

HOW STRESS RESPONSES IMPACT THE BRAIN

My brain is doing its best to keep me safe.

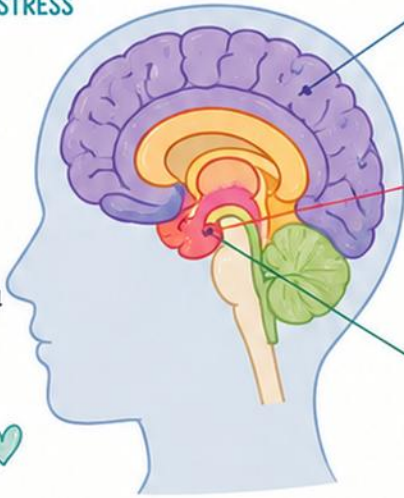
Understanding my brain helps me respond with compassion and make better choices.

When we feel stressed, our brain goes into survival mode to protect us. While this is helpful in the moment, too much or long-lasting stress can change the way our brain thinks, feels, and functions.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN?

THE BRAIN UNDER STRESS

When a threat is perceived, the amygdala (the brain's alarm system) sends a signal to kick off the stress response. Stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol flood the body and brain to help us fight, flight, or freeze.



Prefrontal Cortex
Thinking, planning, decision making, self-control

Amygdala
Detects danger, triggers the stress response

Hippocampus
Memory and learning

AREAS OF THE BRAIN & STRESS IMPACT



1. PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Handles focus, planning, impulse control, and decision making.

Impact of stress:

Harder to concentrate, trouble making good choices, more reactive, harder to think clearly.



2. AMYGDALA

The brain's alarm system that detects danger and keeps us safe.

Impact of stress:

Becomes overactive, leading to feeling more anxious, easily triggered, or constantly on guard.



3. HIPPOCAMPUS

Important for memory, learning, and emotional regulation.

Impact of stress:

Memory problems, trouble learning new things, and difficulty recalling positive experiences.

SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM STRESS

SHORT-TERM STRESS

(Brief and occasional)

- Helps us stay alert
- Gives us energy
- Can improve performance
- Brain returns to balance after the stress is over



LONG-TERM STRESS

(Ongoing and overwhelming)

- Keeps the brain in survival mode
- Wears down brain structures
- Impacts mood, memory, and physical health
- Makes it harder to manage emotions and stress



HOW STRESS IMPACTS YOU



Overthinking or worry



Feeling easily overwhelmed



Trouble focusing



Feeling tired or drained



Strong emotions

REFLECT & CONNECT

Answer the questions below.

1 How do you usually feel when you are stressed?

2 How does stress show up in your thoughts or body?

3 What happens when stress lasts for a long time?

WHAT HELPS YOUR BRAIN HEAL?

When you take care of yourself, you help your brain feel safe again.

List things that help you calm your mind, body, and brain.



Mind
(Calm thoughts)



Body
(Move & care)



Emotions
(Feel & express)



Connection
(Support & belonging)

Be gentle with your brain.



Your brain is strong. Your brain is learning. You are more than your stress.



You are not alone. You are enough.

★ The more we understand our brain, the more we can choose what helps us grow, heal, and thrive.

