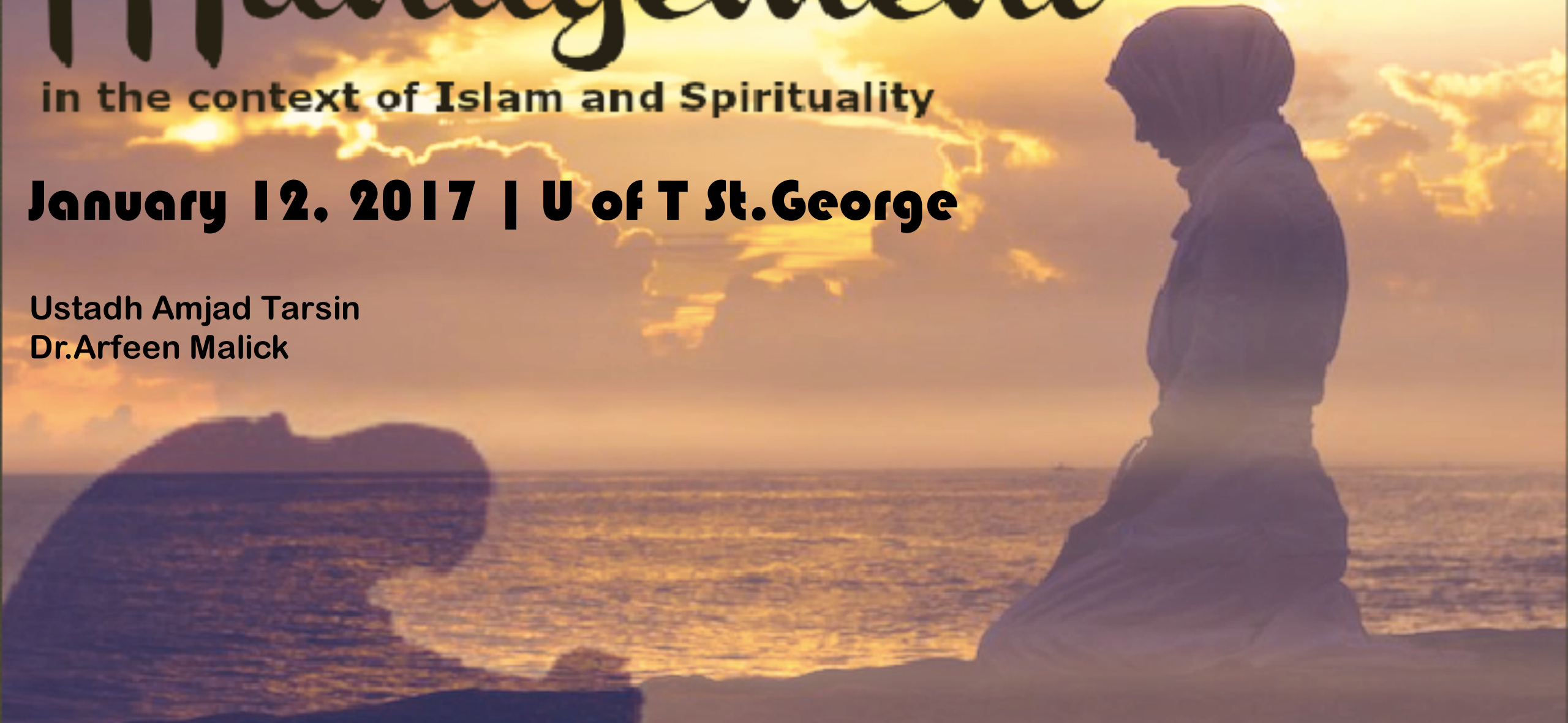


Success in Management

in the context of Islam and Spirituality

January 12, 2017 | U of T St. George

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Dr. Arfeen Malick





Inspiring Muslim Minds



- An Educational Health Initiative by the **Muslim Medical Association of Canada** (www.muslimmeds.ca) established in 2014
- Evidence based Muslim mental health education and resources to the community in the context of spirituality and religion across the GTA
- Panel members include a **Muslim mental health professional alongside a spiritual leader.**
- Objectives:
 - 1) To bring together and **strengthen connections** between health care providers, organizations, individuals with lived experience, students, spiritual leaders and researchers working with Muslim mental health issues in Canada
 - 2) To **provide psychoeducation** to the general public on mental health topics in the context of spirituality and Islam
 - 3) To **decrease the stigma** of mental illness within the Muslim community
 - 4) To **increase access** to mental health resources to the Muslim community

Annual Canadian Muslim Mental Health Conference – University of Toronto – Stay tuned for 2018



What is Mental Health?

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** defines mental health as:

“... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can **cope** with the normal stresses of life, can work **productively** and **fruitfully**, and is able to make a **contribution** to his or her community.”

What is Stress?

- Stress can be defined as the brain's response to any demand.
- Many things can trigger this response, including change.
- Changes can be positive or negative, as well as real or perceived.
- Changes can be mild and relatively harmless, such as winning a race, watching a scary movie, or riding a rollercoaster.
- Some changes are major, such as marriage or divorce, serious illness, or a car accident.
- Other changes are extreme, such as exposure to violence, and can lead to traumatic stress reactions.

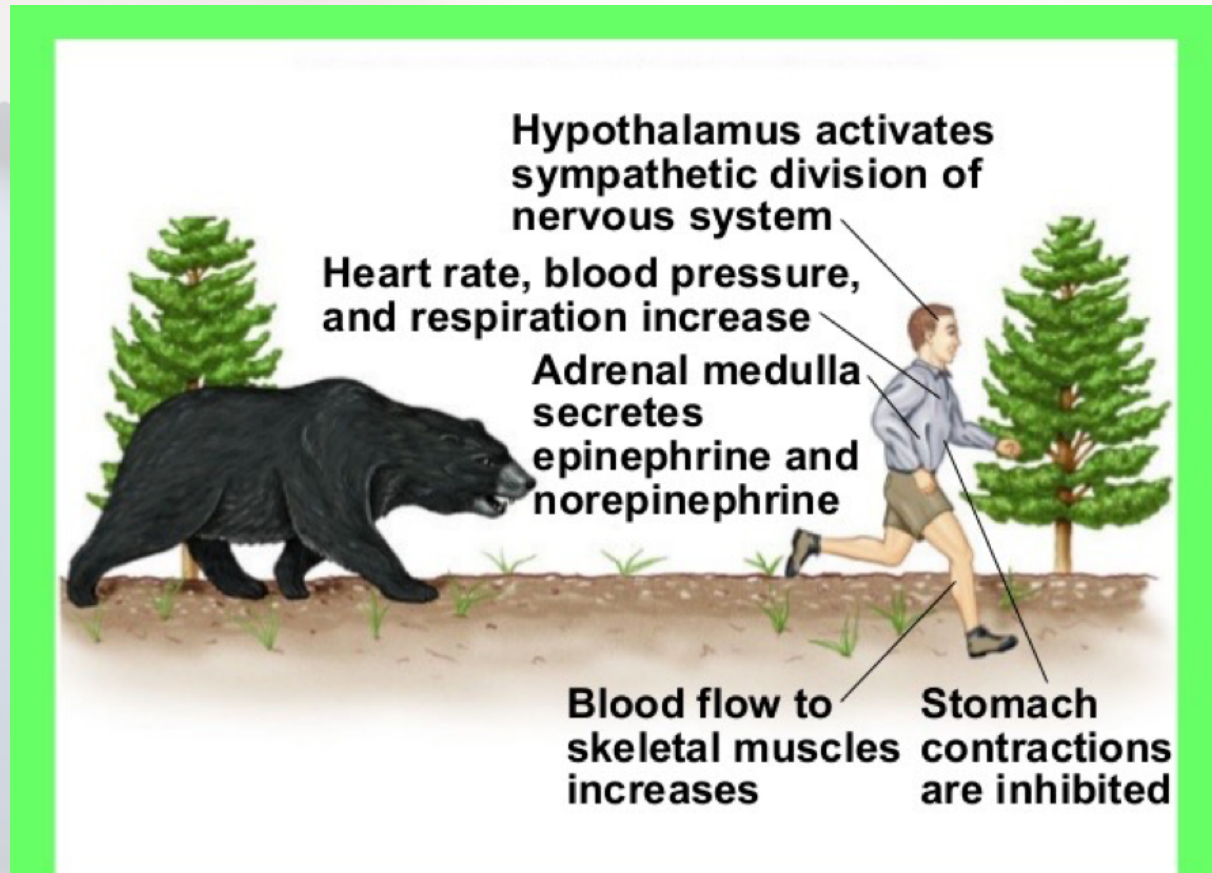
What are Stressors?

"And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits; and give good news to the patient" (Noble Qur'an, 2:155)

How does stress effect your body?

What is Stress?

Adaptive – Life-saving in a fearful situation so we can run to safety. All body functions are aimed at survival.



Stress

Maladaptive - if it is prolonged (chronic), if the stress response occurs in non-threatening situations, or if the stress response continues **AFTER** the threat has subsided.

How can stress effect your body?

The Effects of Stress on the Body

Brain becomes more alert

- Stress hormones can effect memory and cause neurons to atrophy and die.
- Headaches, anxiety, and depression
- Disrupted sleep

Respiratory Rate Increases

Digestive system slows down.

- Mouth ulcers or cold sores

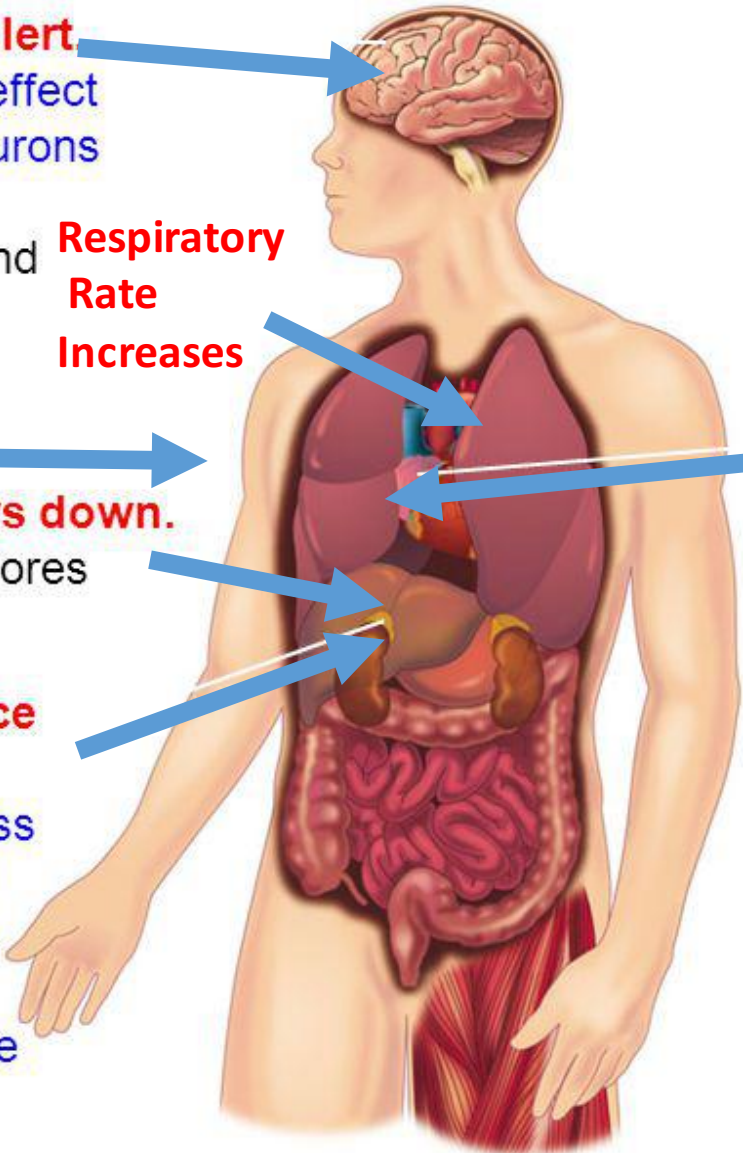
Adrenal glands produce stress hormones.

- Cortisol and other stress hormones can increase central or abdominal fat.
- Cortisol increases glucose production in the liver, causing renal hypertension.

Heart rate increases and blood pressure rises.

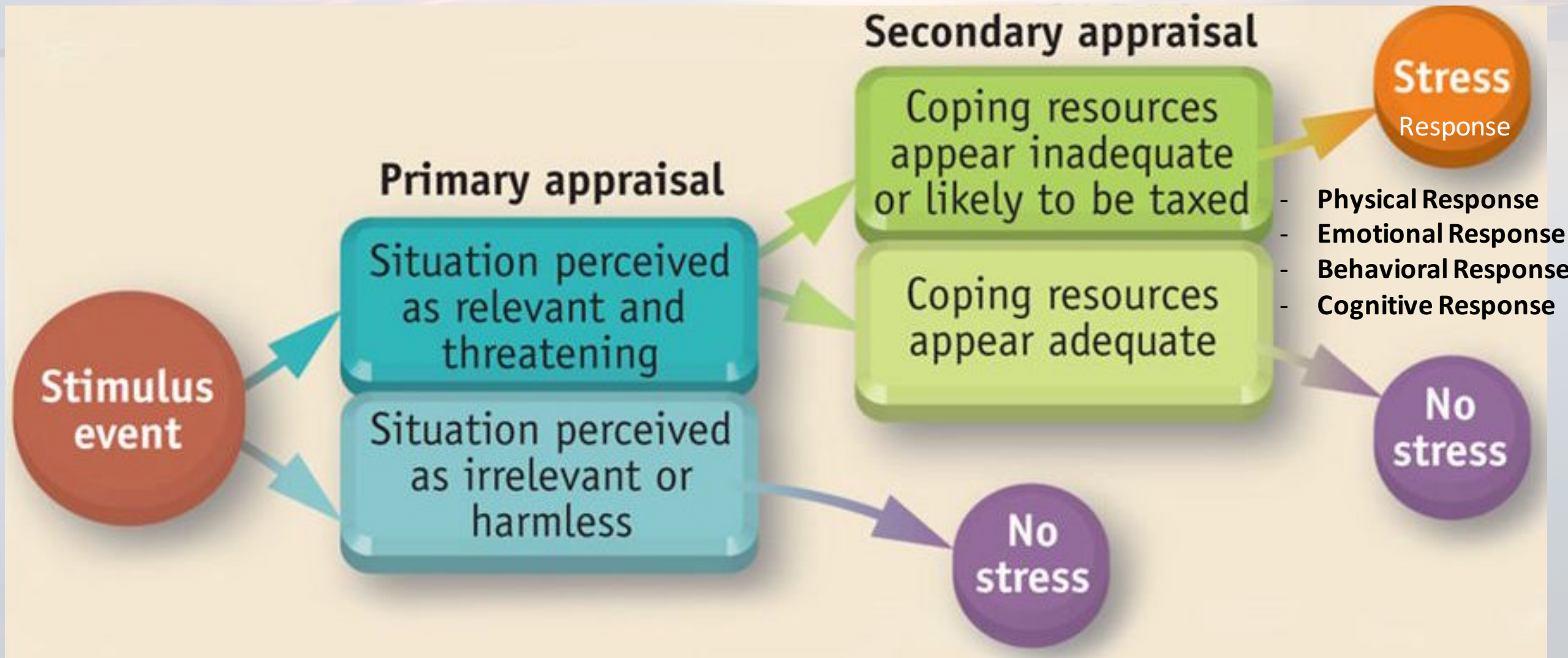
- Persistently elevated blood pressure and heart rate can increase potential for blood clotting and risk of stroke or heart attack.
- Weakening of the heart muscles and symptoms that mimic a heart attack

Decreased Immune Response – Increase risk of Infections



Stress Management is NOT
about what the stressor is, it
is about how you VIEW and
RESPOND to the stressor

What is Stress?



Appraisal of Stressors

- Appraisal/Beliefs
 - Perceived importance of stressor (primary)
 - Perceived capacity to cope with stressor (secondary)
- Your appraisal is a major way to regulate your stress response

Primary Appraisal: Beliefs about Stressors

- Viewing Stressors as:
 - Challenges vs Threat
 - Stressor viewed as a **challenge** = person becomes focused and problem solves
 - Stressor viewed as a **threat** = person activates stress response
 - Chronic vs Acute
 - Worst stressors are chronic stressors that are seen as a threat

Common Pattern of Beliefs about Stressors:

- Minimizing/Magnification
- Mental Filter: Selective Attention or Selective Recall
- All or nothing thinking
- Mind reading
- Fortune Telling
- Personalization

Secondary Appraisal about Stressors:

- Overestimating what it will take to cope with a stressors
- Underestimating personal ability to cope
- Underutilizing supports
- Instead think:
 - What resources are needed?
 - What can I do?

Stress Management is NOT
about what the stressor is, it
is about how you VIEW and
RESPOND to the stressor

1. How do you view stressors?
2. How do you respond to stressors?

Hypothetical Exercise:

If you receive a poor evaluation at
work or school

1. How do you view what happened immediately?
2. How would you respond to stressors immediately?

Religion and Stress

- Study : Regular Religious Attendance = Increased life expectancy of about 7 years (similar to effect of exercise).

HOWEVER only if:

- A person understands their stressors as:

a) **Internal Locus of Control** - events in our life can be impacted by our actions (vs External Locus of Control - where people think Allah (swt) controls everything and they have no power over their life - worse health outcomes)

b) **Optimistic Outlook**

Religion and Stress

Religious involvement —> does not mean you have better health outcomes

Religious involvement that leads to:

- a) Healthy behaviors
- b) Social Support (faith communities)
- c) Positive emotions/hope/optimism

= Better Health Outcomes

Response to Stressors

1. Problem focused vs Emotion Focus

- Problem focused coping mechanism- good when you do have control over the situation
 ex. Stressed about an exam —> study
- Emotion focused - good when you don't have control over the situation
 ex. Stressed about an exam you have already studied for —> manage your emotions

"Verily Allah does not change
men's condition unless they
change their inner selves"
(Quran 13: 11).

Response to Stressor

2. Perceived Control

- Study: If a person thinks they have no control over their stressors they have worse health outcomes
- There is a balance in Islam between internal and external locus of control
- Do your best and then leave the rest in Allah (swt)'s hands

Response to Stressor

3. Explanatory Style - Explanations of “Why things happened”

- Hypothetical event: Your boss fires you. This event happened because?

- Common misinterpretations: Allah (Swt) is punishing me

Beliefs about Stressor

3. Explanatory Style - Explanations of “Why things happened”

Optimistic vs Pessimistic

- Optimistic people had better control over their stressors, were better able to cope - led to better mood and better physical health
- Pessimistic people - earlier death outcomes

(Tindie et al 2009, APS)

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

According to a recent University of California – “New Scientific Strategies for Managing Stress”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3e4IxBSRhrU>

- 1) Realistic Goals
 - 2) Notice blessings and be thankful
 - 3) Acts of Kindness
 - 4) Reframing negatives
 - 5) Acknowledge personal strengths
- All things we have in our faith already!!

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

1. Consciousness of Allah (swt) in Acts of Devotion

- Positive Affect
- Optimism
- Salat
 - “Reflection” /”Catharsis” – dua
 - Talk therapy - dua

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

1. Consciousness of Allah (swt) in Acts of devotion
 - Dhikr – “Remember be and I will remember you”
 - Mindfulness/Meditation
 - Jumuah Khutba
 - Weekly reflection, Weekly Naseeha/
Advice/Counselling

"... without doubt in the remembrance (Dhikr) of Allah do hearts find tranquility"
(Quran 13:28).

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

2. Social Support

Good social support - better coping with stress, lower BP, better health outcomes, heal faster, and live longer

- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues
- Masjid Friends
- Pets – study suggests improve health and happiness

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

3. Realistic Goals

Placing trust in the ultimate Provider **and** Putting in an Effort

"And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish His purpose. Verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion (Quran 65:3).

"Verily Allah does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves" (Quran 13: 11).

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

4. Gratitude

- Dhikr – Alhamdulillah
 - Notice Blessings and be grateful
 - Reflect on times when you have had a clogged nose
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Usually we don't notice how on small thing can impact our ability to breath

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

5. Acts of Kindness

- In every moral code
- Recent research suggests that kindness may improve resiliency by promoting feelings of happiness and peace and supporting immunity.
- Feed forward mechanism
- "When you **smile** to your brother's face, it is charity." - Sunan al-Tirmidhî
- Research – smiling – releases neurotransmitter to help feel more relaxed and happy

Strategies for Alleviating Stress

5. Turning negatives around/ Reframing

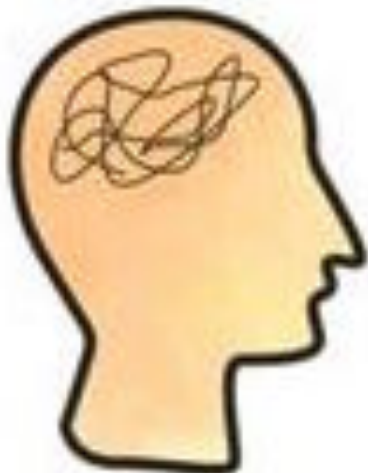
- Sometimes we use our limited human faculties and view stressors as threats, however we are not able to comprehend wisdom behind what happens to us and to others, and this stressor we perceive as a threat may actually be something we find is positive later in life.

Strategies for Alleviating Stress



6. Sabr

'Sabr'
is **NOT** remaining QUIET
and allowing ANGER
to build up inside you.
Sabr is to talk about
what's **bothering** you
without losing control of your emotions.
- Ust. Nouman Ali Khan -



- Often translated as patience but it is **not** just that.
- It includes self-control, perseverance, endurance, and a focused **struggle to achieve one's goal.**
- Unlike patience, which implies resignation and passivity, the concept of Sabr includes a duty to remain steadfast to achieve your goals despite all odds.
- Patience helps us keep our mind and attitude towards our difficulties in check.

**When might someone need
professional help?**

Are stress/worries taking control of you?

Or

Are you in control of the stress/worries?

When might someone need professional help?

1. **Functional impact:** Unable to go to work/school, Unable to live “normally”
2. **Stress that results in 6 months or more of:** Poor Sleep, Fatigue, Feeling Restless, Irritability, Poor Concentration, Muscle tension
3. **If multiple other domains** are impacted:
 - Appetite
 - Mood (ability to feel content)
 - Negative thoughts (worthlessness, guilt)
 - Thought of no longer being alive/returning to Allah (swt) *seek medical attention*

Anxiety Management

Combined Approach works best:

1. Assess your level of stress, your view of stressors and your coping skills
2. Psychological: Talk therapy – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (12-16 sessions, practical evidence based treatment)
3. Spirituality: Counselling, Dhikhr, Prayer, Qu'ran, Halaqa
4. Develop positive coping skills: Exercise, Regular Sleep Schedule, Social supports

These slides are not meant to replace the advice of a medical professional.

If you have a specific medical concerns please seek advise of a medical professional.



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