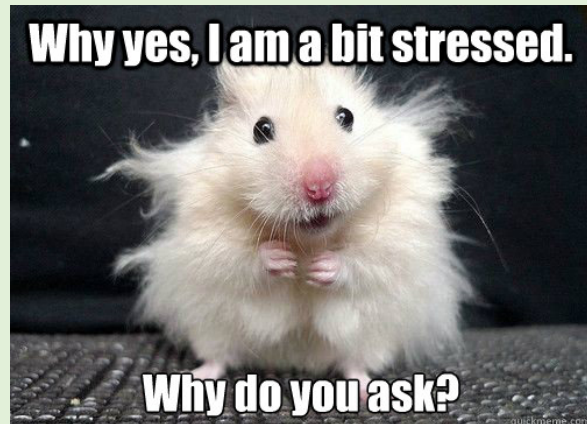
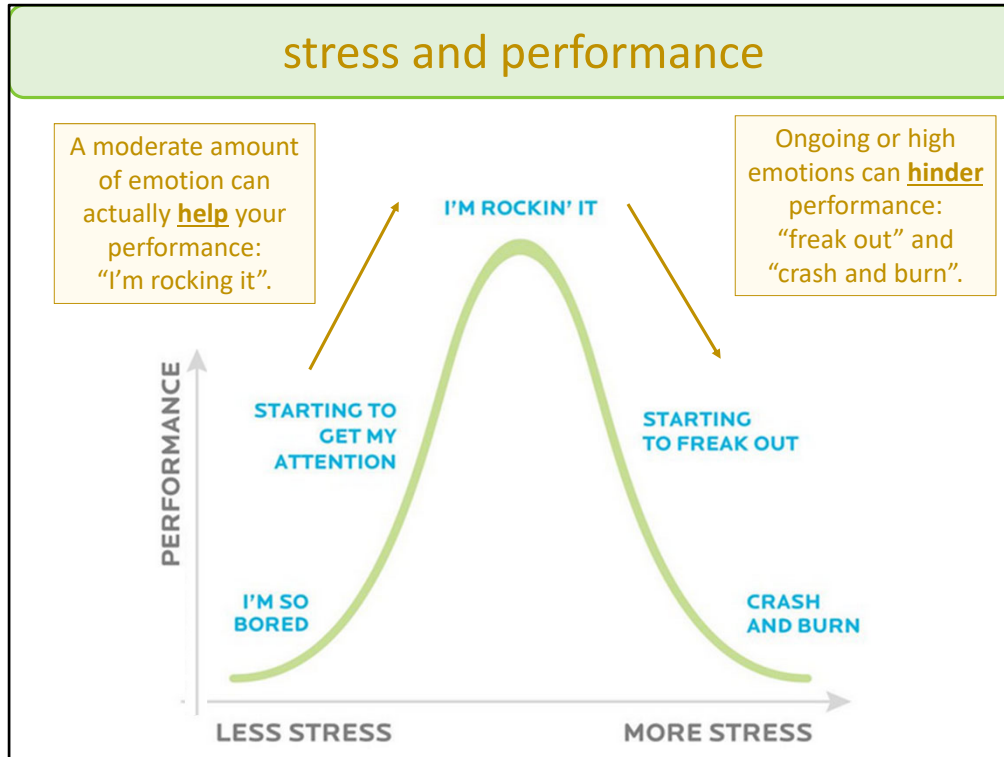


How to leverage stress for increased performance



This presentation will explain:

- the stress response
- how stress impacts functioning, and,
- strategies for managing stress to maintain best performance.



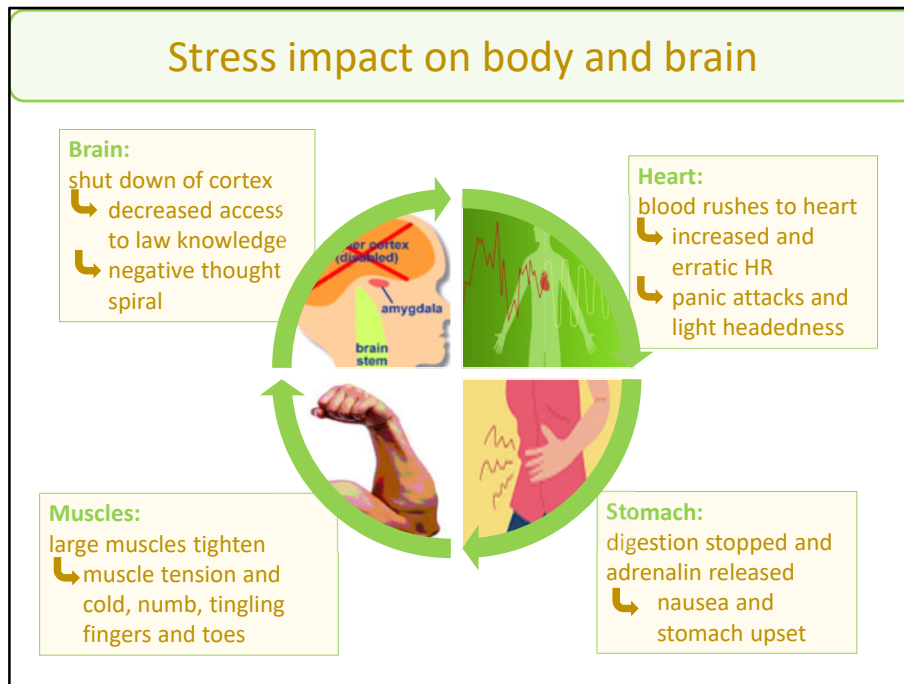
First let's talk about how stress impacts performance.

Effects of stress on performance

Stress is helpful as it increases performance and motivates you. Your body is in a challenge response "I'm rockin' it", gearing up to help us face and overcome challenges. This is your body's helping response. In this zone you feel empowered and knowledgeable.

But when the amount of stress is too high or continued you move from the challenge response "rockin' it" to distress "freak out". This is when **stress becomes a hindrance** as it sets off your body's survival response. The impact of this on the brain and body negatively impacts academic performance.

Let's look more closely at the impact of stress on your brain and body. Understanding your own response to stress is the first step in planning strategies to counter stress.

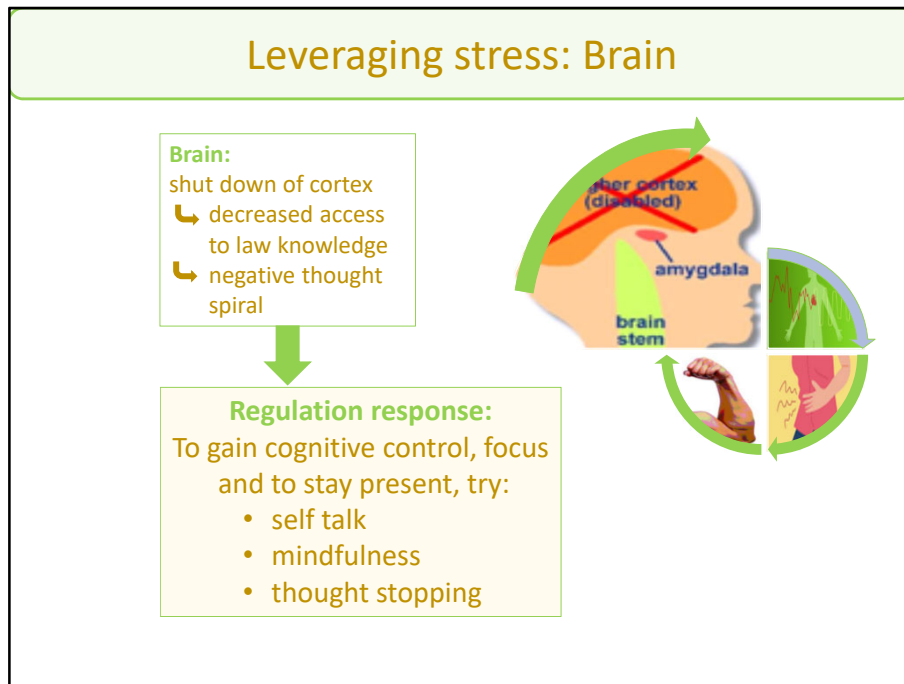


Stress sets off your survival response, a process which impacts your brain and body:

- In your brain your cortex is shut down which results in decreased access to knowledge and can cause negative thought spirals: “I am no good”, “I’ll never pass”.
- In your body:
 - blood rushes to the heart to power it to fuel the body in survival resulting in increased and rapid heart rate which can cause panic attacks and light headedness.
 - your stomach stops digestion process and releases adrenalin which causes nausea and stomach cramps
 - your large muscles tighten in preparation to fight or run which results in muscle tension causing cold, numb, tingling fingers and toes

It’s important to note what happens in your brain and body. Everyone’s reactions are slightly different.

Lets now move to understanding how to leverage stress to stay in the “I’m rockin it” phase and not move into the distress phase of impacted performance.

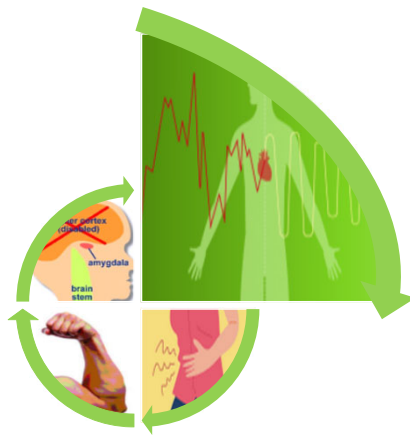


Leveraging stress means being able to stay in the challenge zone. To do so you need to counter your reactions to the stress response. We will look at some strategies to counter the responses we have just discussed in the brain and body. Instructions to each of the strategies are available on the Student Wellbeing Website linked directly under this presentation link.

In the brain, to gain cognitive control, focus and to stay present, try:

- self talk,
- the table,
- mindfulness
- thought stopping

Leveraging stress: Body - Heart



Heart:
blood rushes to heart
↳ increased and erratic HR
↳ panic attacks and light headedness

Regulation response:

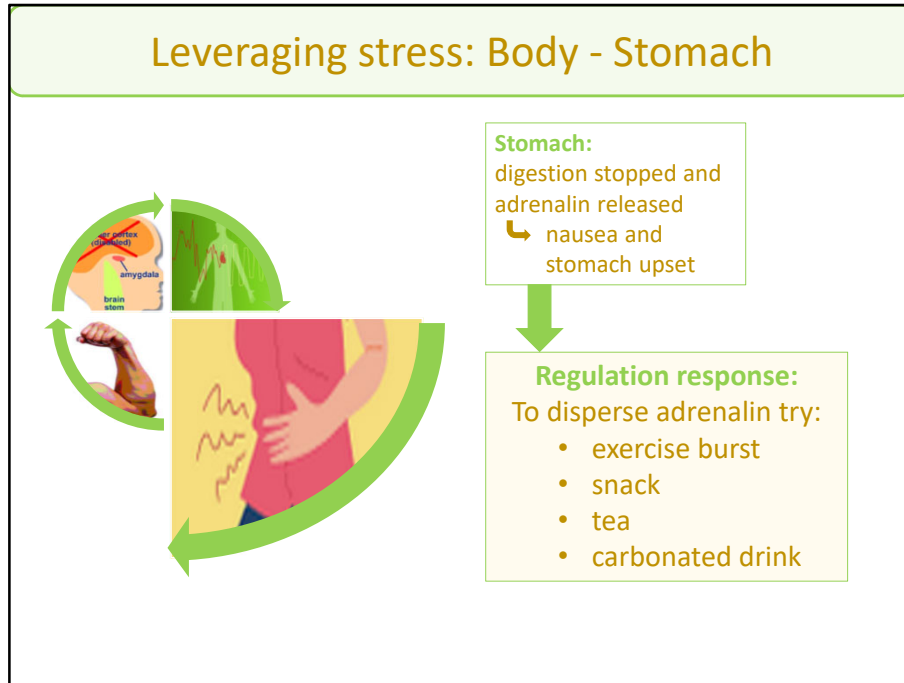
To slow heart rate and turn off the stress response, try:

- deep breathing
- slow breathing

To slow heart rate and turn off the stress response, try:

- deep breathing
- slow breathing

Leveraging stress: Body - Stomach



To disperse adrenalin try:

- exercise burst
- snack (not in the exam room)
- tea
- carbonated drink

Leveraging stress: Body - Muscles

Muscles:

large muscles tighten
↳ muscle tension and cold, numb, tingling fingers and toes

Regulation response:

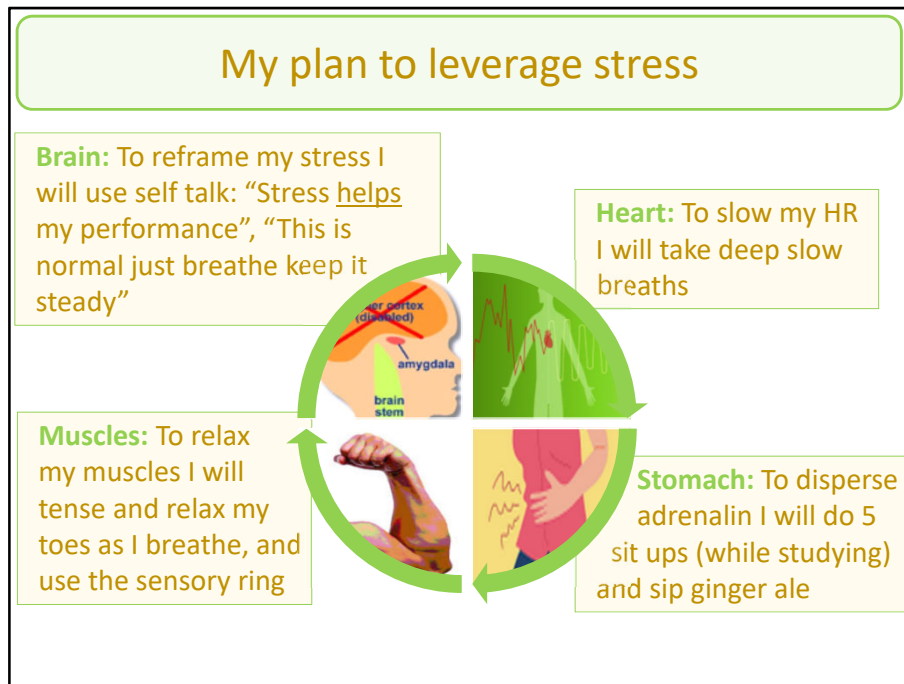
To relax the muscles and turn off the stress response, try:

- progressive muscle relaxation
- toe breathing
- sensory ring
- brain stress ball



To relax the muscles and turn off the stress response, try:

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation,
- toe breathing,
- sensory ring,
- brain stress ball



- Once you know your stress reactions and have created a strategy to counter these reactions you have a plan which can help you to maintain your best performance.
- Try to have one strategy in each area as they work together to lower stress from hindrance to help.
- Try to keep your strategies versatile and subtle so you can use them **in the moment** – class, studying, exams, networking, interviews etc.
- You will need to **practice** for best results – if you introduce a new skill when your brain and body are stressed it will raise your reactivity even more

Put above desk, on laptop, write in CANS.

Use reminders

Brain: To reframe my stress I will use self talk: "Stress helps my performance". This is normal just breathe keep it steady"

Heart: To slow my HR I will take deep slow breaths

Muscles: To relax my muscles I will tense and relax my toes as I breathe, and use the sensory ring

Stomach: To dispense adrenalin I will do 5 sit ups (while studying) and sip ginger ale

PERFORMANCE vs STRESS: A graph showing performance peaking at 'I'M ROCKIN' IT' between 'STARTING TO GET MY ATTENTION' and 'STARTING TO FREAK OUT', with 'I'M SO BORED' at low stress and 'CRASH AND BURN' at high stress.

be proactive,

Practice these strategies even when you do not feel stressed. This builds your resilience to cope.

and prepare.

Do before exam to raise tolerance and regulate emotions.

If you recall the brain shuts down when you are stressed so it is useful to write out your strategies and use reminders. Put these written reminders above your desk, on laptop, in your phone, write in CANS.

Be **proactive** with your strategies, get into a routine of implementing this strategy as part of your daily life. Practicing these strategies when you do not feel stressed will strengthen the effect of the strategy and build your resilience to cope.

Use the strategies as preparation. Do them before an exam to raise tolerance and regulate emotions.

Need help to make your plan for leveraging stress?

- Anna Kline, Student Wellbeing Counsellor, Allard Hall, rm 147b, 604.822.4928 kline@allard.ubc.ca
- UBC Counselling 604.822.3811
- (24/7) UBC Student Assistance Program (UBC SAP) 1.833.590.1328
- Lawyers Assistance Program 1.888.685.2171

Identifying your reactions to stress and finding the best strategies to counter these can take time and be difficult, especially if you are already feeling stressed!

If you need help to make your plan for leveraging stress contact...

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Thanks for taking the time to read.

Remember that the instruction list for all the strategies are available on the Student Wellbeing Website linked directly under this presentation link or via the QR code

<https://allard.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2021-11/regulation%20and%20distress%20tolerance.pdf>

Good luck!