



Stress & Resilience:

Nutrition & Lifestyle Tools

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- When you feel stressed where do you feel it in your body?
 - How does your behaviour / emotions change?
 - What makes the stress better?
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Stress is inevitable

We can't always control the external world but
can control how we respond to things



What do we mean by Stress?

A physiological and psychological response to demands, on the body – threat to survival

There are many different stressors – environmental, physical (sleep deprivation, infections etc), psychological (mental or emotional challenges)

Our thoughts are the most common propagator of chronic stress



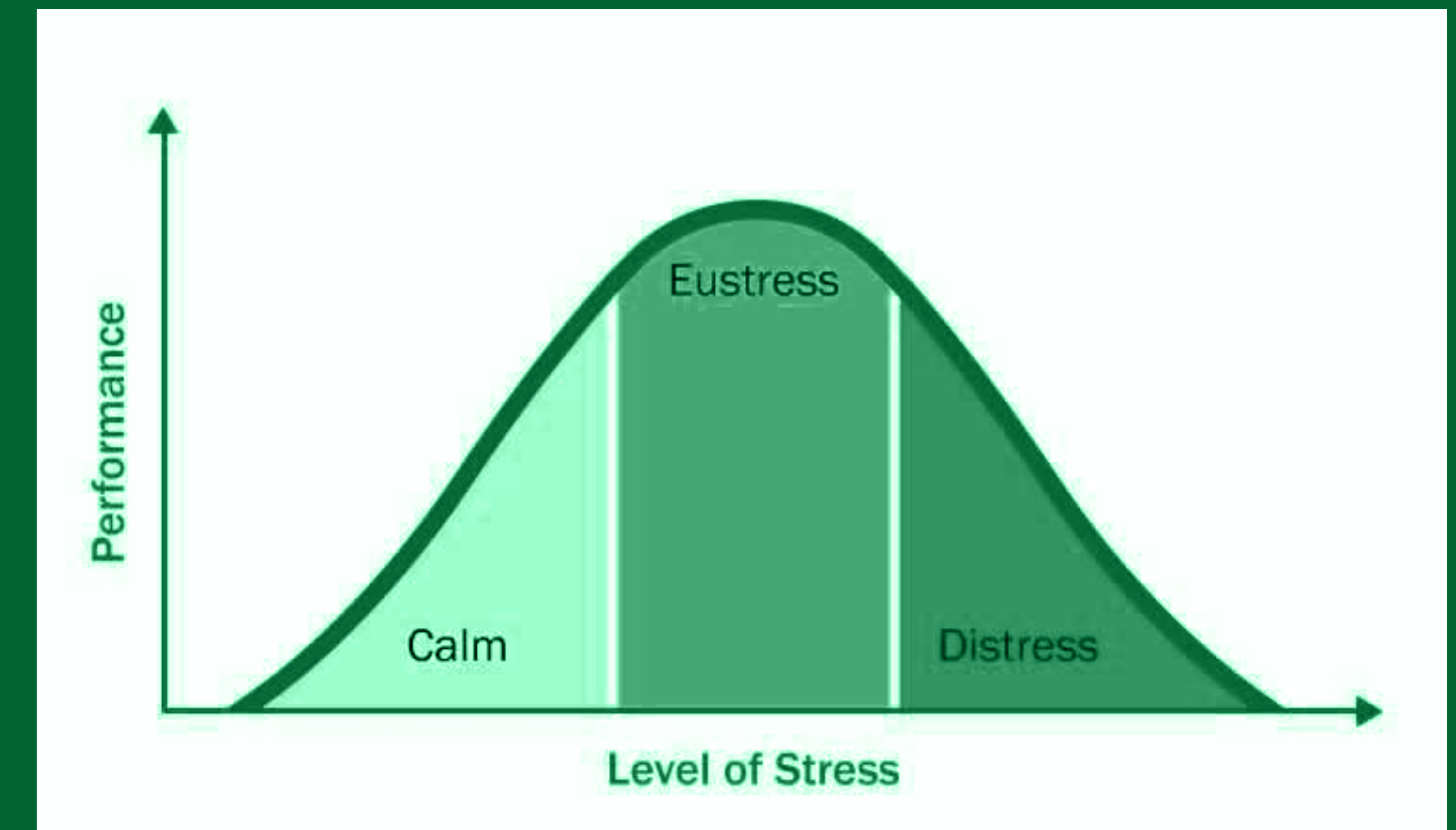
Different Forms of Stress

Stress can be beneficial and problematic depending on the type, context, etc.

Acute stress response: every cell and hormone is undergoing a stress response to allow us to increase capacity, energy and focus

Moderately stressful events take days or months – here it's important to notice whether you are coping acutely with something or whether you can take time to restore

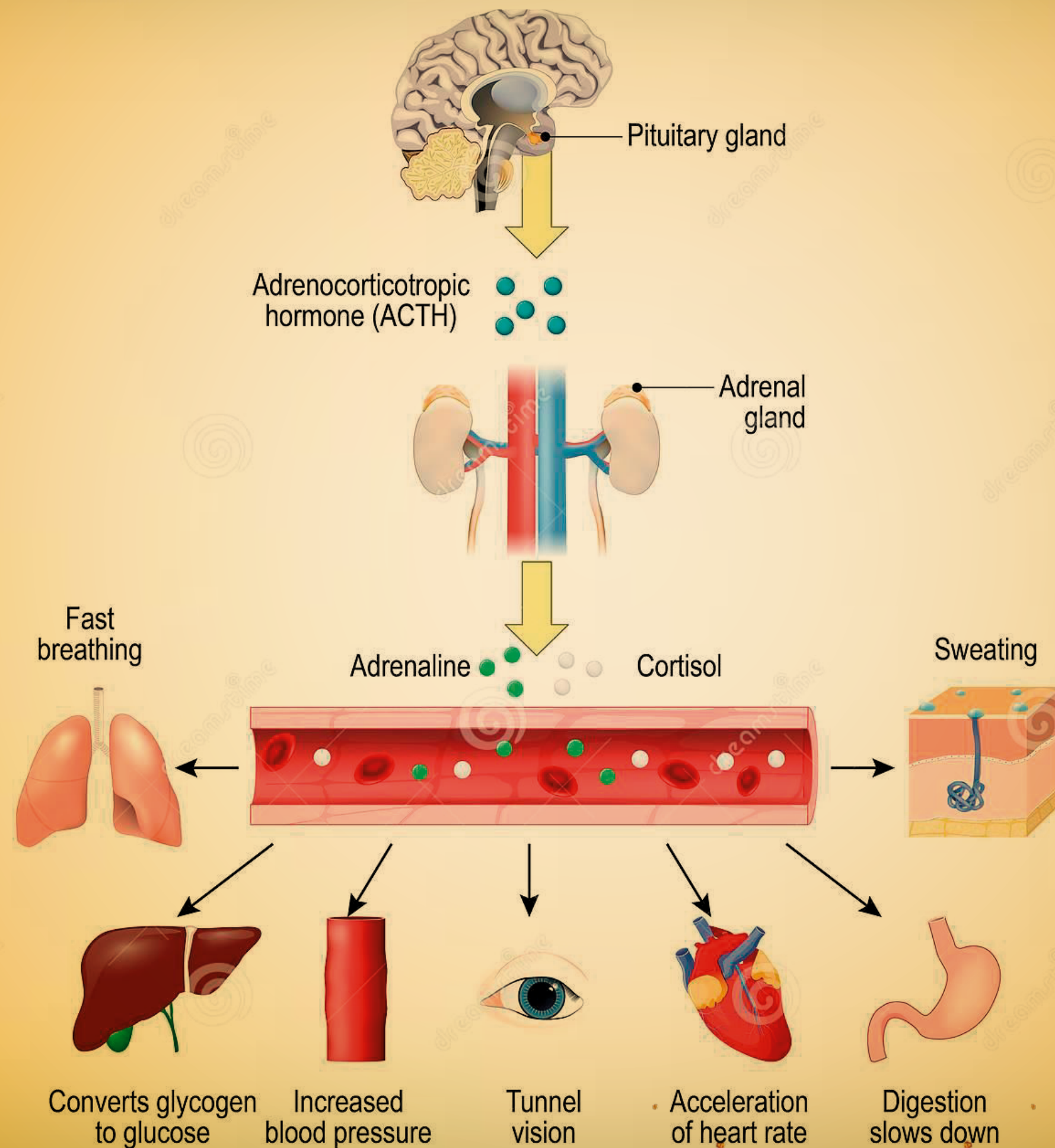
Chronic stressful situations go on for years and maybe can't be changed, such as caregiving



Toxic, chronically, unmitigated stress will accelerate aging – but – a life with no stress will also induce rapid aging and reduced cognitive health (because of lack of stimulation)

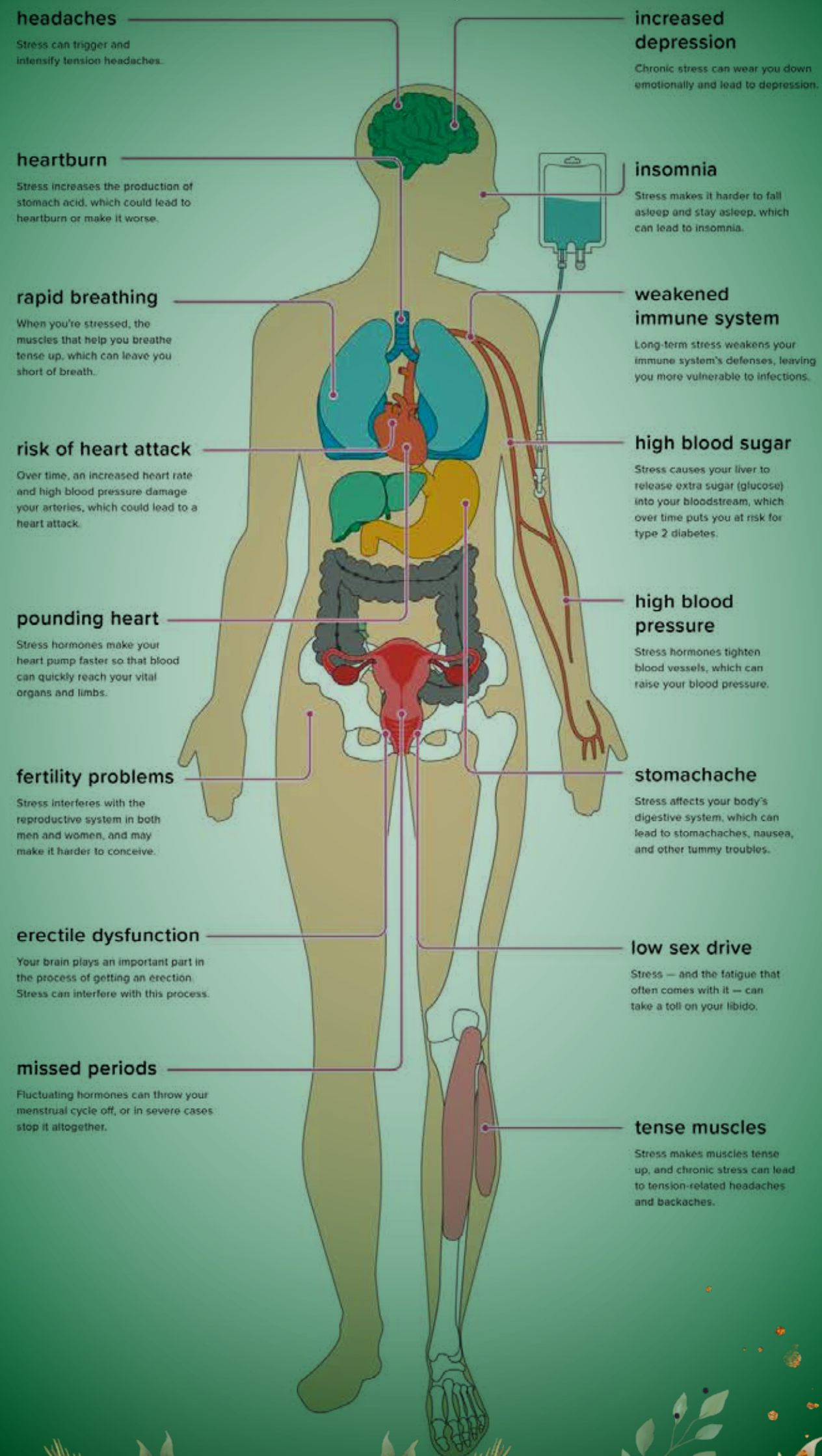
Stress Response

Involves the brain, nervous system, and the adrenal glands (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal) axis.



We switch on our Fight, Flight or Freeze survival mode (sympathetic vs parasympathetic)

When we are in Survival mode - energy is diverted and parasympathetic shuts down



Signs & Symptoms of Stress



Emotional & Cognitive



Physical Symptoms



Behavioural Symptoms

Stress makes you:


- Less empathic
- Less tolerant
- Less willing to take another person's perspective



What Determines Our Response to Stress?

Genetics

- Childhood Experiences
- Trauma
- Diet and Nutritional Status
- Gut Health
- Sleep, Rest
- Support structure
- Mindset
- Ability to dissipate stress
- Hormone levels!!!

1. The novelty of the event
 2. The unpredictable nature of the event
 3. A perceived threat to our body or ego
 4. A sense of loss of control
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Using Diet to Mitigate the Effects



Stress & Eating Behaviours

Overeaters (more common): stress response drives cravings and insulin resistance state, people can't control eating and think about food a lot

Under eaters: highly sympathetic, digestive system shuts down, more alertness and arousal

This can make nourishing our body more complicated.

Cortisol promotes fat storage, particularly in the abdominal area which can be harder to shift making a focus on diet more vital





Nutritional Demands of Stress

**Protein (esp
Tyrosine)**

**Antioxidants
(combating
Oxidative Stress)**

Electrolytes

**Omega 3 fatty
acids**

**Mitochondrial
support**

**Digestive
support**

**Nutrients for
adrenal function**

Adaptogens





Omega 3 Fats and Stress

- Chronic stress is pro inflammatory
- Omega 3 fatty acids reduce inflammation and improve receptor health
- **Studies have shown omega 3 fatty acids can improve resilience to stress**
- Aim for around 600mg EPA / 400mg DHA minimum. At least 1g fish oil daily



Nourishing the Gut

A growing body of research is indicating how our gut microbiome improves stress resilience and mood

- ✓ **Via vagus nerve**
- ✓ **Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA axis)**
- ✓ **Production of neurotransmitters and SCFA**

Use of Psychobiotics - Bifidobacterium longum, Lactobacillus acidophilus Rosell-52, Lactobacillus casei and L. plantarum

Butyrate – modulates HPA, Reduces anxiety and depression-like behaviours





Adrenal Supportive Nutrients

Vitamin D – lowers high cortisol, immune modulator

Egg yolks, oily fish, organ meats
Supplement at least 1000IUS

Magnesium – depleted with stress response

Leafy greens, cacao, wholegrains, nuts, seeds

B Vitamins (esp B5 and B6) improves resilience

Mushrooms, fish, avocados, eggs, chicken, red meat, liver, sunflower seeds, sweet potatoes, lentils.

Vitamin C – reduces high cortisol after intense stress (e.g exercise)

Kiwi fruit, peppers, berries, leafy greens, citrus

Zinc – important for mood, anxiety

Seafood, meat, nuts and seeds, poultry

Phosphatidylcholine & Phosphatidylserine –
HPA / Cognitive health

Organ meats, oily fish, soy products

Electrolytes and Hydration

- **Electrolytes** are involved in the transmission of electrical signals between nerve cells.
- Elevated cortisol levels can promote electrolyte imbalances which can worsen stress responses & symptoms (e.g blood pressure, cardiovascular health).
- **Critical to maintain proper electrolyte balance and hydration**



Caffeine & Alcohol

Both may exacerbate the stress response

- Caffeine can spike stress hormones, which can increase anxiety and interfere with sleep. Good options are to switch to Rooibos or Green tea (L theanine)
- Alcohol disrupts blood sugar & neurotransmitter balance. Inhibits various enzymes which are needed to break down stress hormones. Depletes B vitamins and vitamin C and reduces sleep quality





Lifestyle Tools

- Sleep and rest
- Movement
- Breath work
- Being in nature
- Yoga / Qigong / Tai Chi
- Prayer/meditation/mindfulness
- Neurofeedback/EMDR Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
- Social connections
- Practicing gratitude by recognizing and writing down small things you're thankful for can have a positive effect on the serotonin system, which can help reduce long-term stress



Managing Emotional States

- **When we constantly live in survival stress mode, it can result in harmful / negative thoughts, emotions and behaviours**
- **Cognitive reframing or positive thinking** – Shift your mental attitude, you can influence how you perceive stressors which reduces their impact.
- **Meditation & Mindfulness** - becoming aware of our unconscious patterns and choosing how we want to think, feel and act
- enables us to disconnect from stress and external distractions.



Social Connection

- **Social connection mitigates long-term stress via leveraging chemicals like serotonin / oxytocin which have positive effects on the immune system and connections in the brain**
- **Support networks at work and in personal life are crucially important for health and resilience**



Don't Wait For A Crisis

The hardest part about change is not making the same choices you made the day before.

Don't wait until stress becomes overwhelming!

Changing behaviours (includes diet and lifestyle), emotions and thoughts enables you to be more resilient to stress now and longer term