

WHY AM I SO STRESSED???

by Renee Chillcott



It's a beautiful South Florida day outside, the birds are chirping, the kids are finally off to school, everyone is healthy and happy, and life is good....right? Wrong! Why do I have this anxious, stressed out, overwhelmed, impending doom feeling? If there is no reason for it, why do I feel it? Do I have anxiety?

It's common to use the terms anxiety and stress interchangeably, however they are two very different issues. Stress as defined by Psychology Today: **Stress** is simply a reaction to a stimulus that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium. In other words, it's an omnipresent part of life. A stressful event can trigger the "fight-or-flight" response, causing hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol to surge through the body.

Stress is all around us, every day, and believe it or not, is needed. For instance, if I'm driving on I-95 and a car quickly changes lanes in front of me, I need my stress levels to rise so that I can react immediately. Another example, if my employer comes to me and says "I need this report on my desk before lunch", I need stress to raise my arousal levels so that I think faster, block out external stimuli, and I'm focused and alert.

But it's not just about what I'm thinking, there's a response going on inside my body. Very simply,

handling stress is the job of the autonomic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system sends out the "fight or flight" signal telling the body to feel stressed and then the parasympathetic nervous system comes in and tells us that stress is over and that it's time to rest and relax.

If handling stress is something that our bodies are designed to do, why do I continue to feel uncomfortable? Why isn't my body and brain calming and resting as it should? I thought I was stressed out by life events, so does this mean am I anxious? What's the difference between stress and anxiety?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines **anxiety**: (1): apprehensive uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill: a state of being anxious (2): an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physical

signs (such as tension, sweating, and increased pulse rate), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it: mentally distressing concern or interest.

So, in layman's terms, anxiety is stress that won't go away, it takes an ugly turn to "negative and fear town", and indicates that the "rest and relax" response from the parasympathetic nervous system isn't there.

What we see in the brain is similar but a little more simply stated. Stress is an event in our life that causes our brain to initiate a calming response and anxiety is a neuron pattern in the brain that impedes the calming response. An anxiety pattern in the brain is typically inherited, although still possible to change. This anxiety pattern can be triggered by major stresses, no stresses or by very minor stresses, thus making it an issue for all ages, even young children.

STRESS MANIFESTS IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS SUCH AS:

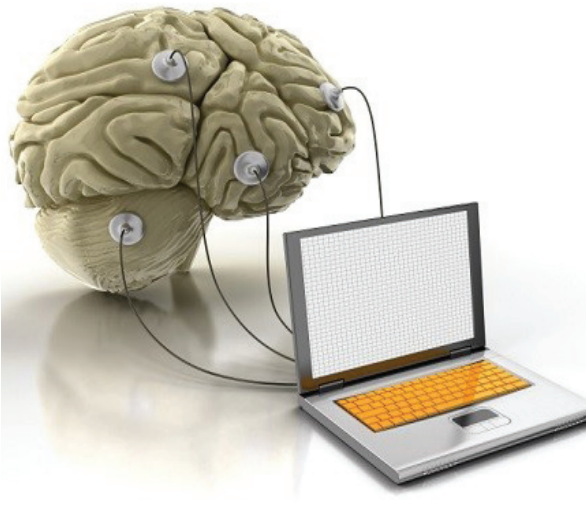
- excessive worrying
- nagging sense of fear
- restlessness
- overly emotional
- negative thinking
- catastrophizing
- defensiveness
- poor sleep
- irritability
- Lack of concentration
- feeling overwhelmed
- fatigue/exhaustion

The good news is... **Neurofeedback fixes stress patterns in the brain!**

WHAT IS NEUROFEEDBACK?

Neurofeedback, also known as EEG biofeedback, has been studied and practiced since the late 60's. Neurofeedback is exercise for your brain. It allows you to see the frequencies produced by different parts of your brain in real-time and then through visual and auditory feedback, teaches the brain to better regulate itself. Neurofeedback can be used to help detect, stimulate, and/or inhibit activity in the brain safely and without medication. It can help restore a wider "range of motion" in brain states, much like physical therapy does for the body.

While the client sits comfortably watching a movie or pictures appear on the screen (a calm and focused state), the EEG equipment measures the frequency or speed at which electrical activity moves in the areas where electrodes have been placed. This information is sent to the therapist's computer. The therapist is then able to determine what frequencies are out of balance.



For example, when the EEG shows that you are making too many "slow" or "sleepy" waves (delta/theta) or too many "fast" waves (high beta), the therapist adjusts a reward band to encourage more balanced activity. This encouragement or "reward" happens through visual recognition of the changes on the screen and the auditory reinforcement of "beeps".

WHAT RESULTS SHOULD I EXPECT TO SEE AND HOW LONG BEFORE I SEE THEM?

As every brain is different, every response is different as well. Typically adults will notice feeling symptom relief within 10 sessions and notice things like being calmer, happier, sleeping better, less panic, less worrying, more relaxed and able to enjoy life. Treatments are individualized and as no two brains are alike, no two treatment plans are alike. We will evaluate your symptoms and how your brain is functioning to customize training for you. All you have to do is call our office to make the appointment!

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Getting started is easy, just give us a call. The Brain and Wellness Center staff will answer all of your questions, and help you get scheduled. If you are wondering what services are best for you? We can help determine that at the time of the intake, in a telephone consultation, or you can schedule a face to face consultation and see our facility. Call, email or message us today! Brain and Wellness Center, 7301 W. Palmetto Park Rd., Suite 102A, Boca Raton, FL 33433. **(561) 206-2706**, e-mail us at **info@bocabraincenter.com**, or text us at **(561) 206-2706** or visit our website at **www.BocaBrainCenter.com**.



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Renee Chillcott is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor that has been practicing Neurofeedback training since 2005. Renee holds a BA degree from The University of Central Florida and a Master's Degree in Psychology from Nova Southeastern University. She is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and is the owner/operator of The Brain and Wellness Center, located in Boca Raton. At The Brain and Wellness Center, adults, teens, children and families enjoy a variety of services from multiple providers. Neurofeedback, Brain Mapping, Nutritional Counseling, Learning Programs, and counseling are among a few of the services offered.



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