

The

STRESS

Factor and the

ORGANIC

SUPERMARKET



Stress is like the weather. We know it exists but we cannot always figure out how to deal with it. Biologist Bruce Lipton, in his book *The Biology of Belief*, tells us that “Almost every major illness that people acquire has been linked to chronic stress” (page 121). Is this news? Growing up, the home grown diagnosing I heard, if someone wasn’t feeling well, was that it was due to “a case of nerves.”

Well, here is the low down. We have two major parts to our autonomic nervous system. The parasympathetic “calm” part is activated, for example, when you meditate or listen to Baroque music. The problem lies with the other part of our nervous system, the “revved-up” sympathetic part, whose primary process is “fight or flight.” This part was meant to help us from threats such as mountain lions or whatever predators our ancestors were bound to encounter. When we are in this mode, blood disproportionately goes to our arms and legs so that we can run like hell and get out of the way. Simultaneously, blood leaves our brain making us in a sense dumber. The issue here is that this “fight or flight” reaction emanates from fear and does not differentiate between

the loss of a loved one and not finding a parking space, no matter what your intent may have been. As President FDR said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

Here is a case in point. There is a health food super market in my town that determined to make its parking spaces much narrower. I am always amazed when I drive by and see how these fine looking organic food seekers are giving nasty gestures to each other, as they struggle to maneuver their cars into spaces. We need not allow stress to push our nervous system into saving our life 24 hours a day, whether shopping, at home or at work.

Triggering the “fight or flight” part of our brain lowers our immune system, making us vulnerable to illness and unnecessary conflict. That is why we should learn how to be cognizant of our emotions and our stress levels. The successful work that I have done for thirty years regarding stress management-- with individuals, couples and families-- includes guiding them to consider the following: stay mindful by being in the present (you cannot change the past); use a “wide angle lens,” seeing things simultaneously, to maintain perspective; communicate as

if you were participating in a win-win volley; practice Coherent Breathing (six second inhalations and exhalations to activate the “calm” part of your nervous system); embrace a healthy life style that celebrates possibilities. And save the “fight or flight” for mountain lions. 🦁



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