

Hello everyone, you are listening to feelings talk with Noa Gross. I'm going to be here every Tuesday between 1-2pm. Every week the program will be addressing a different topic, last week we talked about developing your child's self-esteem .If you want to listen to the podcast you can go to J-AIR.COM.AU or to our website: [www.myfeelings.com.au](http://www.myfeelings.com.au).

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Today we are going to talk about

### **Stress- What causes stress and how can we reduce it**

Is stress good for us or bad for us? What do you think?

When was the word Stress first introduced to the English language? Tuned in to find out the answers ...

Every human being has: difficulties, decisions, frustrations, fears, worries and more. Our physical reaction to all these situations, we inherited from our forefathers. This reaction is called "stress response" it has another name, " fight or flight response " named by the physiologist Walter Cannon already in 1914. Our ancestor who lived in a cave and survived by hunting and gathering would occasionally encounter things such as a tiger on the prowl, or a warrior from a competing tribe. To survive they had to react quickly, flee or fight - which would require physiological changes that increase their physical strength. These changes included: an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, muscle tension increase, with increasing amounts of available energy. To enable these changes, and many others, a series of complex physiological responses developed automatically.

Up next, a little bit about our physiology, but before let's hear a song

To take a time out- [דמן פסק לקחת](#) by Arik Einstein.

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Some information on our physiological responses under stress:

Once we perceive something as a threat or danger, a brain region is activated, the so-called "היפוטלמוס" Hypothalamus ". The hypothalamus produces a

hormone called CRH, which operates the nearby pituitary gland. In response, the pituitary gland secretes a hormone called ACTH, which passes through the bloodstream and reaches the adrenal gland which in turn secretes the hormone cortisol. At the same time the CRH activates, the autonomic nervous system sends electrical signals from one nerve cell to two factors secretion of adrenaline from another part of the adrenal gland.

In a nut shell- as a result of these complex processes, once we perceive a threat or danger, our body is flooded with two very powerful hormones known as stress hormones: adrenaline and cortisol. They are the ones that make our heart and our muscles work better and they are the ones who saved our prehistoric fathers from the prehistoric tiger on the prowl.

So far so good. There is no doubt gut reaction "Fight or flight" actually served our ancestors, and increased their chances of survival. But what happens now? Fortunately, carnivorous tigers do not appear often in our lives, and most of the situations that we perceive as a threat or danger do not require fast physical response for the purpose of survival.

Nevertheless, our brains and bodies continue to react in the same way our prehistoric ancestors did by flooding the body with adrenaline and cortisol whenever we experience worries , workload , frustration in traffic , conflicts in relationships , financial difficulties , or fear of failure of the tasks before us . All these factors trigger our stress response multiple times a day. As a result we constantly live in a state of chronic stress, which includes high levels of adrenalin and cortisol, high blood pressure and heart-beat at an irregularly high pace and an abnormally high level of muscle tension.

Does it positively contribute to our modern day life style or does it have a negative effect?

To answer this I would like to tell you about Hans Selye.

He was a doctor and researcher in the 1930s who worked in Canada. He made a critical contribution to the development of our understanding of the issue of stress.

He wanted to find out what effect a certain hormone had on the body, and for this purpose a selection of rats were injected on a daily basis .The rats developed a series of symptoms including : stomach ulcers , enlargement of the adrenal gland , decrease in size of the Thymus , spleen , and lymph nodes . Surprisingly, even the rats in the control group which was given an injection that does not contain the hormone, developed the same symptoms. Later these symptoms were discovered to be an emerging response to irritation (in this case an injection once a day), these symptoms can be developed under many different circumstances.

Hans Celia found that if the stimulus continues developing, more serious symptoms including high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, arthritis, kidney disease, stroke, and allergic reactions can occur. If the stimuli lasts longer, the rats begin to die due to a variety of diseases.

In 1936 Hans Celia published his findings in the science journal **Nature**. Article title: "A Syndrome Produced by Diverse Nocuous Agents". This article first used the word stress which, up until then was not part of the English language, defining its meaning: "non-specific response of the body to any demand or change."

Now you may ask: So is stress good or bad? Who was right? Walter Cannon who said gut reaction Fight or flight "contributes to the survival" or was it what Hans Celia that said:" it's killing us"? The answer is, of course, that both were right.

Before we will answer this, a lovely song by Dana Berger called:

**תנועה – תוך כדי תנועה On the Move**

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Walter Cannon talked about what the professionals call "acute stress". Situations of physical danger requires a quick response. Perhaps you have found yourself in such a situation, where you have found yourself involved in a car accident. In this case the stress responses would really help you to survive. Hans Celia talked about chronic stress, many small harassments that repeat day after day. Chronic stress killed the animals of Celia and it kills us too.

In the past 40 years scientists have developed a new field of research called psycho-Neuro-endo-immunology and initialed PNEI. The researchers in this, study the relationship between mind and body using Western scientific tools. They learn the connection between our thoughts and feelings and how these operate the hormonal system and immune system. These studies show that chronic stress impairs the efficiency of the immune system and the natural healing process of our tissues. They also showed that chronic stress causes acceleration of the aging process.

Epidemiological studies , clinical and biochemical studies in recent years show that stress contributes to a variety of symptoms and diseases including high blood pressure , sleep problems , headaches , arthritis , a variety of diseases in

the gastrointestinal tract , diabetes , autoimmune diseases , heart disease, cancer , stroke and depression.

**So what do we do to reduce the stress in our life?**

1. Look at the half full glass in life. I don't mean lie to yourself or avoid looking at the situation as it is, but make sure you see the good in every situation. Here is a nice story to explain it :  
2 different people were involved in a car accident and broke their leg. The first was grateful " I am so lucky, I only broke my leg" and rushed to the shulle to say ברכת הגומל. The second, on the other hand, felt depressed "What bad luck I have, now I am loosing weeks of work, all my work projects are stuck"

How can we do it? The answer is being grateful - Psychologist Dr. Robert Emmons studied the effects of this practice of being thankful and found that keeping a journal of thanks on a regular basis has led to an increase in optimism, alertness, enthusiasm, determination, concentration, energy and quality of sleep. On the other hand it decrease in the level of stress and physical pain.

What actually do you need to do? A thankful notebook- buy a notebook (I encourage you to buy a nice and colourful one) and make a list of 5 things every 24 hours in the same time (in the morning, before you go to bed, with your coffee, it doesn't matter).

**Meditation music-**

2. Relaxation Response- Mindfulness meditation has being proven since the 1970<sup>th</sup> to reduce stress, pains, blood pressures, auto-immune diseases, ADHD, reduce depression and more even for only a minutes a day. Dr Harbert Wilson found out that practicing meditation creates physiological effects that are resolving the effects of the Fight or Flight reaction cause by stress.

Though the next singer decided not to do meditation, Bruno Mars took a break in his song: **"The lazy song"**

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Before the break I shared with you some ways to reduce stress in your life. Here are a few more:

3. Learn to make lemonade from lemon juice. Learn to make good things from the opportunities and events in your life.

A nice story can give you an example of that:

**It's can be good or it can be bad**

There once was a farmer who had a strong, healthy and beautiful horse. Everyone said "how lucky you are," he always replied: "It can be good and it can be bad."

One day the horse disappeared, everyone told him:" What bad luck," he replied," It can be good and it can be bad. "

A week later, the horse returned with five young foals, all of them said: "How lucky for you," and he replied: "It can be good and it can be bad."

Then His eldest son went riding on one of foals, fell down and broke his leg, all said: "What misfortune", and he replied: "It can be good and it can be bad."

Then came a war ,emperor ordered all young boys to go into battle , the war was long , many young boys did not return, but the farmer's eldest son was left behind in the village since his leg was broken .

I find great inspiration in the words of Albert Einstein: "In the heart of difficulty, lies an opportunity."

4. Self-love: do what makes your body feel good: go for a walk, eat well, rest or socialise with others.
5. Identifying stressors in your life: use early warning signs to avoid stressful situations. Some of the warning signs can be include:

- Headaches, muscle tension, neck or back pain
- An upset stomach
- Chest pains, rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or overeating "comfort foods"
- A short temper
- & anxiety

What can we do to avoid it: Take a timeout, go for a walk, Plan ahead, and seek for help.

6. Mind your own business- avoid gossip, talking about others or giving your opinion if you haven't been asked for it.
7. From Auto-pilot to making choices- It's important to take control of the things we can and make choices about the things in life. Don't be on auto pilot. You always have the option to choose.

As a break we are going to hear [מה איתי - What about me by Arik Einatein and Josey Katz](#)

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A few more advices you can do to reduce stress are:

8. Giving- researches showed that giving to others increase the way we feel about ourselves, and make us feel calmer and happier. In the KABALAH it say that giving to others embraces us with the feelings of creation, which that is all our meaning in life. In the Jewish tradition we have many ways we give to others: Tzaka [צדקה](#), [משלוח מנות](#) in Purim.

The physiological reason is that our body produces hormone called oxytocin- which makes us feel good. We are going to talk more about this hormone later.

9. Change your inner voice- the way you talk to yourself- Talk positively to yourself. Be kind to and not harsh. For instance, don't critic yourself. Say to yourself: "I deeply and completely accept myself", instead of focusing on the negative -ask yourself what you can do to enjoy right now. Use an imaginary volume button to lower the volume of the negative voices in you.
10. Use humour- laugh a lot, don't be serious. Use humour in many situations in life.

Some of you probably say- I'm too old to learn new ways,  
Or some of you thinks it's impossible to do, so better listen to this amazing experiment:

One of the interesting experiments done in that field by the brain researcher Alvero – Pascowal – Leona. [אלוורו פסקואל- ליאונה](#).

He asked volunteers to play a small exercise on a piano with only 5 fingers, for 2 hours a day for only 5 days.

At the end of these 5 days they done a test called TMS which allows scientists to map the size of the brain area that controls the movement of the fingers. It turned out that following to the practice, the area that controls the movement

of the fingers of the right hand was growing. Other studies confirmed this finding, and show that repeating an action again and again to a particular action, causes the brain to assign a bigger brain area for this action.

But the experiment didn't finished with that.

A second group of volunteers was asked to imagine themselves practicing the piano, without moving a finger!. They had to sit in front of the piano and imagine themselves moving their fingers and playing the piano for 2 hours a day, 5 days a week. At the end of these 5 days they did the TMS test.

It appears that the area in the brain which is responsible for the fingers' movements grow up to the same size as it did in the first group.

The conclusion of the experiment was: that a thought can change the grey function and physiological structure of the brain. This is scientific evidence to the say: "Thought creates reality". Amazing, isn't it?

Up next a beautiful song, by the talented singer **Kobi Aflalao** called **מכתב לאחי – A letter to my brother, this song talks about optimism. There are reasons for everything, but if you wait, at the end you will be happy.**

It is important to remember that stress is not always bad, it can be good for us as well.

According to research at the University of Wisconsin, people experienced a lot of stress but did not believe that stress harms their health, there was a higher risk of death.

It turns out that the pressure makes us more sociable! The pressure releases the "Cuddle hormone" called Oxytocin, which strengthens close relationships between people, increases empathy, it also increases willingness to help and support, and helps our blood system to cope with stress.

Our stress response mechanism has a built-in resistance to stress and this mechanism is the human connection.

This is another piece of scientific evidence to the say: "Thought creates reality", so reach for others. If you would like to find out your stress level, we have a short online questionnaire on our website: [www.myfeelings.com.au](http://www.myfeelings.com.au)

Next week on my programme I will talk about "Relationship issues OR how to avoid divorce"

If you have any questions or queries about today programme or next week's programme you are welcome to email them to: [info@myfeelings.com.au](mailto:info@myfeelings.com.au) or go to our website: [www.myfeelings.com.au](http://www.myfeelings.com.au)