

Module 3

Stress Management

Module 3 : Stress Management

Learning Objectives / Topics

Unit 1

Understanding my brain - Siegel Hand Model

Unit 2

What is stress ?

Unit 3

How to deal with stress ?

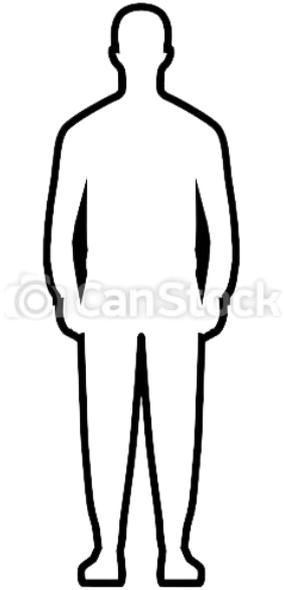
Objectives



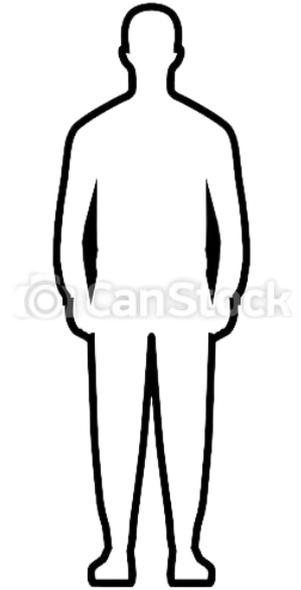
1. Know the functions of the major brain regions
1. Understand how our brain reacts in situations assessed as stressful
1. To become aware of the importance of calming down and controlling oneself in stressful situations.

Unit 1

Understanding my brain - Siegel Hand Model



What is stress ?



1. Draw a silhouette on a paper
2. Visualize where do you feel signs of stress when are very stressed

SIEGEL HAND MODEL

The Reptilian Brain



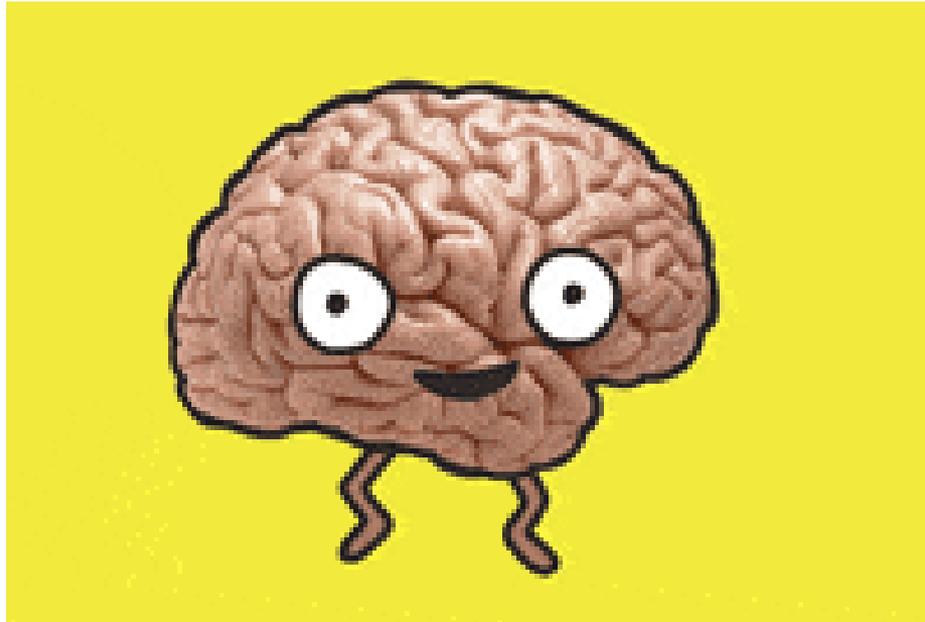
248 to 206 million years ago, the brainstem formed what some call the “reptilian brain”.

This part that is closest to your spine and near the base of your skull is called the ***brain stem*** and is shared with reptiles

This system of the brain is responsible for the most **basic survival functions**, such as heart rate, breathing, body temperature, and orientation in space. It regulates **automatic responses**, determining, for example, if we are hungry or satiated, driven by sexual desire or relaxed with sexual satisfaction, awake or asleep.



**Limbic area
or
“Emotional Brain”**

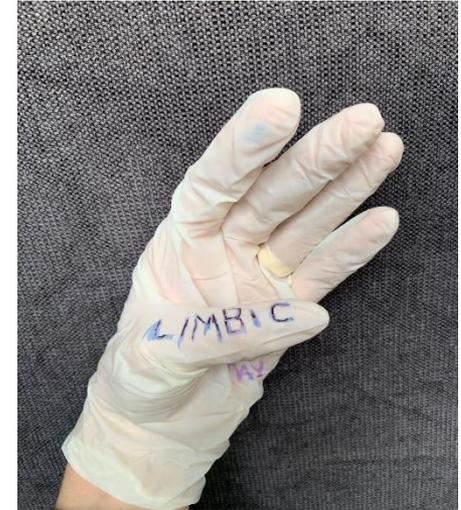


This “old mammalian brain” evolved when small mammals first appeared around 206-144 million years ago. It is shared with older mammals = dogs, cats, mice.

The middle part of your brain can be considered a sort of “center house” for our emotional experiences, is where you process emotions and store your memories (*hippocampus*).

The limbic regions evaluate our current situation. “Is this good or is this bad?”: we move toward the good and withdraw from the bad (*amygdala*). It determines whether a stimulus is perceived as a threat or is relevant to survival, and activates the body’s stress response, or not, accordingly.

The connection between the brain stem and the limbic system leads the fight – flight-freeze responses.



Cortex or “new mammalian” brain



It began to develop 55 -24 million years ago. We share it with monkeys and chimpanzees.

It is where we regulate logic and thought required for complex social situations. It allows us to have ideas and concepts and to develop the mindsight maps that give us insight into the inner world.

On the other hand, It allows us to recognize our physical experience, generating our perceptions of the outer world— through the five senses— and also keeping track of the location and movement of our physical body through touch and motion perception.

From the neocortex we will also plan our motor actions and control our voluntary muscles.



PFC (Prefrontal Cortex)



The prefrontal cortex (specific to human beings) helps us **set and achieve goals**. It receives input from multiple regions of the brain to process information and adapts accordingly.

It contributes to a wide variety of executive functions, including: focusing one's attention and motivation, predicting the consequences of one's actions; anticipating events in the environment, impulsive control, **managing emotional reactions**, coordinating and adjusting complex behaviours ("I can't do A if B happens")

The PFC enables us to **pause before we act**, have insight and **empathy**.



Cortex

- Regulate logic and thought
- Recognize our physical experience

Pre-frontal cortex

- Setting and achieving Goals
- Focusing attention and motivation
- Controlling impulses, managing emotional reactions
- Have empathy

Emotional Brain

- The place of our emotional experiences
- Allows us to store memories
- "Is this right or wrong?"

Reptilian brain

- Responsible for survival functions
- Regulates automatic responses



* Importance of being aware of our body's signs that indicate we are perceiving a situation as a threat and we are about flip our lid.

* when we flipped our lid we are not in a physiological condition to take any kind of decision or to connect with other person.

Unit 2

What is stress ?

What happens when we are stressed?



Flipping our lid!

That means that we have perceived a sound, image, or body sensation as a **threat** and our **brain activated the body's stress response** in order to prepare us for **fight, flight or freeze**.

The prefrontal cortex shuts down and no longer works with the rest of our brain.

In that moment we do no longer have access to all of high competencies such as problem solving skills, empathy, ability to put things into perspective, managing emotional reactions, inhibition...

Reptilian brain and limbic area take over our analytical and empathetic thinking.

At that time you are not in a physiological condition to take any kind of decision or to connect with other person. So avoid say something you'll regret...

How can we regain control and better cope with stressful situation?

UNIT 3

How to deal with stress ?

Our "good practices" to manage stress



Please write on a paper what you have found helpful to calm or re-gather yourself when you felt you were about lose control.

All of these actions will help you **reconnect the prefrontal cortex** with the limbic area and the reptilian brain

When you feel yourself flipping your lid, you can think about this model and how to **help your brain** calm down”.

As soon as you are relaxed, **your brain are integrated**, you will again have access to your higher functions such as control planning, attention, impulsive control and empathy.

Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. It is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that **is appraised** by the person as **exceeding** his or her **resources** and **endangering** his or her well being.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

Thinking

Emotion

Behavior

Challenge

Enthusiasm
Motivations
Envy

Creativity
Proactivity
Cognitive openness

Threat

Irritability
Fear
Anxiety

Avoidance
Escape
Attack
Cognitive closure

Your turn !



My resource, yesterday and today

Step by Step Activity:

1. Think of a **current situation that is stressing you** out regarding the future
2. Place yourself in the room according to your **level of stress** about this situation: 0 being "no stress", and 10 being "a lot of stress".
3. **Share your situation** with the rest of the group.
4. **Draw this stressful situation** - and represent yourself in the drawing.
5. Identify **one internal resource you think would be helpful** in dealing with this situation (*ex courage*).
6. Now think and try to find **a moment in your life where you have used this resource**.
7. Take a second sheet of paper, and **draw this past situation**
8. Take a third sheet of paper, and **imagine yourself dealing with the stressful situation identified at the beginning** of this activity but this time, using the internal resource (*courage*).
9. Hang your **three drawings on the wall** from the oldest to the most recent
10. You can **write on the third drawing the name of the resource**. (*ex : "courage"*).
11. Share your **reflection** on its three drawings with the group.
12. Focus on the last posture (confronting their stressful situation with the resource) and try to relocate your **level of stress** on the scale from 0 to 10, using the same method as in step 2.

1 - Match the definition with the corresponding brain area :

Limbic area or emotional brain (1)	This system of the brain is responsible for the most basic survival functions and regulates automatic responses. (4)
Prefrontal cortex (PFC) (2)	This region evaluates our current situation. It determines whether a stimulus is perceived as a threat or is relevant to survival, and activates the body's stress response, or not, accordingly. (1)
Cortex or "new mammalian" brain (3)	It receives input from multiple regions of the brain to process information and adapts accordingly. It helps us set and achieve goals, focus attention and motivation, manage emotional reactions, and have empathy. (2)
Reptilian Brain (4)	It is where we regulate logic and thought required for complex social situations. It also allows us to recognize our physical experience through the five senses. (3)

2- According to the cognitive behavioural theory, which strategy can help you better adapt to stressful situations, in the long term ? *(one right answer)*

- waiting until the stress disappears
- deep breathing exercises
- **identifying internal and external resources** *(right answer)*

3- Stress is a natural reaction of the body

TRUE / FALSE

→ True! It is a natural alert reaction to respond punctually to a dangerous situation.

4 - Our environment, our perceptions, our emotions and our thoughts have an impact on our physiological functioning and vice versa.

TRUE / FALSE

→ True!

5 - Our brain is switching between an automatic mode and an adaptive mode

TRUE / FALSE

→ True! The prefrontal cortex acts as a control center. When everything is going well, it keeps our "primary" emotions and impulses under control. In contrast, acute stress triggers a series of chemical events that reduce its influence. And so, we switch off to an automatic mode, and then take back control.



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