

DYNAMICS OF STRESS

Stress results from the inability to cope with emotional or physical threats, actual or imagined. When stress occurs, adrenaline is pumped into the body to either fight or flee, dating back to caveman times. Our heart speeds up, blood is diverted away from our limbs to our most vital organs and in essence, we're put in an agitated state, ready for physical action.

Today, it's generally an angry boss, a missed bus, or other emotional situations that cause stress and sets off the same automatic, physical (autonomic) response in us as a saber tooth tiger did in caveman times. Since there's no tiger to fight and there's nowhere to run, we literally stew in our own juices. If we're caught in a traffic jam, most of us don't start physical fights with other drivers or run away from our vehicles. Instead, we often allow ourselves to get upset because we're late, angry or otherwise disappointed with life, and the adrenaline starts to flow, with no physical expression to expel it.



Once in our cells, the adrenaline causes tension in the cell, prompting your cells, your very being to be ready for action of some sort. Yet you sit, all jacked up and nowhere to release the tension-produced adrenaline. The problem with this is that unless you exercise



or otherwise purge the adrenaline, it stays in our cells, which causes us a permanent state of agitation and even cell damage. Being in a permanent state of stress has been linked to heart disease, cancer, ulcers and host of other diseases. It also makes us very unhappy and generally unpleasant to be around. After all, who wants to be around someone who is a constant state of agitation?!

Most of our stress inducers today are the result of emotional decisions we have made about people and situations. Not too many saber tooth tigers chasing us these days. Of course, we may have a physical emergency to deal with that requires us to 'juice up' and deal with it. But most of us stress over bills, relationships, our purpose, world conditions and other aspects of life that are emotional in nature, rather than physical.

That being said, we'll focus on a couple of ways that you can rid yourself of dysfunctional responses to non-physical circumstances that cause you stress. We'll talk about Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and the Zen concept ...