worthy of interest and time. According to the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, those who have close friends are happier with their lives and suffer from less depression.¹ There exists a high probability that if people are less connected and not social, due to isolation and a lack of nourishing relationships, they have a higher risk of premature death. The sobering part of these sad statistics is that they may also

die from a host of chronic diseases; most importantly cardiovascular disease.²

Loneliness along with social isolation and the biological stress that ensues has been front and center in many media articles and is backed by in-depth research. It seems loneliness can be harmful to health in regard to white blood cells that play a part in a strong immune system. Steve Cole, MD found that chronic loneliness affects stress by way of the sympathetic (fight or flight) part of the central nervous system. This sets the stage for a higher level of inflammation, thus less immunity in those who are living a lonely life.³

Bringing people together in social groups in older communities can have positive benefits, by lowering a sense of loneliness and improving mental health. Dr. Julene Johnson, a San Francisco researcher on the effects of aging brought older adults in 12 senior centers together for a study to see the difference in those who joined a 90-minute choir session, and those that did not. The result of those who sang together after taking their psychosocial evaluation, revealed they felt less lonely by developing a newfound social interest in their lives. Consequently, those in the non-choir group did not have any changes in their loneliness, and their life interest actually declined.⁴

The bright side and positive component of having close friends is in regard to our own health and wellness. Healthy friends help other friends see the difference between making intentional

The bright side and positive component of having close friends is in regard to our own health and wellness.

Support systems abound for those that live in advanced economies when asked the question, “what makes life meaningful?”

healthier lifestyle choices in life, or not. This may be in regard to smoking, taking time for exercising and moving more, choosing to take up yoga, beginning to meditate, praying more, finding time to get a massage to reduce stress, or simply learning a new breathing technique to calm down. Witnessing a friend embark on a weight loss mission can impact one’s own dedication to healthier weight options, along with proactive choices.⁵ It appears that when one is surrounded by a positive life changing decision, it can influence and impact a friend’s life into the future.

Does Friendship Make Life Meaningful?

Support systems abound for those that live in advanced economies when asked the question, “what makes life meaningful?” Might we find that *friendship* made it in the top three answers? Yes, as the Pew Research Center compiled the data from over 19,000 people from these countries: Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, France, Greece, Germany, Canada, Singapore, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Japan, UK, US, Spain, South Korea, and Taiwan.⁶ The first choice of what makes life meaningful was FAMILY in 15 of the 17 countries, with OCCUPATION coming in second for about half of them, while FRIENDSHIP came in a distant third place in meaning for those in Australia, New Zealand, and Sweden. In fourth and fifth place, FRIENDS were only chosen seven times.

Friendship and the Surgeon General

Doing a deep dive into why friendships matter with US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy on his podcast House Calls, friendship expert Dr. Marisa G. Franco illuminates the value of friendship along

with current trends.⁷ She is the author of the book, *Platonic: How the Science of Attachment Can Help You Make and Keep Friends*, along with being the assistant clinical professor at the University of Maryland, teaching about loneliness and friendship. Dr. Franco is passionate in her stance that strong friendships are the pillar of healthy lives. She states that she is seeing how friendship networks have been shrinking over the last few decades. They both agreed that in their professional lives teaching and traveling, when speaking on loneliness many in their audiences feel lonely. Dr. Franco states that friends help protect cognitive health, and conversations are like food to the brain.

Dr. Franco has a unique proposition that friendship is more like a responsibility, and an investment in another whose back you have and can be counted on to be emotionally supportive through the years in good times or bad. In the end it comes down to committing to an intentional investment in time and energy to have a meaningful friendship helping each other’s successes and goals.

She found in her research that men are different when they get married, as they tend to be okay letting go of some friendships, whereas women tend to keep their friendships vital and present in their lives. For men to believe that friendship is organic, and not intentional to connect with other men, may be a false narrative. It is the connection that allows for vulnerability that Dr. Franco says is key for men’s unique view on their outreach to friends.

Friendship Statistics Post-Pandemic

The depth and breadth of the impact friendship has on the health and longevity of the body, mind and soul, sets a new standard and paradigm for



connections. This reciprocal bond of caring and affection is the cornerstone of a balanced life of friends, family, community, along with spirituality. Making intentional time to invest in friendships especially after the pandemic comes with and a deep need to connect once again, despite the stress, loss, grief and hardships the pandemic gave so many.

In a 2021 survey from the Survey Center of American Life comes research that Americans talk less with their friends, do not turn to them for support personally, and communicate less with those friends. The pandemic as the force for this sea of change resulted in 47% of those surveyed losing touch with friends from May 2020 through May 2021. The group at the highest percentage of loss were young women 18-29 or 59% of participants. In regard to men and women, the latter receive more emotional support from friends than the former.

Friendship and Connections Help Longevity

Author of the #1 New York Times best seller, *The Blue Zones Kitchen*, Dan Buettner has traveled the globe finding the common denominator for longevity in those living robustly beyond 100 years of age. His Blue Zones Power 9: Lifestyle Habits of the World's Healthiest, Longest-Lived People, includes three components on heart connections. They are BELONG, to a faith-based group, LOVED ONES FIRST, putting family first and taking care of them, RIGHT TRIBE, creating moais as Okinawans do, which is a circle of 5 friends committed to each other for life.⁸ His quote says it all:

“I argue that the most powerful thing you can do to add healthy years is to curate your immediate social network,” said Mr. Buettner, who advises people to focus on three to five real-world friends rather than



distant Facebook friends. “In general, you want friends with whom you can have a meaningful conversation,” he said. “You can call them on a bad day, and they will care. Your group of friends are better than any drug or anti-aging supplement and will do more for you than just about anything.”

Friendships Protect the Heart

My own personal struggle not seeing my family during the pandemic, including my six grandchildren was without a doubt hard on my heart. Those video chats and seeing them for Christmas in my driveway exchanging gifts doing those crazy self-hugs was enough to break anyone’s heart. There were moments

when a simple, long quiet drive to cry was all the medicine I needed, to purify stress and negativity through my tears, to feel better. But it was during those months of social isolation from friends that impacted my happiness quotient, from laughing, to sharing a great meal, or a long walk. The evidence and clinical research that friends are nourishing for the heart is profound!

According to The National Institute of Mental Health the impact of the two types of stress are the reasons. Acute or occasional stress or chronic stress that continues long term plays out in a chemical cocktail of hormonal changes. The fight-flight-freeze component of the sympathetic nervous system turns on to

handle the situation in the acute phase. The failure happens when that system stays in hyper mode, cascading a flood of cortisol, adrenaline and epinephrine that effects the cardiovascular, immune, reproductive, and respiratory systems along with sleep.⁹ The bottom line is that acute or chronic psychosocial stress is the driver behind chronic inflammation, which sets the stage for cardiovascular disease progression along with strokes. As the founder of the American Institute of Stress, Dr. Paul Rosch taught us, it is stress and chronic inflammation that is the biggest driver behind cardiovascular disease.

The healing balm of all the above statistics and research is to lessen stress and find self-regulating tools to engage and activate the parasympathetic nervous system to aid homeostasis in the body. The favorites I teach are Box Breathing, taught in the Navy Seal's training, to help focus and stay calm in the midst of great challenges.

Box Breathing:

- **Step 1:** Breathe in, counting to 4 slowly. Feel the air enter your lungs.
- **Step 2:** Hold your breath for 4 seconds. Try to avoid inhaling or exhaling for 4 seconds.
- **Step 3:** Slowly exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- **Step 4:** Repeat steps 1 to 3 until you feel calm and relaxed.

Another is StimVn (stimulate the vagus nerve) breathing. I coined this type where

you inhale into the belly, then lungs, and exhale through the mouth AHHH, or humming out the exhale. Implementing these breathing techniques into daily life, while driving, about to fall sleep, during a massage, or even before a sports competition can enhance the function of the central nervous system. This helps increase the happy hormone Oxytocin to buffer the stress response. Oxytocin can also be raised by bonding with friends, laughing and hugging.¹⁰

At the end of the day, it is friends that add to the spice of life and allow the connection of the hearts to enhance longevity, wellness and health. The five F's say it all:

FAMILY, FUN, FAITH, FOOD, FRIENDS
– intentional choices, with the bookends being family and friends for a robust life.

References

1. Choi, K., et al., The American Journal of Psychiatry, 177(10), 2020.
2. Holt-Lunstad, J., et al., PLOS Medicine, 7(7), 2010; Steptoe, A., et al., PNAS, 110 (15), 2013
3. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>.
4. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0245666>.
5. Wing R. R., Jeffery R. W. Benefits of recruiting participants with friends and increasing social support for weight loss and maintenance. J. Consult. Clin. Psychol. 67 132–138. 10.1037, 1999.
6. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/11/18/what-makes-life-meaningful-views-from-17-advanced-economies>.
7. <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/house-calls/dr-marisa-g-franco-part-1/index.html#transcript>.
8. <https://www.bluezones.com/2016/11/power-9>.
9. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34293932/#full-view-affiliation-2>.
10. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0306453010003148>.

*Optimum Health for Life is **Linda Penkala's** wellness company that offers health and wellness presentations, by Zoom or in person, and therapeutic massage incorporating aromatherapy, light therapy, and Thai massage. Her passion and heart for holistic lifestyle choices can be found through published articles on her website, www.lindpenkala.com, and in Linda's book *The Pause to Relax Ladies for Robust Heart Health*. Blending her first career as a jockey with her current one as an LMT for 36 years reveals powerful analogies regarding speed, stress, and the effects of not paying attention to proactive lifestyle choices for heart health.*





Some of My Favorite Recent Finding Contentment Podcasts

Finding Contentment is the official podcast of The American Institute of Stress. This podcast focuses on stress and stress-related issues featuring interviews with healthcare practitioners, stress experts, and professionals with expertise in stress research and management. Finding Contentment is hosted by AIS Executive Director Will Heckman.

By William C. Heckman, MS, NBCT, DAIS

Launching a podcast dedicated to the topic of stress is a venture deeply rooted in personal experience and a genuine desire to make a positive impact. Stress is an ever-present companion in our lives, infiltrating our daily routines, relationships, and overall well-being. It is a universal phenomenon that knows no boundaries, affecting people from all walks of life. Besides my role as AIS Executive Director, my motivation to create this podcast stems from my own journey of grappling with stress and its adverse effects on my physical and mental health.

Through our podcasts, we delve into the multi-faceted nature of stress, addressing its root causes, physiological impacts, and psychological intricacies. I want to provide a safe space where guests can openly share their personal stories and insights about stress, fostering a sense of community and solidarity among listeners. Moreover, by featuring experts in fields such

as psychology, neuroscience, and holistic wellness, we offer a multitude of practical strategies and tools for managing stress effectively.

The ultimate goal of this podcast is to empower people to take control of their stress levels, develop resilience, and lead happier, healthier lives. Stress is both a constant companion and a formidable adversary, but by shedding light on its various dimensions and offering a platform for open discourse, we hope to help individuals not only cope with stress, but also thrive in the face of life's challenges. Together, we can embark on a journey of understanding, healing, and personal growth in the realm of stress management.

Below you will find some of our most popular recent episodes.

The Damage of Hidden Stress

On this show, Douglas Mulhall and I have a conversation about whether we could live longer and better if the damage triggered by the hidden stress that affects all of us was reversed.

That is the question he asks in his new book: *Discovering the Nature of Longevity-Restoring the Body by targeting hidden Stress*.

Also, we discuss why standard therapies temporarily relieve heart disease symptoms but don't repair the damage. Treatments still mostly focus on cholesterol, hypertension, age, and smoking, but the process is also driven by our body's reaction to environmental stress.

Douglas Mulhall's career spans his work as a journalist, author, award-winning



documentary film maker, TV network founder & CEO, academic researcher, biotech company co-founder,

pioneer of digital standards for healthy products, and developer of award-winning healthy buildings. He co-founded Elastrin Therapeutics, dedicated to reversing cardiovascular damage. He also co-founded projects in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Europe, and the U.S. He co-created award-winning buildings in Sweden & Netherlands, and co-developed healthy materials for the building, packaging & printing industries. He has published on calcification in heart disease in journals like Nature's Laboratory Investigations.

Stress and our Education System

On this show, Dr. Yair Maman and I speak about a topic that is near and dear to our hearts, education, and the educational system.

Few people outside of the system realize the pressures put on those who are involved with the teaching and care of our young adults. As for the students, previous research indicates that unchecked academic-related stress can reduce

achievement, decrease motivation, and increase the risk of school dropout.

The longer-term impacts, which include reduced likelihood of sustainable employment, cost governments billions of dollars each year. A conversation about the impact of academic-related stress, including a discussion of the impact on students' learning capacity and academic performance, mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, sleep disturbances, and substance use was long overdue.

Dr. Yair Maman has been a faculty member, a dean, and a chair of programs in Education and Psychology at Touro College and University System. This included an appointment at New York Medical College. Dr. Maman holds several master's degrees and two doctoral degrees in the fields of Education and psychology. Dr. Maman has



played a pivotal role in restructuring vocational training for at-risk youth with audio/video engineering and other STEAM

careers. He continues to be a voice for change in the behavioral health workforce in public schools, hospitals, and business organizations.

Break Free From, Stress and Anxiety

We have always strived to bring you the leaders in the field of stress and mental health on our podcast. We succeeded in this episode when we spoke with one of the best. In this episode of Finding Contentment, I had the opportunity to speak to Brett Cotter about how you can break free from stress and the anxiety it can cause. We also found out information about the Anxiety & Trauma Recovery Retreats that Brett offers.

The ultimate goal of this podcast is to empower people to take control of their stress levels, develop resilience, and lead happier, healthier lives.



Please join us next time as we explore more stress management strategies and insights.



Brett Cotter taught in Fortune 500 companies, hospitals, schools, military bases, and disaster sites. He is a trauma expert for Meditation Magazine's Teacher Training Program and certifies



students in the Stress Is Gone Method. He is certified by The American Academy of Experts in

Traumatic Stress; his method is certified by The American Institute of Stress and is accredited by the International Mindfulness & Meditation Alliance.

Workplace Stress

A great episode of Finding Contentment, our guest for this episode on workplace stress was Nick Jonsson. Numerous studies show that workplace stress is far and away a significant source of stress for American adults and has escalated progressively over the past few decades. Increased levels of stress on the job, as assessed by the perception of having little control but lots of demands, have been demonstrated to be associated with



increased heart attack rates, hypertension, and other disorders.

Nick Jonsson, is an international bestselling

author dedicated to raising awareness and eliminating the stigma around the phenomenon of executive loneliness. He has identified that feelings of isolation and depression—personal struggles that he, himself, has had to grapple with and conquer — are much more widespread than we think.

The Perils of Unchecked Stress

In this episode of Finding Contentment, Eric Kussin and I have a great discussion about Eric's journey from a severe bout of PTSD, along with symptoms of anxiety and depression. His issues came essentially "out of nowhere" and left him almost permanently in bed, and with severe cognitive impairment, for over two and a half years. Listen as he speaks about how he found a way to climb out of his abyss, and how he vowed to spend the rest of his life focused on changing the global conversation through mental health advocacy.

During his battle, Eric was pumped with over 50 combinations of psychotropic drugs, 22 sessions of TMS therapy, and 12 sessions of ECT "shock therapy" only



to find himself worse off with each passing treatment.

Eric Kussin is a 20-year professional sports executive. After five

years with the NBA League Office, he rose to the ranks with the expansion Chicago Sky, and Phoenix Suns. He then switched over to the NHL, working with the New Jersey Devils and Florida Panthers.

His goal is simple: to build and provide important resources and programming, as well as to support The Alliance Members already doing great things with their own initiatives, all resulting in a well-educated and more accepting global community. Eric plans to use bold messaging that changes how we all think about mental health, the term "mental illness," and the best practices available to heal and prosper. Please continue to check their blog and #SameHere Hero Stories, as they have new content posted on a daily basis.

Fritz and Donnybrook- Stress Relief From Nature

Our very special guest for this episode is Fritz from Fritz and Donnybrook from @Old.Time.Hawkey. He has shown many people how our environment can help us live better, more content lives. Millions have befriended Fritz & his Loyal companion Donnybrook.

He tells us that his passion for the outdoors comes from his grandfather, who always taught him every time they went fishing, that it was just as cool to bring home a garbage bag full of trash he'd picked up next



to the river or on the side of the road than it was to catch a fish. The lessons he learned taught him that we all have a responsibility to

nature. That it gives us so much. Without ever asking for anything in return.

He began creating online content in May 2020. His videos highlight the simple joys in life around their small cabin; bonfire cooking, camping, or staying in for a night of retro video games.

I must express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to engage with our diverse array of guests. Regrettably, I am constrained by space in this article and cannot include

them all. Listening to our podcasts provides a convenient and effortless pathway to amass knowledge on stress and related issues. If you've been tuning in, allow me to conclude in my customary manner:

This has been Will Heckman; I want to thank you all for joining us today. Remember your support helps us to keep making these podcasts. I want to remind everyone, just as stress is different for each of us, there is no one stress reduction or management strategy that is right for everyone.

Please join us next time as we explore more stress management strategies and insights. And remember to visit stress.org to gather information, tools, and techniques to live a healthier, happier, and longer life!

I hope the information you hear on our podcast will help you find contentment.



William C. Heckman, MS, NBCT, DAIS is a nationally board-certified educator, with three decades of experience teaching Pre-K to 12th grade. As a teacher, Mr. Heckman has been trained and is an expert in Bibliotherapy to help children and young men and women overcome stress-related problems. He has also been an innovator and consultant in the use of online gaming for assistance with standardized testing and reading programs for many years. Will has published articles on the use of graphic novels and been featured on CBS News, in several newspapers, and on a national radio talk show. He has also been a presenter at technology conferences, a book reviewer for a national publication, and an award-winning photographer. A former New York City police officer, Mr. Heckman is a member of MENSA, and a former president and founder of a national motorcycle organization.





The American Institute of Stress

Stress Management Experts Wanted!

Obtaining credentials from The American Institute of Stress is a designation that sets members apart as stress experts and reflects their commitment to the advancement of innovative and scientifically based stress management protocols. The AIS Seal and credentials inform the public that the certificate holder commands advanced knowledge of the latest stress research and stress management techniques. For physicians and other healthcare practitioners, it designates your practice as an advanced treatment center for stress-related illnesses.



	Member	Diplomate	Fellow
Features Save 20% on years 2 and 3 with our 3 year plan	\$95 per year or \$247 for 3 years	\$395 per year or \$1,027 for 3 years	\$495 per year or \$1,287 for 3 years
Requirements	Open to everyone	Hold a degree or healthcare license and have been in practice or profession for 3 years	Hold a doctorate degree or special license and have been in practice or profession for 5 years
Collaboration with International Professional Community	✓	✓	✓
Continuing education training programs		✓	✓
Subscription to quarterly magazine Contentment and Combat Stress	✓	✓	✓
Membership certificate	✓	✓ + use of DAIS designation	✓ + use of FAIS designation
Quarterly Research Roundup publication		✓	✓
Opportunity to join Speakers Bureau		✓	✓
Discount on annual online conference		✓	✓
Access to AIS research archives		✓	✓
Media spokesperson opportunities		✓	✓
Opportunity to contribute to magazines, blogs, and social media		✓	✓
FREE: Hans Selye and the Origin of AIS ebook	✓	✓	✓
FREE: Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress, a documentary series produced by AIS	✓	✓	✓

**Sign up for
membership today
at stress.org**



**Enjoy exclusive AIS features and articles online,
or on your smartphone or tablet.**



Subscribe today and begin receiving your copy of Contentment and Combat Stress in your inbox each quarter.

The American Institute of Stress is a 501c3 non-profit organization, headquartered in Weatherford, Texas. We serve the global community through both online and in-person programs and classes. The Institute is dedicated to advancing understanding of the role of stress in health and illness, the nature and importance of mind/body relationships and how to use our vast innate potential for self-healing. Our paramount goal at the AIS is to provide a clearinghouse of stress related information to the general public, physicians, health professionals and lay individuals interested in exploring the multitudinous and varied effects of stress on our health and quality of life.

The American Institute of Stress
220 Adams Drive, Suite 280 - #224, Weatherford, TX 76086 USA
Main: (682) 239-6823 info@stress.org

CONTENTMENT

Click
Here To
Subscribe
Today.

It's free, although if you agree with our mission, we are most grateful for any [tax deductible donation](#) you would like to make.

And we are not here to cause you stress so rest assured that we will never sell your email and you won't get any junk mail from us.



The American Institute of Stress
220 Adams Drive, Ste 280 - #224
Weatherford, TX 76068

info@stress.org
(682) 239-6823

The American Institute of Stress is a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.