



Pine Grove

Alumni Program

Forrest Health®

Spring Issue
2020

The Impact of Stress on Your Brain



Caroline Smith, MA, LPC, CSAT-S, CMAT, CIP, EMDR

Director of Intensive Workshops, Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services

Did you know that excessive worry about catching COVID-19 can actually increase the risk of catching COVID-19? To gain an awareness of the connection between prolonged periods of emotional stress and increased vulnerability to physical illness, it's important to understand the body's exquisite stress response system. The human brain is shaped like a walnut, about the size of a coconut; it takes up about 2% of your body's volume, uses about 25% of your caloric intake and 50% of oxygen consumed. Its number one priority is to sustain life.

When the brain registers a threat, changes within the body rapidly occur. The hypothalamus, known as the brain's first responder, instantly alerts the pituitary gland of imminent danger. The pituitary then signals the adrenal glands to mobilize for battle and defend at all cost. These two little adrenal glands, sitting atop the kidneys, will start pumping out significant amounts of the survival hormones named cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones are known as the adrenal axis.

The body's stress response is designed to be immediate, explosive, short-term, and with one singular purpose; enhance the ability to survive a life or death situation.

Survival hormones are great should you find yourself in a forest suddenly encountering a grizzly bear. If one makes it out, cortisol and adrenaline are the two hormones you can thank for your survival. However, there is a dark side to this stress response. If the adrenal axis response is turned on too often, or stays on too long, physical and mental health can become impaired.

The adrenal axis will activate this same stress response even if the grizzly is not real, but merely imagined. Being in a state of chronic worry and stressful hypervigilance

exposes the body to hormones at excessive and harmful levels, which can turn a psychological risk factor into a physical one. When the source of stress is chronic, the body never receives the message to return to normal functioning.

Although we are powerless to change the reality of this current pandemic, we do have the choice to respond in ways that will protect our brain and promote wellness. In his seminal book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl wrote these wise words, "The last of human freedoms is the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances." Science has proven that our response to what we perceive is currently happening, has a greater impact on our health than what is actually happening. This means what our mind dwells on is what our body will act upon.

Here are some specific ways to optimize energy and maintain your well-being:

- The term, social distancing, is not necessarily being interpreted correctly. It is, of course, essential that we practice physical distancing to limit the spread of this virus, but social connection is also critical. We need each other more than ever during times of uncertainty. Numerous studies show that meaningful emotional connections keep us healthy. When we experience personal connection with others, our pituitary gland releases oxytocin.

“Although we are powerless to change the reality of this current pandemic, we do have the choice to respond in ways that will protect our brain and promote wellness.”

This neuro chemical is known as the calming, bonding hormone and it works to correct damage caused by excessive levels of cortisol. However, sending emails and text messages will not result in the production of much oxytocin. Meaningful emotional connection

There's God's will and there's your will and there's a space in between. If you do the work, eventually the space will disappear and it will be God's will.

– Sandi Bachom



Mark Your Calendars

Alumni Weekend Retreat
June 12 – 14

Days of Hope
September 10 – 11

Days of Hope
December 3 – 4

(... Continued from page 1)

requires observing another person's facial expressions and experiencing sustained eye contact. Benefits from social engagement can be accomplished by using programs such as FaceTime, Zoom or Skype. Human connection is the emotional oxygen that is essential to sustain physical health and emotional well-being.

When President Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated in 1933, the U.S. was experiencing the worst depression in its history. A quarter of the workforce was unemployed. It was at this time of national uncertainty and distress that Roosevelt claimed, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." This reality remains true today. It's comforting to remember that no problem lasts forever. No matter how permanently fixed in the center of our lives it may appear at any particular moment, it will eventually pass.

Interestingly, these present circumstances may provide unique opportunities for resilience. People and tea bags have one thing in common, it takes being placed in hot water to determine how strong we really are. Difficult situations often bring out qualities in us that otherwise might not have risen to the surface. These qualities include courage, faith, and our need for one another. All of our experiences, both good and bad, help us grow.

The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to happen when we are feeling deeply distressed. For it is only in such moments, motivated by our fear and discomfort, that we are likely to step away from old patterns and create new ways to move forward.

Recovery Support During COVID-19



Erin Konves
Alumni Coordinator,
Pine Grove Behavioral Health

Connection is one of the greatest assets we have in recovery. Due to the current events of our nation and social distancing, what can we do to stay active in our recovery? Willingness to adapt to the change in the world is part of our responsibility. Here are some suggestions to assist during this time:

- Re-read your basic text book again.
- Now is a wonderful time to focus on the 12 steps of recovery.
- Call your sponsor/someone DAILY, if you are not already.
- Get active in morning / evening meditation/prayer.
- Take part in on-line yoga / exercise groups.
- Walk / run / bike / hike outdoors while you still are permitted – fresh air is good air!
- Attend online meetings – you can search for these via the internet.
- If available, Facetime / Skype someone several times a week.
- Make a gratitude list.
- Practice DAILY affirmations.
- Read a personal book of your choice for fun.
- Journal and reflection.
- Listen to music – it's amazing for the soul.
- Color – you know this is not just for children; it is relaxing!
- This might be a good time to clean out a drawer/closet you have wanted to tackle.
- Stay connected on the PG Alumni social media sites.



Eileene McRae
Alumni Coordinator,
Pine Grove Behavioral Health

READING AND RECOVERY:

Mrs. MARTY MANN

THE FIRST LADY OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Sally Brown and David R. Brown



WOW, what a captivating read! The legacy left to us by this amazing woman had to have been divinely inspired!!

A couple of quotes by Mrs. Mann taken from this book:

On her drinking days... "I've done my fieldwork in alcoholism both in the U.S. and abroad. I've been soused in the best salons and the worst saloons of Europe and America."

On her first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting... "I could finish their sentences! We talked each other's language! It was not a room of strangers. These were my people. I had come home."

My first sponsor impressed on me the power of daily gratitude. Since that time, I have at least thought of one thing each day for which I am truly grateful. The late Mrs. Marty Mann's trailblazing spirit is way up there close to the top of my gratitude list. I wonder where the recovery movement would be today had it not been for her. She is often referred to as the "First Lady of AA"—although she was not the first female to go to AA, she was the first one who maintained long-term sobriety.

After achieving her own sobriety, her efforts were concentrated on educating the public on the fact that alcoholism and other substance use disorders are medical, not moral problems. This understanding today is largely due to the groundwork of Marty Mann. During a time

when women were mostly silent publicly, her courage and bravery paved the way to addiction enlightenment.

Mrs. Mann was never in conflict with Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1956 at the annual meeting of the National Council on Alcoholism, Bill Wilson, in his keynote address, praised Marty Mann for her many contributions to AA. Through her efforts in establishing the NCA, she has educated America—we could never repay our debt to this pioneer woman, except to continue to "carry the message."

This book can be purchased at Pine Grove's Books and Gifts by calling Grace Blackshear at 601-288-4942 to order.

Affirmations

During the recent events of COVID-19, we can easily turn our thoughts astray. Here are some affirmations to brighten our spirits. Tape these to your mirror and choose one per week to say to yourself 5 times each morning and 5 times before bed.

- I am right where I need to be at this very moment.
- I feel the love of those who are not physically around me.
- I take pleasure in my own solitude.
- I am too big a gift to this world to feel self-pity.
- I love and approve of myself.
- I focus on breathing and grounding myself.
- Following my intuition and my heart keeps me safe and sound.
- I draw from my inner strength and light.
- I am a unique child of this world.
- I have as much brightness to offer the world as the next person.
- I matter and what I have to offer this world also matters.
- I may be one in 7 billion but I am also one in 7 billion.
- I trust my inner wisdom and intuition.
- I breathe in calmness and breathe out nervousness.
- This situation works out for my highest good.
- This day brings me nothing but joy.
- Today will be a gorgeous day to remember.
- I am safe and sound. All is well.
- I may not understand the good in this situation but it is there.
- I choose to find hopeful and optimistic ways to look at this.



MILESTONES

March 2020

Tom P.	5 years
Chris A.	3 years
Melissa P.	6 months
Kim P.	6 months
Debbie W.	3 years
Ryan M.	5 years
John B.	5 months
Dawn F.	3 years
Ed M.	1 year
Elizabeth S.	4 months
Kevin P.	4 months
Teddy M.	3 years
Sharon K.	8 years
Laura B.	9 months
Eric A.	9 months
Ron D.	6 months
Emily T.	9 months
James M.	5 months

APRIL 2020

Dee W.	1 year
Amy G.	2 years
Phil A.	9 years
Donna J.	4 years
Melanie M.	18 months
Frank C.	7 years
Amy G.	2 years
Danny M.	4 years
Morgan G.	9 months
Pablo T.	1 year

MAY 2020

Susan S.	1 year
Lorraine G.	2 years
Fred R.	19 years
Frank B.	13 years

If your sobriety/abstinence date is in June, July, or August please email your name and date to alumni@pinegrovetreatment.com



Intensive Workshops

Call 1-888-574-HOPE or visit www.pinegrovetreatment.com/self-improvement-workshops.com for information. Please note schedule is subject to change based on registration.



Pine Grove Intensive Workshops

Forrest Health®

Gratitude – COSA / SAA

(All Gratitude/GP Spouses Welcome)

Family COSA Meeting

Wednesday – 8:00 p.m. CST
Conference Call-In #: 319-527-3510
Access Code: 715268

Questions? Please contact
Beth A. at 256-566-8554.

**This meeting is chaired by family alumni
and is not associated with Pine Grove.**

Write on Our Wall

Join us on Facebook and post your message of hope, get some encouragement and get connected!

Email alumni@pinegrovetreatment.com for access to our private group.

1-888-574-HOPE
www.pinegrovetreatment.com

FOLLOW US

