

# Arousal Transcript

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## *Video Transcript for SHARE*

### **Arousal Symptoms**

And the third category is what we call Increased Arousal Symptoms which takes us right back to that “fight, flight, or freeze” we were talking about earlier. But for someone who’s been through trauma, whether especially if it was Chronic or Complex Trauma, it’s like their “fight, flight, or freeze” is always turned on; and instead of having a control for it, it’s just on or off. So most of the time, their bodies are still reacting like they are in that traumatic situation. They’re going to have problems with sleeping because of the different adrenaline levels they have in the way their thoughts are processing. There’s going to be some irritability or even rage. You see impulsive behaviors which makes sense because they’re reacting to perceived threats. They’re going to have difficulty with concentrating; you may see a startled response.

One of the things you’re really going to see is that hypervigilance which again goes back to that “fight, flight, or freeze” that you’re only taking in what’s important but your whole system is trying to ensure that you’re safe whether it’s a real threat or a threat from their past or even a perceived threat. They’re always, always going to be trying to make sure that everything around them is something that is safe and that they can trust. So, let’s talk about Bobby for a second. Bobby is in second grade, and yesterday when Bobby’s dad had a very bad day at work and when he got off, he stopped and got a couple of six-packs on the way home. And, Bobby’s dad and mom don’t have the healthiest relationship skills so Bobby ended up having a very, very long night with everything that was happening in his home. He didn’t get breakfast the next morning, and he obviously didn’t get a lot of sleep. So, the next day he’s in school, and he’s sitting in the classroom. And, he’s having those intrusive thoughts of what happened last night, but he’s also really worried about what’s going to happen when he gets home tonight too. He’s hungry; he’s tired; and this isn’t the first time this has happened in Bobby’s life, so he’s hypervigilant. And he’s the kid that is scanning the room and trying to make sure that he understands everything that is happening around him. Now it’s third hour and the teacher has just asked Bobby for the third or fourth time to answer the math question, and he can’t. Now, a lot of times, people would look at Bobby and say that he has ADHD, that he can’t pay attention to anything, he can’t sit still in his seat. But the truth is, it’s not that Bobby can’t pay attention to anything, it’s that Bobby is trying to pay attention to everything in his environment. And that inability to sit still comes from increased arousal; the inability to concentrate is because he’s dealing with all the symptoms of what’s happened to him, and that he’s hyper-vigilant because he has to stay safe. And so, this is why it’s so important that we understand how these symptoms look and, how whether it’s a child or an adult, what we’re really seeing so that we make sure that they’re getting the right help and interventions that they need.

We're now going to take a look at some clips that help demonstrate some of the possible symptoms in the Arousal Symptom Cluster.

*Iron Man III* follows genius industrialist Tony Stark in his mechanized superhero persona of Iron Man. In the wake of other worldly disaster, Tony finds himself struggling with insomnia and anxiety when faced with adversity, a task he usually handles well. Tony spends many sleepless nights tinkering away with new suits to help protect the ones he loves but finds himself lost when presented with a new threat.

### Iron Man III clip:

COLONEL RHODES: "There've been nine bombings," ["Nine?"] "but the public only knows about three. But here's the thing. Nobody can ID the device; there's no bomb casings.

TONY: "You know I can help. Just ask. I got a suit. I got bomb disposal, catches explosions midair."

COLONEL RHODES: "When's the last time you got a good night's sleep?"

TONY: "Einstein slept three hours a year; look what he did."

COLONEL RHODES: "But people are concerned about you, Tony. I am concerned about you."

TONY: "You gonna come at me like that?"

COLONEL RHODES: "No, look, I'm not trying to be a dick... *(two children approach table)* ...tator."

GIRL: Do you mind signing my drawing?

TONY: If Richard doesn't mind. You all right with this, Dick?

COLONEL RHODES: *(Laughs)* Fine with me.

TONY: What's your name? [Erin] *(Aside to little boy, "I loved you in 'A Christmas Story,' by the way.")*

COLONEL RHODES: Listen, the Pentagon is scared. After New York Aliens? Come on. You need to look strong. Stopping the Mandarin is priority but it's not...

TONY: "...it's not superhero business...I get it."

COLONEL RHODES: No, it's not, quite frankly. It's American business. *(Tony reacts, puts hand to face. Richard becomes concerned.)* Are you okay?

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GIRL: Are you okay, Mr. Stark?

LITTLE BOY: (*Whispers*) How did you get out of the worm hole?

(*TONY panics, leaves table abruptly, bumping into multiple people as he breathlessly escapes the restaurant.*)

COLONEL RHODES: Tony! Tony!

(*TONY mutters "Suit" as he steps into the superhero suit and it fastens around him. Suit falls to one knee.*)

TONY (to SUIT): Check the heart. Check the ...check the...is it the brain?

SUIT: No sign of cardiac anomaly or unusual brain activity.

TONY: Okay, so it's poison?

SUIT: My diagnosis is that you've experienced a severe anxiety attack.

TONY: Me? [*RICHARD thumps top of suit's head.*]

COLONEL RHODES: Come on, Man. This isn't a good look. Open up.

TONY: Sorry, Man, I've got to split. (*flies straight upward*)

*New scene...*

HARLEY: You know what this crater reminds me of?

TONY: I've no idea. I'm not...I don't care.

HARLEY: A giant wormhole in New York. Does it remind you?

TONY: That's manipulative. I don't want to talk about it.

HARLEY: Are they coming back...the aliens?

TONY: Maybe, can you stop? Remember that I told you that I have an anxiety issue?

HARLEY: Does this subject make you edgy?

TONY: Yeah, a little bit. Can I just catch my breath for a second?

HARLEY: Are the bad guys at Rose Hill? Do you need a plastic bag to breathe into? Do you have medication? ["Nope."] Do you need to be on it? ["Probably."] Do you have

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PTSD? ["I don't think so."] Are you going completely mental? I can stop. Do you want me to stop?

TONY: Remember when I said to stop doing that? I swear, you're going to freak me out. *(They look at each other. Then, TONY rises.)*

TONY: Ah, Man, you did it, didn't you? Are you happy now?

HARLEY: *(calls after TONY as TONY runs away)* What did I say? Hey, wait up. Wait...wait *(as he chases after TONY)*

HARLEY: *(as he catches up with TONY)* What the hell was that? *(TONY, kneeling with head in hands, looks up at BOY, then throws a snowball at him.)*

*(From car)* TONY: Harley, tell me what's happening. Give me a full report.

HARLEY: Yeah, I'm still eating that candy. Do you want me to keep eating it?

TONY: How much have you had?

HARLEY: Two or three bowls.

TONY: Can you still see straight? ["Sort of."] That means you're fine. Give me Jarvis. Jarvis, how are we?

JARVIS: It's totally fine, Sir. I seem to do quite well for a stretch, and then at the end of a sentence, I say the wrong Cramberick. *[TONY reacts as though he does not understand.]* But, Sir, you were right. Once I factored in available ain downling facilities, I was able to pinpoint the Mandarin's broadcast signal.

TONY: What are we talking? Far East? Europe? North Africa? Iran? Pakistan? Syria? Where is it?

JARVIS: Actually, Sir, it's in Miami.

TONY: Okay, Kid, I'm going to have to walk you through rebooting JARVIS' speech drive, but not right now. *(to BOY)* HARLEY, where is he really? Look on the screen and tell me, where is it is.

HARLEY: It does say "Miami, Florida."

TONY: Okay, first things first. I need the armor. Where are we at with it?

HARLEY: Uhh, it's not charging.

*TONY's car's tires screech as he pulls over to the side of the road and panics.*

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JARVIS: Actually, Sir, it is charging but the power source is questionable. It may not succeed in revitalizing 42.

TONY: What's questionable about electricity? It's my suit...and then I can't...I'm not gonna...I don't wanna...Oh, God... (*He breathlessly gets out of car in panic.*)

HARLEY: Tony, are you having another attack? I didn't even mention New York.

TONY: There, you just said it by name while denying having said it.

HARLEY: Okay, umm, uhh ["Oh, God, what do I do?"] Just breathe. Really, just breathe. You're a mechanic, right? ["Right."] You said so. [ "Yes I did."] Why don't you just build something? [TONY stands and says, "Okay."]

TONY: (*as he gets back into car*) Thanks, Kid.

### With movie playing in background...

For Arousal symptoms, we're going to take a look at *Iron Man III*. In *Iron Man III*, Tony Stark, this is his world after what happened in *Avengers* where there was a massive alien attack and he was part of things that he'd never experienced before and didn't understand, even with all of his prior experience being a superhero. And we see that in the very opening, he tells Piper that he's a piping hot mess and that nothing's been the same and he doesn't know what to do. We see that he's experiencing hypervigilance, and this plays out in that he keeps creating more and more different prototypes of the Iron Man suit, that he feels that threat is imminent and that he has to do everything he can to protect the people around him and that includes building the best security system he knows how. He can't sleep; and, in fact, it's not just that he can't sleep but that he is awake almost constantly out of that hyper aroused state. In the next scene, he's meeting with his buddy Colonel Rhodes and there's a new threat and he wants to be a part. He wants to be a part of the solution, and he's doing okay until the kids approach him and ask him for his autograph. And, all of a sudden, they present him with a picture of what happened in New York and the boy asks him about the wormhole. And, all of a sudden, he has a full-blown anxiety attack. Only, that's not what he thinks about because he doesn't think about himself as someone with anxiety and he has to weigh. And his first thoughts are "Is it my heart? Is it my brain? Is it poison? What are all these other things that could possibly be wrong with me? And when he's told that it's an anxiety attack, he goes, "Who, me?" because that is out of his perception of who he is and what someone of his strength would experience. In the next two scenes, we see the interaction in between Tony and Harley. And this is a great example of how symptoms can cascade from one to the other.

If you really watch these scenes, there's pieces of intrusion, pieces of re-experiencing, pieces of anxiety and arousal; and they all kind of go together. But, when we see them together at the bomb site, Harley brings up the word "wormhole" and he starts reminding Tony of what happened before New York. Tony has both a physical and

psychological reaction and that leads into this state of anxiety. And, then in the second scene, what we see is that he's doing okay. You know, he's feeling pretty good. The attack's coming, but that's all right. He has a plan. He's staying steady until he finds out that he won't have his armor and the one thing that he's had that has made him feel safe, that's made him feel protected is no longer available and all of a sudden that sense of anxiety returns. And Harley helps him ground down by reminding him of who he is and that he doesn't need the external thing, he has what he needs internally.