

## **Extract from: “Stress Management Guide”**

available from [www.hypnoticworld.com/](http://www.hypnoticworld.com/)

### **“What's Going On?”**

So what is stress, and how does it become a problem? Is it always harmful?

Essentially stress is a defence mechanism we share with a great many other species on our planet. When faced with a threat, our brain sends out signals to the body which trigger the release of emergency hormones from the adrenal glands, and prepare us to react to that threat. The heart of the problem is that for most of our time on the planet the threats we faced were physical. A physical threat requires a physical response. If you were faced with a wild beast seeking to turn you into lunch, you essentially had two choices. Either run like mad, or fight the beast off. Both of these responses become more effective if these “stress” hormones (such as cortisol and adrenaline) are flooding your system (The jury's out as to whether they make you any tastier if you come a cropper).

You have more energy available due to increased blood sugar, increased heartbeat and blood pressure flood your brain and body with additional resources. At the same time, bodily functions which are not vital to your immediate survival will be closed down to a greater or lesser degree. These include digestion, immune function and reproduction. I'm sure you can see how this would help. Equally, there are situations in modern society where this response is a good, life saving choice. If you are crossing the road, and a car takes you by surprise you need to get a move on and get out of the way, and not have to devote energy to digesting your sandwich while you're doing it. When you have taken action and made use of the various chemicals released in to your system, your body naturally returns to a balanced state.

### **The Problem**

Things start to go wrong because the brain triggers this response whenever you think you are threatened. It doesn't distinguish between different types of threat. There are many events in the society we now live which “make” us feel threatened, but to which there is no physical response. And, of course, when there is no physical response to be made then these chemicals linger in your body. If this happens occasionally, then they are unlikely to do any harm.

### **Stepping Over The Line**

If, for whatever reason (more later), you are always seeing danger around you, or being threatened by things where no immediate physical response is possible, then you will be constantly releasing these arousal chemicals into your body. Over time, by virtue of not being used up in action, these chemicals will start to produce symptoms. And this is where the line is often crossed into significant harm. The symptoms themselves may appear threatening which will promote more of the hormones which produced them. This will, in turn, produce more symptoms. It is possible the reach a point where the symptoms take

over from the original stressor and this can lead to a vicious circle of self perpetuating problems.”