



Video Transcript

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Stressed!

What do you want to know about stress? We'll discuss stress and its impact, understanding the brain, good and bad stress, fight, flight, freeze, or flock. The stats don't lie. We'll enhance our awareness and specifically discuss women's stress. We will review known stress agents. We'll develop best practices for addressing stress. We will incorporate daily de-stress activities and evaluate your plan for stress-free living. Are you stressed? Oh my goodness. Sometimes we feel that we're stressed, sometimes we don't. Stress anticipation keeps adrenaline high and blocks brain function.

There are some signals that our brain gives off regardless of whether we physically feel like we are stressed. All this takes place in the amygdala. That's where you turn on the fight or the flight response. That's why when bad stuff happens, a trigger stresses us out and we begin to go into that fight or flight mode. We'll talk specifically more about that. I just wanted to share for a moment where the stress mentally begins in our brain and what area of our brain that's in, because that is so important to understand the physiological effects that stress has on us and where it all gets started. Our brain activity really falls into four categories.

Your mind, worrying like muddled thinking, impaired judgment. Our behavior, accident prone when we're stressed, loss of appetite. Some of the behaviors we develop as a result of stress could lead to insomnia or restlessness. Unfortunately, it can lead to other bad behaviors that are a little more challenging to fight off. All of these actually are challenging to fight off. It has a great impact on our emotions, loss of confidence, irritability, depression. We see it in our body. We're fatigued. We may have skin irritation, frequent infections. Our immune systems are compromised. All of these things happen in our brain, which manifests itself in our behavior when we're stressed.

Stress and how we perceive it; because it is bound to happen. It's all in our perspectives. That's going to make the difference in how we allow stress to impact us. We can look at it this way. Good stress, bad stress. When you know stress is ultimately going to happen, let's change our perspective. Let's flip the script on how we think about and how we handle stress. Good stress. This is an opportunity for me to slow down, for me to rest, for me to regain focus, as opposed to an opposing view about stress. Stress can be a set up. This is a set-up for success because triggers in my mind are letting me know. I'm seeing these physiological examples that are manifesting themselves. Let me set this up for success so that I don't allow stress to be a stumbling block. It's about understanding those stress triggers, those signs that we get, and looking at the perspective of how we're going to address them.

Stress protects us. That's a good thing. We don't want stress to allow us to freeze, have paralysis, procrastination. We want it to protect us, to allow us to refocus, get a grip, employ those de-stress activities we're going to talk about soon and use that perspective for the good. Stress can also give us energy. It can ramp us up to help us to be excited, full of energy, ready to go conquer everything in the world. We can monitor that and handle stress for energy as opposed to allowing it to take us into a place of exhaustion. Bad stress can be life-threatening. Good stress can be exciting if it's used the right way. If we have the right perspective, if we have the right plan and we know what to do, how to handle it. You're going to walk away knowing that today.

Stress has these four phrases that we go through, four possibilities of how we can manifest stress. You have fight or flight, freeze or flock. You're likely very familiar with fight or flight. Remember, that occurs in the amygdala. We can allow stress to put us in a fight mode, put your boxing gloves on and say, hey, I'm going to turn my perspective of stress into good. I'm going to fight this with the right tools. I shall be victorious; stress will not win. We can flight, run away from it. I don't recommend that because it eventually will catch up with you. It'll just keep chasing you, you'll keep running like the hamster in a wheel.

Freeze. The third option is actually not an option. Freezing, that paralysis mode, is not an option because it doesn't deal with the stress or the triggers that [inaudible 00:07:20]. We have to get to the root of it. We have to deal with it. Getting to the root of it to pluck it out so that it doesn't grow back again. I'm not a horticulturalist but I understand about weeds and how you got to get down to the root of them and pluck them out so that they don't grow and take over the good and the beautiful flowers, the vegetation that we're growing. The fourth option, flock. I personally like the fight or the flock option, and really a combination of them both. Flock is hiding. To disappear and to not address it or flocking to support.

Of course, we want to flock to support. Flocking to support looks like you're hanging around and you're associating yourself with persons who understand stress, who know how to deal with it, respond to it appropriately and positively. We all want that kind of support. Identify who in your circle seems to handle stress well, who in your circle is a fighter and so not be defeated by stress. You want to be around those folks. You want support from those folks. Flock to support as you gain your strength and your tools to fight. This is critical. Some statistics support why fighting stress is so important. The American Institute of Stress says that the main causes of stress are, 40% from workload, 28% people issues, 20% work or personal life matters, and 6% lack of job security. These may not be a secret. These are some common causes of stress. We talked about how stress starts in the brain, and we have this brain activity that begins. What happens in our brain? What are those conversations that lead to those statistics that we just saw? One is occupational demand. Fear leads the way for that. We're trying to do more with less. We're juggling learning new tenets of our jobs while trying to maintain a grasp on the old ones that are still in play. We're being pulled in a different direction because we're needed. We're off, tipping in above 100% percent. That can be stressful, and it can also cause fear. Fear of not doing well, fear of not performing well. We all want to perform not just excellent but exceptionally well. There's a lot of demand on that. That's a lot of pressure there.

You want to make sure that fear doesn't lead that way of anything that we're addressing from an occupational standpoint. Reaction to excessive pressure or demand. We just talked about that. All the demands, all the different angles and all the different persons coming at us. We have to control that and control our reaction to that. I was once told, just because you can do everything doesn't mean you have to do everything. Just because we believe we can multitask, or switch task, doesn't mean we have to always do that. Sometimes to relieve that excessive pressure means taking a pause, slowing down and really focusing on one thing at a time. A lot of people I know schedule their email response time. They don't leave the email up all day hearing that click, click, click as they all come in and feeling the need to jump to that one immediately and respond.

A lot of people have a different ring tone for who the email is coming from. If it's coming from my boss, we want a certain ring tone so we know to go answer that one, but the others may have to wait just a few more minutes. There are a lot of tactics and strategies that we can put into place to help relieve that excessive pressure, those demands. We all wear that superhero cape, but even Superman or Wonder Woman had to put it down every now and again, to be focused and to regroup. There are also various disorders that have happened as a result of these brain activities regarding stress—hypertension, heart attacks, migraines, allergies, uncle Arthur as we call arthritis. Those are several things that can really impact our physiological functions with stress. Stress can also result in work absenteeism, turnover, complaints.

This is why we want to get such a good handle on it, so that it doesn't adversely impact what we're doing in these ways. The NIOSH report said that 40% [of respondents] reported extremely stressful jobs. Three-fourths of employees believe that workers have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago. Attitude in the workplace. The seventh report says 80% feel job stress, 50% say they need help learning how to manage stress. 42% say their coworkers need help. 10% are concerned coworkers could become violent. 14% felt like striking a coworker. 25% felt like screaming or shouting. This, ladies and gentlemen, is coming from the Attitude in the American Workplace Report. These are real statistics that remind us that we must get a grip on stress. I share all these statistics with you because knowing about stress helps us learn to deal with stress. Dr. Salvatore Maddie has a great quote and it reads, "Resilience is having the courage to grow from stress."

Resilience is having the courage to grow from stress. Remember, that's when we turn our perspective to the good stress. Now we want to turn our attention to why is women's stress so different? No offense, gents. Just want to talk a little bit about why women's stress is so different. It's because we smile right through it. One and a half times more likely to experience workplace stress, that's women. Higher stress levels in women aged 25 to 54 with frontline roles. We're the guardians. We're the healthcare workers. We're the ones who are all about taking care of well-being of others. Why is our stress so different? We have anxiety and psychological distress. We're worried about unequal pay and minimum support systems. We are the support system in those cases.

Stereotype performance and the subconscious. These are the things we tell ourselves. We must perform better. We must do better. We must show longer. We must work harder. We drive ourselves in this way. We have domestic concerns. A lot of times it's the women that are the caretakers for their parents, for their children. Sometimes even for their partners. They're often the sole providers. We're all about the societal yes and we must be the best at this. We must be the best at that. We have to learn how to say no. We said, knowing about stress to deal with stress. What are the known stress agents? Are they good or bad? Duh, work rises to the top of the list because that's a lot of area of stress for us if we don't categorize it correctly, if we don't perceive it and change the narrative about it to work for the good.

Relationships are another known stress agent. That one's no surprise either. Finances, time management, and life events that can take us from zero to a thousand in less than 30 seconds. Those are what bring on stress. What are your stress agents? If you go to psychologytoday.com and put in the subject search line, personality and what are your stress triggers, you can take an assessment to find out what your specific stress agents are. I highly encourage you to do that. You have to know what they are. You have to get to the root of it. You have to pluck it out, and you have to have a plan of attack to successfully use stress and handle it appropriately in your life. Here's some best practices for addressing stress in the workplace. We talked about stress in the workplace and it has been the top of the different reports that we've shared.

Here are some best practices we can put into play. Have crucial conversations to avoid crucial confrontation. Resource identification and utilization. Identify your tool. Know your resources. Remember, run through your flock of support. Identify those tools so that you can pull them out immediately whenever you need to use them. If you don't have them, you won't be able to use anything. You have to identify them, so you know which ones to use in which situation. Create and maintain work-life balance. Sometimes we are encouraged to separate work life, personal life. It's one life. It's your life. Create and maintaining a one life, your life balance. Balance doesn't look like 50/50 either. I've tried. What balance does look like, something that allows you the space and the ability for self-care and to have a little fun, a little play time, a little creative time in the midst of all of the caretaking and working that we're doing.

Be certain to employ these de-stress activities. I'll share with you some because these are some great anchoring thought de-stress activities. Positive mental focus; have a personal mantra. I have these little cards I keep on my desk and I switch them out every month. I repeat them to me every time I sit down to work. One is called, dare to dream big. One is called, I'm not going to be stressed today. One is called, I have control over how I respond to stress and emotions. Create your positive mental focus, your mantra. Have a funny phrase and that's going to be internal use only like you made me the only one who knows what the funny phrase means, but it cracks you up and it pulls you out of a very stressful place. I call mine the NF, the non-factor. If something or someone is stressing me all the way out, I stop and say, are they paying my mortgage?

Are they contributing to my utility bills? Are they driving around? Are they cooking for me, doing my hair every day? Right? No. That's a non-factor situation or person, and I laugh it off and I keep it moving. You may have different gestures. I have these socks, they're called the Garanimals socks which if you recall, those are for kids, right? But I'm a big kid at heart and so I may put on my Garanimals socks. Whenever I feel like I'm stressed or trying to become stressed, I look down at those socks and bust out laughing. Focus on the high-hanging fruit and prioritize. Remember we talked about email and prioritizing which ones you get to first, prioritizing the time of day you do them. Meditation is great. It helps with mental focus. Healthy eating, and rest and get some sleep.

Healthy eating is not the easiest thing to do when you're stressed, because stress can bring on that adrenaline kick. Remember? That happens in the amygdala. With adrenaline, we want that sugar. My go-to is that home-fresh-baked chocolate chip cookie, but I can't do that. I don't even buy them anymore. I'm focusing on healthy eating, like the Granny Smith green apple doesn't taste exactly like that chocolate chip fresh-baked cookies, hey, but it does the trick. Get some rest, get plenty of sleep. Having a relaxation response is like the big shoulder shrug where you take your shoulders and you scrunch them up to your ears off to the top of your head and then you let them down. Do your neck roll, stretch while you're sitting in your chair, take a walk at lunch. It's a good exercise and I love to dance. I love ballroom dancing. I love hip hop. I love all kinds of dancing.

When I feel really stressed, I am learning to throw on a dance video. You're not going to see me though on TV and anyone's video because I don't have the choreography or the rhythm like that, but it's fun for me. Have visualization and goal setting. I have a planner. I just write down the top three things I need to accomplish today. I don't even put any more, because they just rotate from day-to-day if you put too many. Visualize and focus on what you want to accomplish. Then when stress tries to creep its way in there, you're like, no, no, no. I can't let stress distract me from my goal, my focus today. Journal. If you have to scream, just don't scream in the phone or while you're on a Zoom or webinar. Go outside and just scream to the top of your lungs. Make sure nobody is around so they don't call 911. But scream, get it out.

Use your lifeline. Call a friend. Flock to that support. I cannot stress that enough. I shared several de-stress activities. What's your plan for stress-free living? What are your anchor thoughts? What are your activities? Here's some of mine. No is a complete sentence. Unapologetically, no is a complete sentence. We cannot do everything, even though we can do everything. We should not do everything. Exercise guilt-free flexibility. Exercise when you schedule something. When you want to participate in something. Be flexible. Own your own C-suite journey. Have your development plan, have your goals, have your focus, and stick to that. You own it. You drive it. You can throw that stress. You flip the script. Use it for the good, for the positive. I have another rule called two things, every day, and this is separate from my three work priorities.

I do two things a day. I limit myself to two things every single day, because I found that I was just trying to do the most. Two things would be, one thing is work. Another thing might be dancing after work. Just two things. On the weekends, if someone says, hey, can you do this? Can you do that? Check your calendar. Do you already have two things planned? I'm already booked. Perhaps we can look at another day. Stick to your rules. Stick to your plans. Every superhero needs a theme song. Every superhero needs a theme song. We are superheroes. We know when to take off our cape. We know when to fly and to soar. We know when to sing. Get your favorite song. When things start looking like they're becoming stressful, hit that play and sing your heart out. That will relieve stress. You see here a picture of my dog, Casey.

I tried yoga in the morning. I can't say I was quite successful with that. It's a little different than dancing, yet I gave it a whirl. As soon as I lay on my yoga mat to try to do some yoga moves, here comes Casey. She thought, oh, you're on the ground, that means play time. She brings over one toy at a time and just drop them on my head. Like, no yoga, play with me. Find what works for you. Another great quote to remind us about some de-stress activities comes from Peggy Noonan, "Humor is the shock absorber of life. It helps us take the blows." Yes, it does. Humor is the shock absorber of life. It helps us take the blows. There's a great TED Talk on stress, and Kelly McGonigal, she's the author of that. Check that out on YouTube. It's an awesome resource.

I certainly hope today that you were able to walk away with understanding how stress is triggered in the brain, how those thoughts turn into behavior, and how we can control the narrative. By flipping the script, changing those thoughts into positive ones, using stress for the good, and controlling our response to the triggers. Know your triggers, then fight like everything in your mind and flock to your positive group of support. Call on your friend. Use that lifeline and develop your stress-free living. Create your mantra. Take your daily activities down and live stress-free. Thank you.