



NHS Fife Department of Psychology

The Mind- Body Link

Help Yourself @ moodcafe.co.uk



This leaflet talks about the link between our mind and body. It highlights the importance of finding ways to reduce stress.

This exercise helps people discover the strong link between mind and body:

Imagine a lemon tree covered with ripe yellow fruit. Pick the fattest and juiciest lemon and cut it into slices. Now – bite into a slice and suck the juice. Are you salivating? Can you even feel the sides of your jaw aching? Most people will answer, yes! This shows the relationship between what you think and how your body reacts - the mind / body link. Looking back over history the link between our minds and bodies has often been talked about. Up until the 1800s, doctors told patients to visit spas and seaside resorts if they were unwell. This focus reduced with the discovery of the causes of illness, such as bacteria, and the development and use of antibiotics to cure. More recently, there has been a growing awareness of the link between stress and health. It is accepted that emotional, social, behavioural, mental and spiritual factors can all directly affect our health and wellbeing.

The physical impact of stress

When we are in a stressful or dangerous situation our ‘fight or flight’ system is activated. For example, when you feel fear your body prepares to fight or run away from the thing it feels threatened by or possibly to stay completely still and wait for the threat to pass. Our fear is useful as it prepares our body for action by releasing hormones into the blood to make changes, such as a faster heart rate or increased breathing rate. This is helpful in certain situations. However, if our bodies are constantly under stress then this can begin to affect us biologically (e.g. increased blood pressure, chances of catching infection, aggravate skin or stomach problems, increase pain). People are more likely

to eat more unhealthy comfort foods, smoke or drink when stressed. This can then have a further negative impact on health.

Combating stress

There is now much research and interest in the opposite of the 'fight or flight' system – the 'relaxation response'. The use of relaxation, meditation and yoga has been found to counteract the symptoms of stress by making physical changes, such as lowered heart rate and breathing rate which has helped the treatment of many stress – related problems (such as anxiety and panic). Mindfulness (based on Buddhist meditation practice) is now used to help lessen both physical and psychological symptoms of many medical conditions, including chronic pain. See [moodcafé](#) for more information.

Managing your stress

Given our understanding of the impact of stress on our bodies it is worth trying to minimise stress, or focus on building up our ability to handle stressful situations - particularly if you have a physical health condition. In turn, this will help you cope better with your condition. There are a number of useful self help leaflets on the moodcafé website which provide specific stress management advice ('Self Help Documents' and 'Related Sections').

Visit moodcafe.co.uk
for more helpful resources

