

## HOW FEAR AFFECTS THE BODY

“Even relatively short periods of stress may cause changes that leave brain cells hypersensitive for weeks, reports Israeli scientists trying to uncover the molecular root of post-traumatic stress disorder.” Washington (Associated Press) September 2001.

“Pregnant women who often feel stressed out could be programming their fetuses’ nervous systems for heightened reactions to stress and a greater lifetime risk of heart attacks, scientists reported over the weekend.” San Diego (USA Today) March 1999

We all know by now the negative effects of fear, stress and anxiety to our bodies. Angina, arrhythmias, asthma, allergies, high blood pressure, irritable bowel, tension headaches, strokes, impotence, insomnia, diabetes, prostatitis, malabsorption and eczema are but a few of the many diseases known to be stress-related. Doctors are only now starting to study this mind/body connection, calling this new field Psychoneuro-immunology. The aim of these researchers is to nail down the physical and molecular underpinnings of emotions and disease, using the latest medical technology, looking inside the brain, at hormones and at the immune system for answers.

But, what about the spirit? We are a triune being. We are a spirit. We have a soul. We live in a body. Our SOUL consists of our mind, will, memories and emotions. Our SPIRIT consists of our conscience and intuition (knowing right from wrong) and our BODY is the mobile home for our soul and spirit.

**1 Thes. 5:23 - And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Fear, stress and anxiety are not merely psychological defects but tribulations of the soul. The so-called holistic approach treats the “whole” patient, but how well do they understand man’s spirit and soul from God’s perspective?

Your enemy, however, understands our packaging quite well. He has made a study of God’s creation for a long time. He knows about our mind/body/soul connection. He knows that we are only sustained in health and sanity to the degree that we match up to the nature of the living God. He knows that by controlling our thoughts, he then can control our biology.

So, if Satan has made a study of creation, it’s time for creation to start understanding what really makes us tick. Part of that is discerning exactly how he uses fear, stress and anxiety to break down our bodies.

In order for our bodies to maintain all of its systems, the hypothalamus gland in the brain works to regulate factors so that we remain at a state of homeostasis. For instance, our blood pressure should normally be 120/80, our resting heart rate should be around 60 to 80 beats per minute and our body temperature should be around 98.6. Everything is at a remarkably set point and does not vary much from day to day. To achieve this homeostasis, the hypothalamus must receive input about the state of the body and make compensatory changes if anything goes out of whack.

The autonomic nervous system regulates the activity of cardiac muscles, smooth muscles and glands. When a fearful thought triggers the hypothalamus, it signals the autonomic nervous system, which in turn affects our heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, sweating, etc. The body is ready for fight or flight. This is why our hearts may race, our hands may get sweaty and our knees might buckle when a test, a bully or an equally stressful situation confronts us.

There is a time for rest and a time for action. Fight or flight is normally a short-term response. But if a stressor is not removed and this fight or flight mechanism is extended beyond its normal time frame, the body will start breaking down. The medical profession calls this the General Adaptation Syndrome.

When a person is continually not feeling safe and having fearful thoughts, the body will be in a continuous state of fight or flight, leaving no time for rest, recovery and bodily repair. When the body can no longer maintain its homeostasis, sickness will result.

**For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. Proverbs 23:7**

Yes, doctors will tell you that stress kills, but what do they do offer to counter it? Perhaps they may prescribe an anti anxiety drug or suggest stress management courses. New agers might look towards yoga, biofeedback or various other relaxation responses. But, are these godly solutions?

**For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. [14] They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Jeremiah 6:13-14**

Man may offer up a false peace, one that might have a slight healing effect. Jesus Christ, however, offers a peace that the world cannot understand, bottle or dispense. Jesus, not Prozac, is the Prince of Peace.

**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27**

Just as fear can put you into fight or flight, God's provisions can bring you into peace. His gift of perfect peace belongs to those whose minds are fixed on Him. Staying your mind on Him and not on projected failures, visiting mother-in-laws and other insecurities, will bring your body back to homeostasis.

**Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:  
because he trusteth in thee. Isaiah 26:3**