

Effects of Trauma Transcript

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Effects of Trauma

Before we can really get into understanding trauma and traumatic stress we need to understand a few principles that help form that. The first one is fight, flight, or freeze. An easy way to think about that is what we see in nature. Fight or flight came into effect when there was hope for survival. And so the brain would process the threat and it would trigger the autonomic nervous system. In the autonomic nervous system would then trigger the sympathetic which is what releases cortisol and adrenaline and helps you fight whatever's coming or flee from whatever's coming, you know it's going to empty the bladder, it's going to change your heart rate, you get the things were like you have the sweat, and the racing heartbeat, the eyes dilate, the muscles contract, and every single part of your body, the sympathetic nervous system prepares to either run as fast as possible or fight as hard as possible to get away.

The problems that we see, starting, that started with the fight or flight response is that originally in nature, in the wild, you would only see an attack last 45 seconds to a minute max. Most things that happen to us last much longer than that. When we talk about things like chronic trauma or complex trauma were its ongoing and building, that sympathetic nervous system ends up being turned on for very long periods of time and then it doesn't turn off at all.

When we consider the freeze response, it begins in many ways the same way as the fight or flight response does. There's a threat or a perceived threat and the brain considers what its options are. Only in this case, it thinks that there's no hope. That there's no way it is going to be able to get away, no matter how hard it fights or how fast it runs. And so it goes into what is called a freeze. And so this time instead of the sympathetic nervous system being activated the parasympathetic nervous system is activated.

Now the parasympathetic nervous system is what happens at night like when you are going to sleep. When the different hormones are released to help you relax, different painkillers, only this time those same hormones are released in huge quantities. The blood pressure drops. It constricts the amount of blood flow and so that if a person was wounded that there would be less blood released and the body temperature drops. You see almost the exact opposite reaction that you would see in fight or flight and why this is important isn't just understanding the different trauma affects, but why those trauma effects may occur given the situation. Like in children, a lot of times children, when we talk about chronic trauma or complex trauma, they know they can't fight or flight away. There's just no way, and so you will see the freeze response a lot with children and also you will see it with ongoing with adults and chronic trauma, domestic violence situations,

human trafficking situations. When they have had enough experience to know that there is no way out of this.

Now that we have talked about fight, flight or freeze, let's talk about something I'm sure no one in this video has ever experienced, stress. Stress is something we all experience every day and the thing is to understand how stress affects us. The first way stress affects us, it is, affects us physically. And let's think that through. If I told you someone healthy and really doing well took a job and six months later they were taking high blood pressure medicine and they were on migraine medicines and was developing an antacid addiction, what would you think? Stress. If I told you a young person woke up and they were feeling really, really good and they get to school and there's a pop quiz and all of a sudden they have to go throw up, what do you think? Stress.

Stress

We know that stress affects us physically. People get tension in their shoulders and they get headaches and I even love that you can go to Walmart, or CVS, or Walgreens, or wherever you go to pick up your medication and that they have, we even label our medication tension migraine meds. We label it for what causes it. , people get back aches, they get high blood pressure, it affects your blood sugar, it affects your immune system. When people went through finals week, what almost invariably happens after finals week? They get sick. Or you will see someone who works full time and they are just always on and they take a vacation and at the end of the vacation, what happens? They get sick. It's like their bodies finally relaxes and it all hits them. It doesn't just affect us physically but it affects us mentally and emotionally.

I don't know about you but I know when I'm stressed out I'm such an angel of light and joy, my friends and family just want to come hang out with me, right? No. We get irritable, we may get easily emotional, we get forgetful. When you are under a lot of stress that is when you do things you never normally do, right? You forget the keys, you forget the one thing you never forget. So we know that stress affects us physically, and it affects us emotionally and mentally. Well when it does that, when we get irritable, when we get stressed out, when we are feeling bad, what do we do? We try to avoid that pain. No one likes to feel stressed. No one likes those negative emotions. And so, we do things like, we may go shopping. And I am pretty sure I have a friend who has a shoe collection based on her bad days at work. A, we may over eat, some people lose their appetite altogether and under eat. You have the person at work and you know this person at work who has the chocolate stash, right? And that is where everyone goes when they get stressed out is they go to the chocolate stash. And it may be other things that you do, that you try to find a way to let go of the stress. It may be that instead of having that one drink after work with coworkers at happy hour that one drink turns into two drinks or three drinks. Or maybe you quit smoking and all of sudden you start smoking again or smoking more. But we know that stress affects our behaviors.

Stress affects the way we feel physically. Affects the way we feel mentally and emotionally and eventually it will affect our behaviors because you can't have all those emotions and it not affect the way you act and behave. So in addition to there being

three ways that stress affects us physically, mentally, and behaviorally, the other thing is, is we have to look that there are different levels of stress.

There actually is positive stress and we know this that there is that certain level of stress that we actually perform better under and that, it doesn't have a negative effect on our system but it actually gives us just enough to perform better. But then we move into what is called tolerable stress. Tolerable stress is a little different.

Tolerable stress is that stress we experience were untreated or without having the right resources it can turn toxic or even into traumatic stress but if we have the right resources and the rights things that we need, then it's tolerable. Tolerable stress there is that chance of recovery that we're going to come back from that. But then we have what's called toxic stress and this is where you have acute, ongoing, the stress doesn't let up and it's, it's usually a traumatic, a form of traumatic stress and we're going to talk more about that through the training. But the important thing to realize is when that happens that's when we start looking at changes to the architecture of the brain and the long term impacts.

So the important thing to remember is as we are going through and we start talking about trauma and traumatic stress, is how just basic stress affects us. It affects us physically, mentally, emotionally and behaviorally and there's those different levels of stress and that's why at one level of stress you can bounce back quicker than you can at another level of stress.