

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Building

STRESS RESILIENCE

— for Teachers —

STRATEGIES FOR **BUILDING STRESS RESILIENCE**
TO IMPROVE TEACHER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

DECREASE TEACHER BURNOUT
IMPROVE CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL EFFICACY
RAISE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND OUTCOMES
REDUCE EDUCATIONAL FINANCIAL COSTS



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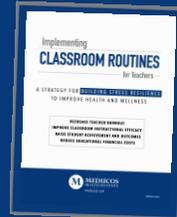
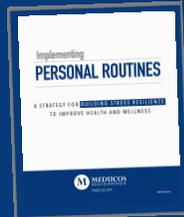
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WEB RESOURCES

Teachers | Classroom | Schools & Districts

Implementing Personal and Classroom Routines Supplements



www.meducos.com/educators

BUILDING RESILIENCE TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS *(with ongoing personal learning)*



Meducos Health Institute YouTube Channel

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**Building Stress Resilience for Teachers
Independent Study**

Edition 1

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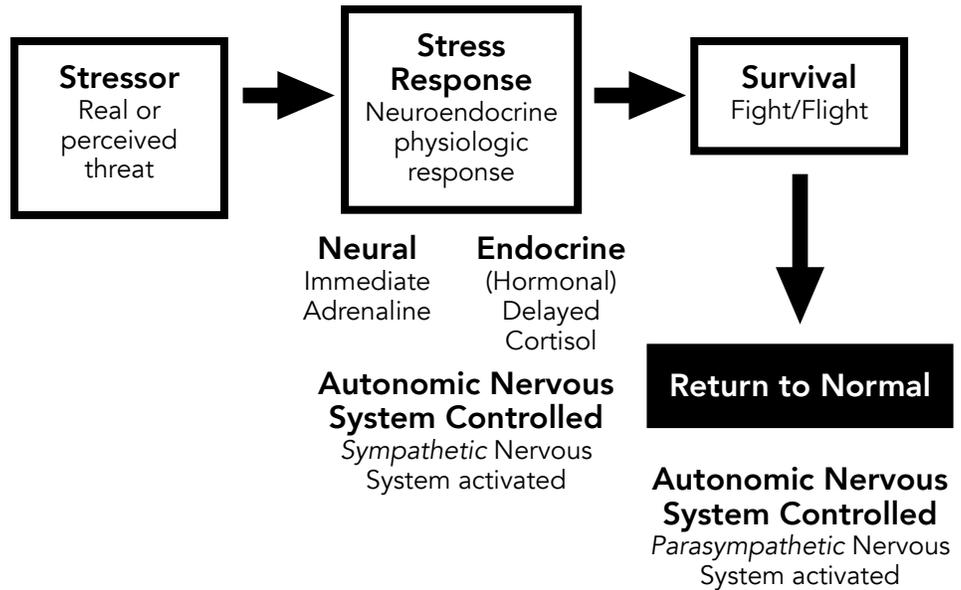
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Stress RESPONSE



Autonomic Nervous System

Part of the nervous system that regulates involuntary body functions. It operates and controls body systems automatically, even before cognitive awareness. The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are part of and control your autonomic response to the environment.

Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)
Fight/Flight

ACTIVATES SURVIVAL MODE

Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS)
Rest/Digest

RESTORES BALANCE

* The body's RECOVERY mode

There is a constant balancing act of these two parts of the system. They keep getting constant real-time feedback so your body knows to shift blood to your muscles so you can run away, or back to your gut so you can digest your food.

The PURPOSE of STRESS → SURVIVAL

Stress is your friend. It's an alarm system.
Stress can increase performance.

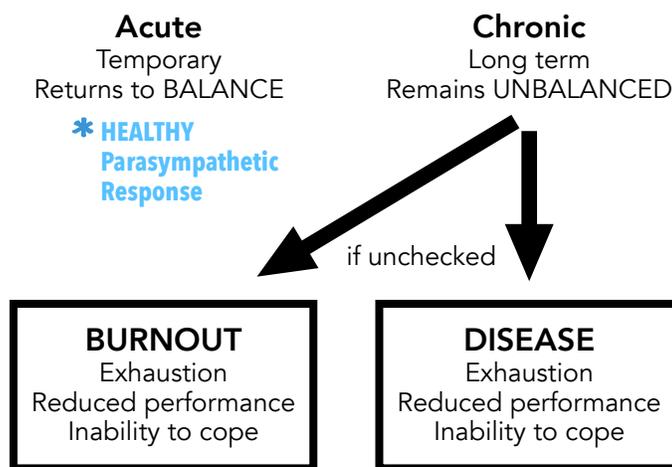
The PROBLEM of Stress

Physiologic Effects of Adrenaline/Cortisol

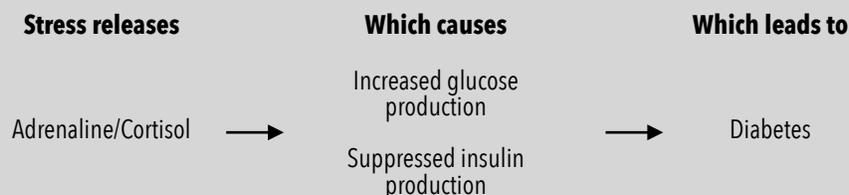
In the
STRESS
State
(SNS control)

- Increased heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased respiratory rate
- Increased glucose production
- Increased alert system
- Increased arousal
- Suppresses insulin production
- Suppresses digestion
- Suppresses reproduction
- Suppresses immune system
- Lowers serotonin ("happy" neurotransmitter)
- Depletes dopamine ("motivation/pleasure" neurotransmitter)

These effects are all good when you need to fight or flee, but without a parasympathetic balancing, you will constantly be in a fight-or-flight state. If left unchecked this can cause chronic physical and mental disease.



Example of how chronic stress can cause disease:



Notes

Notes**CONSEQUENCES of Chronic Stress**

The physiologic effects of stress are helpful when you need to fight or flee to survive, but without a parasympathetic balancing, you will constantly be in a fight-or-flight state. If left unchecked your body will not be allowed to recover. This can cause chronic physical and mental disease.

Physical Effects of Chronic Exposure to Adrenaline/Cortisol

Headaches
 High blood pressure
 Heart problems
 Muscle tension/pain
 Fatigue
 Diabetes
 Skin conditions
 Upset stomach
 Sleep problems
 Asthma
 Arthritis
 Sexual dysfunction
 Depression
 Anxiety

**Partial list*

How does this affect teachers?

1. Poor teacher physical health
2. Poor teacher mental health

How does this affect students and the classroom?

1. Poor teacher performance
2. Poor student outcomes
3. High teacher turnover
 - Lowers student achievement
 - Costs \$7.3 billion extra per year
4. Increased inequities in education

STRESS RESILIENCE

What is Stress RESILIENCE?

The capacity to **RECOVER** quickly

A healthy body is able to return to a recovered state. The speed at which it recovers is a measure of a healthy autonomic nervous system. A healthy parasympathetic nervous system is essential for a well balanced recovery from a threat.

Resilience (speedy recovery) requires:

1. Neutralizing the threat
 - As long as the threat exists, the stress response will remain activated.
 - This is particularly important for perceived threats and is critical to understand when it comes to changing perception.
2. A healthy parasympathetic response

**Stress Resilience
=
Healthy
Parasympathetic
Response**

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How to BUILD Stress Resilience

1. Get adequate support (be properly resourced)

To maintain balance, it helps if you are standing on solid ground or if you are properly supported.

2. Act on Evidence-Based Balance Strategies

Knowing how to maintain balance and using that knowledge helps you keep a lower stress baseline and increases your ability to stay in balance as you keep a healthy parasympathetic response.

3. Review, Revise, Repeat

As with everything you do, the more you do it, the more you improve what you are doing, the easier it will become to successfully stay in balance. Repetition builds confidence and confidence makes you stronger in the face of potential threats.

**Do whatever you can to make it
as easy as possible to stay in balance.**

EASY

1. Get SUPPORT (RESOURCED)

Sources of Support:

- Self Support
- Social Support
- Peer Support
- Administrative Support
- Professional Support

SELF Support

1. Be prepared for the day and for possible contingencies
2. Be properly resourced
3. Enact daily strategies to lower your stress baseline
(If in an unfamiliar environment, do your best to maintain these.)
4. Have and follow a “School Day Routine” that includes a pre-start breathing ritual
5. Practice and have ready PSNS activators

SOCIAL Support

Recent evidence has shown a significant correlation between social support and the mental health of teachers and students. Positive social communication with family members and friends reduces anxiety and develops the feeling of security. This can help protect people from physical and mental illnesses.

PEER Support

Peer support is distinct from social support in that peers are considered people who are similar in fundamental ways. These equal relationships are helpful because it gives connection to others who have “been there, done that” and therefore is much more relatable.

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Notes**Administrative Support**

There is no bigger frustration than feeling like you are in the battle alone and that maybe even your administrators are making it more difficult for you to do the job you love. If administrators truly want to support you, to make it as easy as possible for you to teach, they will provide you with the following:

1. Evidence-based curricula

- There is no need to recreate the wheel and if the evidence doesn't support it, neither should your administrators.

2. Materials that enhance your efforts

- These should make it easier for you and provide scripted, relevant, and engaging content.

3. Training/Coaching

- You cannot be expected to figure things out for yourself. Appropriate training and guidance makes the process more effective and efficient.

4. On-going support

- It should never be a "one-and-done" experience as you will be constantly refining your skills as you strive for mastery. You use spiral learning with your students, why not use it for yourself?

5. A voice

- Improvement requires feedback. If your administrators are dedicated to changing the system, they must list to those on the front lines in the classroom.

6. Social and emotional wellness programs

- Evidence shows that wellness programs work. They improve teacher health and this translates into better outcomes and achievement in the classroom.

PROFESSIONAL Support

When needed, mental health professionals and coaching can be extremely helpful. Anyone with symptoms of anxiety, depression, or other mental health symptoms should seek guidance from a mental healthcare professional.

2. Act on Evidence-Based Balance Strategies

- Change perceptions
- Create control using routines/rituals
- Employ parasympathetic activating techniques

Change PERCEPTIONS

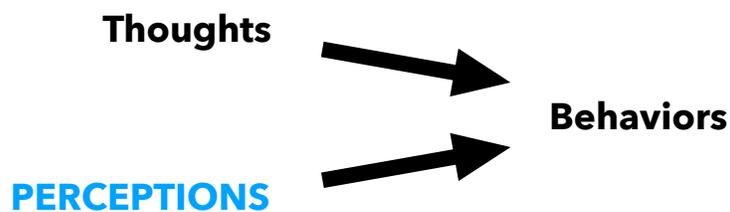
Perceived threats are the most frequent cause of stress. It must be asked, "Is the threat real, or is it just perceived?"

Are your perceptions helpful or harmful?

Changing perceptions reduces your tendency to see neutral situations as threatening (overreacting). Both your thoughts and your perceptions (beliefs) affect your personal behavior.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques can be effective in helping you to REFRAME your environment in a way that can decrease your stress by changing your perception of threats.

Things we believe (perceive) directly affect how we react to events without conscious thinking.

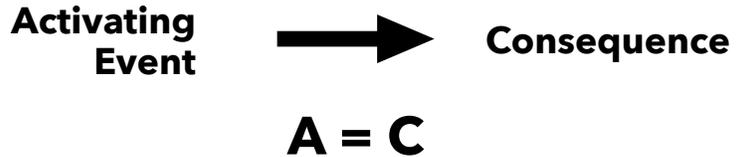


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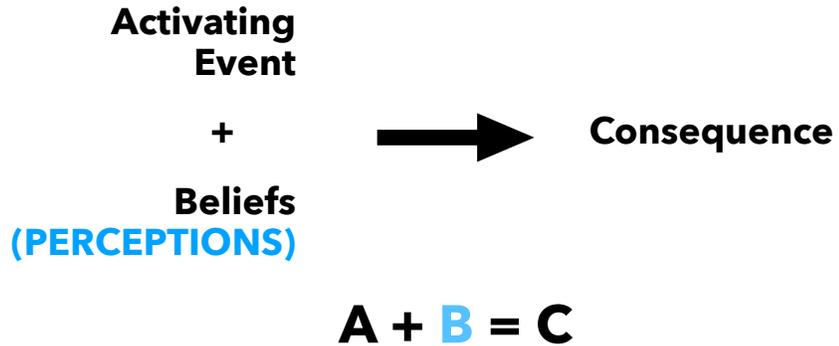
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ABC Model

Typically it is thought that a consequential behavior occurs from some activating event.



According to Albert Ellis, this inaccurately represents what really happens. He suggests that beliefs (perceptions) unconsciously cause us to look at the event through our personal bias and our behavioral reaction is the resulting consequence.



REFRAMING to Change Perceptions

1. Become **AWARE** of the event, thought, and feelings surrounding the event. Objectively identify the facts and what really happened, not what your mind thinks happened.
2. **CHALLENGE** your thoughts.
3. **REFRAME** the story.

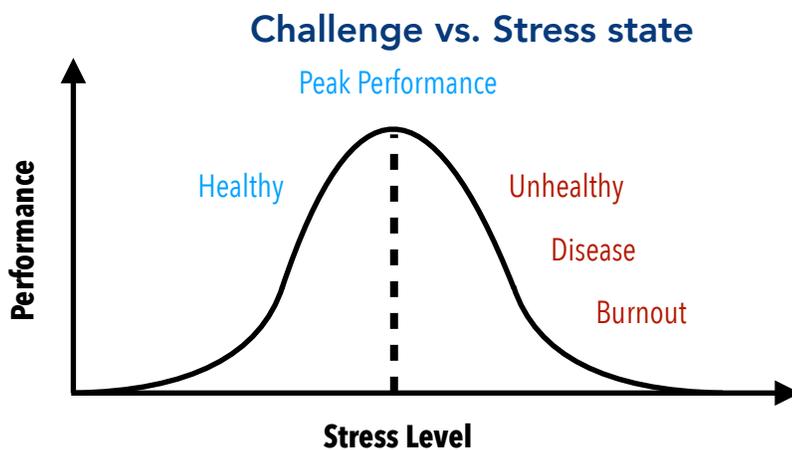
Additional Resource:

Rapid Reframing REAL-TIME TOOL on the Meducos Health Institute YouTube Channel

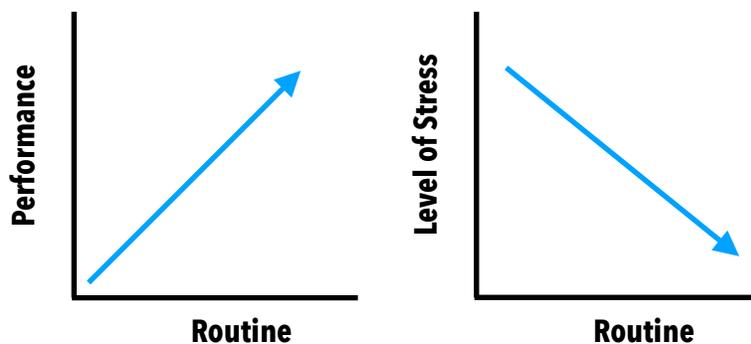


Create Control using ROUTINES/RITUALS

Uncertainty and a lack of control are strong contributing factors that can trigger a stress response. Routines give you control by providing your brain with a sense of structure, regularity, and predictability. The brain thrives on finding patterns and is always seeking efficiency. Routines are a primary strategy to accomplish that goal. This provides cognitive stability which allows you to be more able to process how to respond to threats.



The effects of routine on performance and stress:



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Characteristics of EFFECTIVE Routines

A routine should:

1. Be simple, practical, and serve a specific function.
2. Have symbolic meaning. Adding mindfulness makes it a ritual and more powerful.
3. Include parasympathetic activators.
 - Include breath work, nature, etc.
4. Include as many senses as possible and activate both sides of the brain.
 - Physical action.
 - Vocalization (Trigger word/phrase or mantra)
 - Visualization.
5. Be well practiced. (Even when in low stress situations)

Example routines to incorporate:

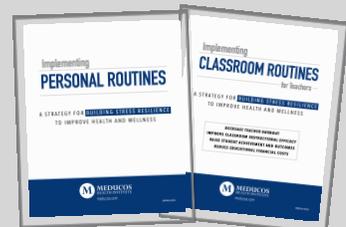
1. Morning
2. Work Related:
 1. Starting the day
 2. After lunch
 3. Changing focus
 4. Before a quiz/test
 5. When the mood is tense
 6. Ending the day
3. Special "event"
4. Disconnect from work
5. End of day
6. Evening
7. Before Sleep
8. Urgent/Contingency

Sunset Routine

1. Alerted by reminder
2. Walk to front door
3. Look at the sun setting
4. Put my hands on my chest
5. Focus on breathing
6. Express gratitude
7. "Today I _____"

Additional Resource:

Web Supplements:
Implementing Personal & Classroom Routines



PARASYMPATHETIC Activating Techniques

Balancing the stress (fight-or-flight) response requires activation of the parasympathetic nervous system. A healthy response means quicker recovery, or increased resilience. Science has shown that certain activities can activate this recovery response. Employing these frequently will help minimize the time to recover from threats.



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM ACTIVATING TECHNIQUES

EXAMPLES:

1. Resonant Frequency Breathing
2. Demands vs Resources Balance Visualization
3. Heart-Mind Coherence Technique
4. Affect Meditation
5. Cold Water Immersion
6. Looking at/or Being in Nature
7. Humming/Singing/Chanting

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Additional Resource:

How to Breathe for Stress Relief on the Meducos Health Institute YouTube Channel



Notes**Practice: Review, Revise, Repeat**

To adequately implement these tools and techniques requires some real-time experience. They aren't automatic until we make them that way and there will be many barriers and much resistance along the way. The tendency is to quit when it doesn't go right.

As well, there is no set formula to get this accomplished. Learning basic principles and then applying to your personal life is ideal. What works best for some might not work best for you.

The goal is that we intentionally and consciously build automaticity of healthy habits into your life. Doing so will let your brain rest and allow it to focus on the most important things rather than the "system".

Practice. Practice. See where it needs to be adjusted, and then practice some more.

Incorporating Resilience into Daily Living

Start simple.

Just choose one simple thing that has been learned and start there. Something as simple as 60 seconds of slow, diaphragmatic breathing in the morning is easy, free, and effective.

Gather additional resources and support and do everything you can to support yourself.

Then build from there.

Just one new thing each week will lead to a lifetime of progression.

Seek help where you can.

And once you are on track, you can start implementing these same skills in the classroom. Without even teaching them the details, your modeling and usage of these techniques will make a difference. This is how you too will be able to #SpreadHealth.

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