

Yes, Anxiety and Stress Can Adversely Affect Your Brain

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Here it is - another article on how bad stress is for us! It actually should be shouted from the housetops! Stress is bad, so stop it or it will stop you! The anxieties of life are a huge factor in our modern day lives. There's been many an article written about stress, listing symptoms and solutions. It seems as if we're all looking for ways to relieve stress and live in peace. We're all looking for answers. Keep reading you are going to find some answers within these pages.

When we are anxious, no matter how justifiable, our bodies do not receive sufficient oxygen. As our oxygen levels are lowered it becomes very detrimental to our brains. When we are stressed out by school, our children, our responsibilities, our neighbors, the bills, the lack of time to sit and enjoy anything, we have moved onto that merry-go-round going where? We have to ask, "Where am I headed – for healing and health or sickness?" Where are we leading our children – down a path of freedom or bondage?

Let's begin by talking a little bit about the topic of oxygen. So, you think it's obvious just how important oxygen is to your brain? Everyone knows that you can't live without oxygen just like you can't live without light or water. However, our bodies must be in balance and at peace to take up the proper amounts of oxygen and then have the ability to utilize it. When our cells don't get enough oxygen, they degenerate and die. We, as humans, are degenerating and dying, but some of us are doing this faster than others! Why? Perhaps it would help to explain how oxygen affects your body, or rather, how a lack of oxygen affects your body.

In the book, *Stop Aging or Slow the Process Exercise with Oxygen Therapy*, by William Campbell Douglas, MD he wants you to go out, buy an oxygen tank and exercise with it to keep your blood oxygen levels up to a good healthy level, something I don't think most people are quite ready to do! He has some good information to be gained in this book about our blood oxygen levels. Did you know that your blood oxygen level should be at or near 100? Young people, for the most part, have oxygen levels that stay in the 90's. As we age, our oxygen levels tend to get lower; but that doesn't have to be the case. If you don't stress out about everything and stay in peace, it is possible to attain that goal and not have to use an oxygen tank even once!

There are certain things that we do that actually *decrease* our oxygen levels and lower the immune system. One of them is very surprising! It is strenuous exercising. If we exercise vigorously it seems like our oxygen level would go up; it does not. In fact, it acts as a big stressor to our bodies. Exercising in moderation, on the other hand, like walking at a moderate pace for about 15 minutes a day or being on a stationery bicycle, peddling at a moderate pace can increase oxygen levels. A person starting out running a marathon with a blood oxygen level of 92, has a severe drop of over 20 points in their oxygen levels within the first three hours of starting the race and it stays down until the race is completed. It can take days for a marathon runner's oxygen levels to go back up because their body is so stressed. Most athletes engaging in extreme physically stressful sports like marathon runners, boxers, or weight lifters do not, overall, live a long life. There was a report on the news just a few weeks ago stating that most professional athletes do not have a long life expectancy. The low levels of blood oxygen lead to a weakened immune system. This brought to mind what the Bible has to say about doing *all* things in moderation. When our activities, no matter what they may be, are done in moderation, our body can greatly benefit. It is great gain for us to be at peace.

So what else can lower your oxygen levels thus lowering your immune system? Some of these, like strenuous exercising, might surprise you. This is the short list just to give you food for thought. The following activities are oxygen killers: worrying and being anxious, overdoing almost anything, going through a major operation, vaccinations, smoking, or even being in a noisy environment which, of course, includes rock music. We need to throw that last one in here for all the teenagers! For lack of knowledge people are perishing! All of those activities or "happenings" in our lives are very stressful to the body, lowering the oxygen levels, with the potential of cutting our lives short.

Dr. Douglas said in, *Stop Aging or Slow the Process Exercise with Oxygen Therapy* on page 34...

After a rock concert in a smoke-filled room, there's probably not enough oxygen among the kids to keep a debilitated sloth alive...

Did you know that diseases like cancer will thrive in an oxygen starved environment? That's why some recommend taking antioxidants daily. However, we can take all the supplements we want but if we have a compromised immune system those expensive pills and potions will end up in the toilet. Our bodies cannot use them because of the cell membrane rigidity as a result of being worried, anxious, and stressed. Our supplements simply cannot be absorbed well. I will share this with you from my own experience; when I was in this state many years ago, stressed out all the time, my doctor showed me exactly what my cells looked like. He put them up on a big TV screen. Although it was fascinating, as I had never seen my cells before, it was not a pretty picture because they were *not* healthy looking. Although I diligently drank a lot of water every single day and took a ton of supplements, the doctor explained that my cells were unable to take in the nutrients because I was so stressed out all the time. That was the first time I heard the term "cell membrane rigidity". Thankfully I'm not who I used to be nor am I who I'm going to be! This is good news! We are ever-changing!

In the book, *Smart Moves* by Carla Hannaford, Ph.D., there is an amazing chapter on "Fight or Flight". Dr. Hannaford has this to say about the brain and oxygen:

Balanced, aerobic activity, where we don't go beyond our bodies' messages and over secrete endorphins or diminish dopamine, increases oxygen intake, so important to learning (and our health). Carla Hannaford, Ph.D., Smart Moves p193

She says that it is important to learning and our health to increase our oxygen; and there's that statement again about not over doing the exercise. It's just not good to over do anything whether it is good or bad. Physical activity is good for everyone as it increases our oxygen levels. It can help us to learn and think more efficiently. Stress, however, (fear and anxiety) can have big, bad consequences on our health. For one thing it increases cortisol levels, which in turn affects the following body systems:

- *Stress (which includes fear and anxiety) produces upper beta brain waves.*
- *Blood flow decreases to the cerebral cortex especially to the frontal lobes and non-dominant hemisphere causing learning and memory to decrease and can produce incoherency.*
- *The amygdala activates the sympathetic nervous system*
- *Cellular potential decreases and the sensory system goes on hyper alert.*
- *The cortisol that is released supplies energy to muscles, depresses the immune system, breaks dendritic connections and decreases learning and memory*
- *Stress (fear & anxiety) activates the hypothalamus, which triggers the pituitary gland to release adrenocorticotrophic hormones (ACTH) through the blood stream to the adrenal glands.*

Adrenaline then causes these problems:

- *Eyes move laterally to see where the danger is. Pupils dilate.*

- *Breathing becomes fast and shallow.*
- *Heart rate increases. Incoherent heart rate variability pattern occurs.*
- *Digestion slows or stops.*
- *Tendon guard reflex at the back of the knee locks to protect the Achilles tendon, forcing body forward or backwards off balance. This can cause you to walk up on your toes.*
- *Tightened muscles decrease cerebral spinal fluid flow.*
- *Blood pressure rises*
- *Blood flow increases to big muscles, arms and legs. Muscles contract for fight or flight.*

Carla Hannaford, Ph.D., *Smart Moves* p177

By the way, Dr. Hannaford also agrees with the experts about how fear and stress can open us up to disease. She says that when you have

...unresolved emotions where they build up over time into fear, the stress response is stimulated, leaving the system vulnerable to disease and inhibiting the learning process.

She goes on to say that,

...research has found a connection with people and personality types who are unable to express their emotions and the increased chance of cancer and heart disease. p187

In the book, *A More Excellent Way* by Henry Wright, which has personally changed my life, it tells us about all the ways our disobedience, like stressing out every day, has adversely affected our bodies. We've allowed disease to enter through an open door, robbing us of the life we so desire. Here is an excerpt from page 236.

...In the case of allergies we have a combination of less oxygen or too much carbon dioxide coming out of anxiety, ...when we have stress, our heart starts to race; we have repetitive breathing and the respiratory rate increases. We also have potassium levels that have been depleted, and the third stage of an anxiety disorder called the exhaustion stage sets in...

It's in that exhaustion stage that we have the onset of many allergies and begin having problems with either hyper or hypothyroidism. Since a compromised immune system gives you a much greater chance of getting dreaded diseases like cancer, the following information is important.

This is the cancer profile from Pastor Henry Wright that he has found to be true in almost 25 years of research and ministry:

Cancer Profile: *Denies certain strong needs and represses a lot of feelings – shuts down; poor ability to develop and maintain meaningful, long-term relationships without fear; hopelessness and despair; holding resentment; tendency towards self-pity and introspection; unresolved grief from the loss of a love object; getting fired or being rejected in a vocational pursuit.*

You've just heard about a few ways that stress and fear can affect the body like developing disease, premature aging, digestive issues, breathing (i.e. asthma), or thyroid and heart disorders, just to name a few. It's a good idea to check your thoughts and see if any of this rings true in your own life.

Now is a good time to check and see if *any* of the above sounds familiar. Are you holding onto bitterness, self-pity, the "why me?" syndrome; do we have unresolved grief, perhaps a death of a person or the death of a dream?

As a personal testimony I will tell you that I home schooled for a total of 23 years. I recognized, after some of Pastor Henry Wright's good teaching, that I had been entertaining some bitterness and self-pity, "It all falls on me to do – the housework, the bills, the teaching and the directing of the children, the cleaning, the shopping, the

everything!" I quickly repented of that self-pity and bitterness that had built up over the years because it just wasn't going to get done unless I did it! Wow, what peace arrived at my door when I finally just let it all go! I used to proudly tell people that the big "S" on my chest did not stand for "Super Mom" but it stood for "Stressed Out"! That was not much of a testimony, was it!

It would be a good idea to take a look at your children and see if stress, anxiety and fear are a part of their daily lives. If you're not sure whether they are being affected, you can just look for the fruit of stress, allergies, asthma, thyroid problems, retaining heavy metals, a disorganized central nervous system, Candida, parasites, diarrhea, insomnia, eating disorders, etc. (This list is not exhaustive.) Are these things present in their lives? Then some changes are in order.

What causes us to have less stress (fear and anxiety)? Short of living with an oxygen tank and trying to live a more peaceful life, what can we do? Well, thankfully, there is a more excellent way! (I Corinthians 12:31)

The Bible tells us over 365 times, *"Do not fear; do not be anxious about anything; do not worry; do not be dismayed."* There's a reason for that, don't you think? Our bodies just weren't built to take it! It causes us to age before our time and opens us up to all manner of disease. We can already see by the verse in II Timothy 1:7, (For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind) that having no fear or stress in our lives is related to having a sound mind.

There are two things that can be of great help to us: 1. do all things in moderation. 2. there should be an absence of stress, fear, and anxiety in our lives. We will find the peace we are looking for in our obedience to the Word of God. We need to cast all our cares on Him because he cares for us! "Do not fear"; that's what we need for the ability to take in sufficient oxygen and to have a strong immune system. Our brain and body systems will function as they were intended, pulling in all the oxygen they need. Be quick to repent and ask your Heavenly Father to forgive you for not obeying His Word. You tell your children not to play in the street so they won't get hit by a car. Your Heavenly Father has told you not to fear, not to be anxious for anything because He doesn't want your body to get hit with a disease.

Hopefully, by now you have a greater understanding of what is happening with your brain when you are anxious. Perhaps you have a clearer picture as to why your immune system may be in need of help.

The Bible does *not* say, "You are what you eat"; but it does say in *Proverbs 23:7*, *"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."* It is important to examine your own life, taking your thoughts captive, making sure that you're not anxious and worried, being obedient and following "Your Maker's Instruction Book" thus increasing your ability to live a long, healthy life as God intended. If we are obedient and at peace, if our children are obedient and at peace, our immune systems will be strong; our bodies will automatically take in all the oxygen they need and will be healthier. Our brains, the brains of our children will have the ability to function optimally; we can live in peace and in health. How wonderful is that!

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