

The Fight/Flight Reflex - By Lauren Nichols

The Fight/Flight Reflex, ADD kids, and its long term effects on Adults - By Lauren Nichols

Deep in the middle of the jungle, the early human is making his daily trip through the shrubs to the waterhole, failing to notice that he is being stalked by the watchful eye of a large jungle cat. He notices a large colourful tail feather resting on the ground and bends down to pick it up. When he lifts his head, he find himself face to face, staring deep into the eyes of the tiger...

Immediately his pupils dilate, his heart starts beating very rapidly, his adrenalin kicks in, the blood is taken from all the non essential systems in the body and is focused toward powering the limbs and muscles, ready to either stay and fight the tiger, or run for dear life! His psychology has fixated on "If I fail, I will die- I'm tiger lunch!"

This is the fight/flight response. In order to increase our chance of survival, the brain shuts down the parasympathetic nervous system, which is essentially our "rest and digest" mode. It is in control of defecation, digestion and sexual arousal amongst other things, all of which slow right down when the fight/flight reflex is active. The body should then return to rest and digest soon after the danger has past.

This system worked beautifully back in the days when that type danger was everywhere, but how is that relevant to now you ask? True, in the modern day, most of us don't have the 'little issue' of being hunted, however we do have a whole new set of dangers to consider (most commonly, jumping out of the way of maniac drivers). Our modern tigers include money and finance, jobs and careers, peer pressure, expectations of others, 'the boss', psychological predators and bullies, and general traumatic experiences and accidents.

I mentioned that the body is supposed to be able to go home, settle down and get back into rest and digest mode. The problem is that in our stressful and busy world, the body starts to think it's 'normal' to be in the active reflex state. The fight/flight is activated so often and remains active due to 'ongoing stressors' for such a long time, our body doesn't always know or get the chance to switch it off again.

In everyday life we are bombarded with ongoing stressors. Consider this... so many of us are jolted awake in the morning by an alarm clock, drag the kids out of bed and get them ready for school, fight the traffic to work, fight the boss for being late, stress about deadlines, fight the lunch lines, fight the traffic again and pick up the kids, listen to them fight each other all the way home, make dinner, watch scary and violent movies, go to bed, wake up the next morning to do it all again!

Of course **for kids** this isn't the story, they have their own modern tigers, like bullies at school, pressure to meet expectations, highly competitive environments, abuse, trauma and accidents, unrealistic punishments and so on. There are also traumas to consider such as birth complications, in utero issues and childhood vaccinations. This can have massive effects on the child's behaviour, such as...

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| * ADD/ADHD | * Timid, shy, clingy | * Bedwetting |
| * OCD behaviour | * Underdeveloped social skills | * Learning problems |
| * High energy, can't sit still | * Crave junk food | * Dyslexia and memory |
| * Aggressive and defiant | * Digestive and constipation | * Nail-biting |

Being stuck in the fight/flight state in the long term causes problems like insomnia, anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome, post traumatic stress, obsessive compulsive disorder, erectile dysfunction, serotonin deficiency, anxiety and panic disorders. The psychology of being a perfectionist can also often lead to self esteem issues, due to the failure of being able to live up to unattainable expectations. This failure often leads to deserving and worthiness issues, which can stimulate the creation of massive unconscious self sabotage programs.

Personally I find it amazing that one little primitive reflex can affect and shape so much of our lives, and it's a rapidly growing problem. This is why so much of my professional career is dedicated to switching off this reflex, bringing the body back into balance, assisting to resolve the ongoing stressors, and helping the body to improve its ability to handle stress for the future.

It's important to reduce as many stressors as possible from all parameters of health; mental/emotional, spiritual, structural/physiological, nutritional and biological. Hypnotherapy, kinesiology and other therapies are proven to be very effective in the resolution of the fight/flight response, but of course there are also some things you can do at home to help minimise a few of those ongoing stressors...

- * Avoid MSG
- * Cut right down on all processed food, and food high in sugar. It stresses the biochemistry of the body.
- * Try to maintain good posture, see a chiropractor and get massages (lymphatic ones are good too)
- * Don't let that trip to the doctor for a check-up keep sliding away from you.
- * Look after your organ health, detoxes are good, seek professional advice on the best detox plans to suit your individual situation.

And most importantly, RELAX! Use meditation or hypnosis CD's to help you, or perhaps join a class like Tai-Chi, Qigong or yoga. Make time for yourself and don't sweat the small stuff.

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