

The bear necessities of stress

How cortisol affects us depending on our life and stressful factors? This is the subject Mark Wetherell wants us to think about and ask a question we all think about: How do we combat stress?

The author encourages the audience to imagine they encounter a bear in the woods and how the body will react in that moment. The first thing that will happen in our body is that our brain will interpret the stressing factor and send a message to the adrenal glands to start the stress response. Next, the adrenaline and noradrenaline are released and run through the nervous system. After 20 to 30 minutes, if the stressful event is still happening, you will start secreting cortisol, also known as the stress hormone.

Because it is not allowed to bring bears into the labs to test the theory, the scientists need to come with different ideas that imitate the bear event, like public speaking, putting your hand into very cold water or be exposed to different substances.

Cortisol is a necessity of the body, maintaining the balance of it is a must, especially when cortisol regulates our immune system, endocrine system and digestive system by being high in the morning and slowly decreasing through the day.

A study has shown that parental caregivers of autistic children (Lovell & Wetherell, 2011) are prone to more illnesses than the average person, because of the stress they feel every day and the direct correlation with the level of support they have.

A sign of chronic stress is waking up with a higher level of cortisol and going through the day with the same amount or higher, which the caregivers experience most of the time. The caregivers that were open to talk about the challenges they face have shown lower levels of cortisol in the next three months, compared with the ones unable to see the benefits.

What helps us restart the level of cortisol in our bodies is sleep, if a stressful event is happening in your life, sleeping would make your body process and waking up with a healthy level of cortisol.

In this article we found out how the stress is benefiting us but also that too much cortisol can significantly affect our health and wellbeing. What can help in the moment is to review the events in our life and challenge the cause of the stress, focusing on solutions to those problems.

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Discuss how our understanding of melancholy and approaches to treatment have changed over time

Melancholia through time was seen as a symptom of a disease but not an actual disease, more like a sad state of mind, a non-pathological disposition. This definition was not always the same, and it has changed many times.

In the Renaissance, melancholy was more as a characteristic of a genius or a gifted person and less as an illness. When Greeks started to name a nervous conduct or craziness melancholy, the Latin translation became *Atra bilis* and English version as black bile.

Black bile is one of the four humors, believed to be crucial in keeping a good balance in the body. Melancholic diseases were thought to be caused by an imbalance of the black bile.

In the nineteenth centuries it was discovered a rising number of people having depression meant *depression of spirits* or melancholy. A synonym of melancholy was introduced in the medical field by Wilhelm Griesinger in the middle of the nineteenth centuries by the name of *state of mental depression*.

A scientific text written by Hildegard of Binger, a nun and a female superior in the 12th centuries, melancholy was seen as a heart and brain disease caused by an excess of the black bile from the spleen. She was convinced that by using medicinal herbs such as fennel, mallow, primrose, etc. And animal products from ostrich, heron and ants, people with symptoms of melancholia can reduce the excess of the black bile and improve the state of sadness.

In conclusion, when melancholy was caused by an imbalance of the black bile, Rufus of Ephesus thought that bloodletting was one of the solutions to the problem, but just in a severe condition of the person treated. Otherwise, medicinal herbs like Tyme, aloe and hellebore were used for the purpose of thinning the bile and to make the evacuation faster, therefore calming the person in need.

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