

THE STRESS REACTION

STUDENT READING



Often when we are angry or frightened our bodies tense up. We may want to hit something (or someone) or run away. This is the stress reaction. It is also called "fight or flight."

During fight or flight, our bodies go through changes so we can respond to danger. This happens in all animals. Fight or flight gives animals the extra energy and strength they need to protect themselves.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

During fight or flight the body releases a hormone called adrenalin. Adrenalin makes the heart beat faster and increases the breathing rate. Another hormone released at the same time causes the liver to produce sugar. This sugar provides energy for the body to use during fight or flight.

Other things also happen. The mouth becomes dry, the pupils of the eyes (the black part in the middle) become very large and the lungs can take in more air. You might notice that when you are upset or scared your stomach feels strange. This is because blood rushes away from the stomach to the other muscles in the body.

Sometimes people are able to perform amazing acts in life-threatening situations. They are able to do incredible things because of the extra energy produced during the fight or flight response. The body is able to perform at its very best—at its maximum capacity.

After the danger has gone, heartbeat and breathing go back to normal, blood returns to the stomach, blood sugar returns to a normal level and the body is able to relax.

WHAT IS STRESS?

The stress reaction doesn't just happen in response to physical danger. People may feel the fight or flight response when they become upset in traffic, want to win at sports, or feel nervous about taking a test or trying out for a play.

Sometimes people have problems or concerns that keep bothering them. Their bodies continue to react with fight or flight even though they are not really in danger. They are feeling *stress*. When people feel stress they have a difficult time relaxing. Too much stress can lead to mental problems and to physical problems such as ulcers.

There are many things that can cause us to feel upset or stressed. The things that cause stress are called *stressors*. It is important to learn how to relax to stay healthy and be happy. Some ways to relax also help manage stress and anger. These are exercising, taking deep breaths, meditating and talking about problems or worries with your family or close friends.

STRESS? NOT ME!

5.13

Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

DIRECTIONS

Answer the following as completely as you can.

1. The hormone released by the body when we feel strong emotions is called _____.
2. What do we mean when we say anger and fear cause a fight or flight reaction?
3. Another word that describes the fight or flight reaction is _____.
4. How can the fight or flight reaction help us?
5. What can happen if we stay too long in fight or flight?
6. What kinds of things do people do when they get angry?
7. What are some healthy ways to express anger?

