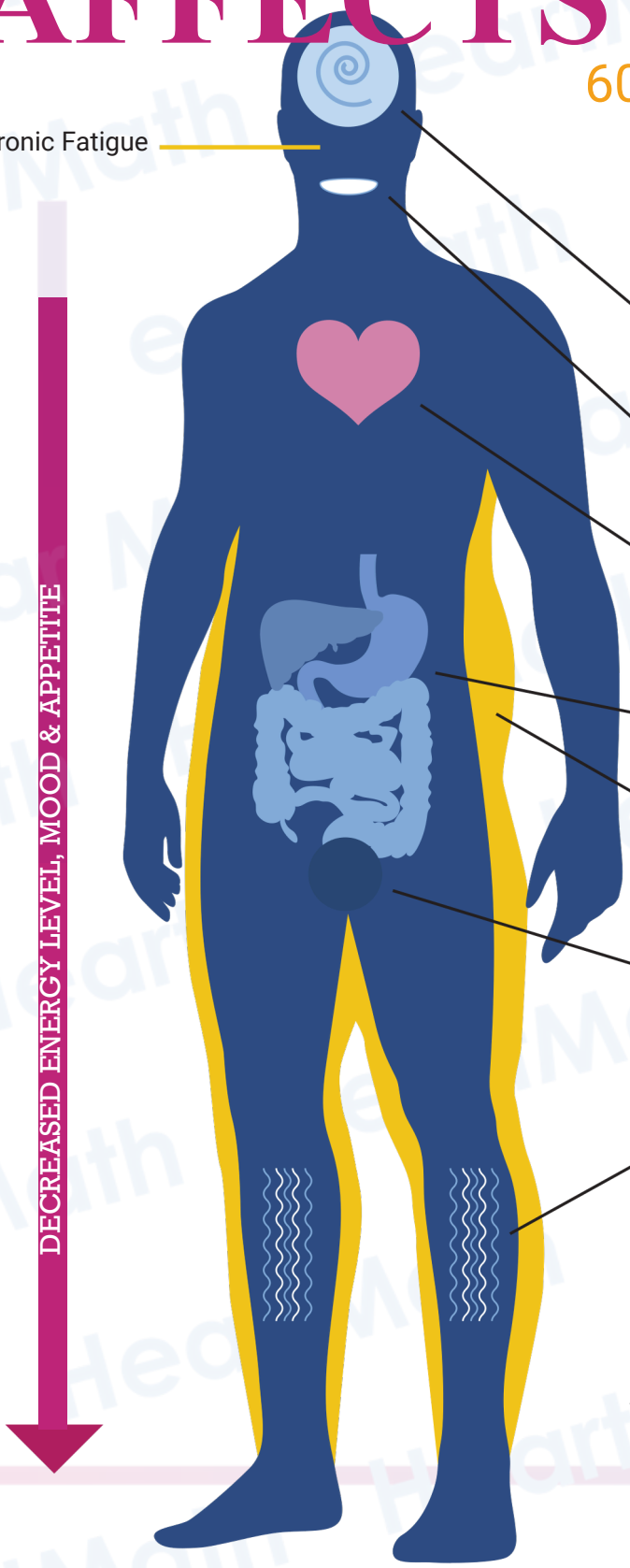
# HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE BODY

60% to 80% of primary care doctor visits are related to stress, yet only 16% of patients receive stress management help.

JAMA internal medicine173.1(2013):76-77
Health Affairs 42.2(2023):163-171




Headaches, Dizziness, ADD/ADHD, Anxiety, Irritability & Anger, Panic Disorders

Grinding Teeth & Tension in Jaw

Increased Heart Rate, Strokes, Heart Disease, Hypertension, Diabetes Type I & II, Arrhythmias

Digestive Disorders, Upset Stomach, Abdominal Pain, Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Weight Gain & Obesity

Decreased Sex Drive

Muscle Tension, Fibromyalgia, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome

Stress affects the entire body and can cause many other problems.

45% of Americans report lying awake at night due to stress

American Psychological Association Stress in America Report 2017

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# Stress Facts

Understanding the mechanics of stress gives you the advantage of being more aware of and sensitive to your own level of stress and knowing when and how to take proactive steps. This increased awareness also helps you to better care for your family, friends and colleagues.

**Here are a few stress facts that many people are unaware of:**

## Fact #1: Your body doesn't care if it's a big stress or a little one.

The human body doesn't discriminate between a BIG stress, or a little one. Regardless of the significance, stress affects the body in predictable ways. A typical stress reaction, which most of us experience dozens of times each day, begins with a cascade of 1,400 biochemical events in your body. If these reactions are left unchecked we age prematurely, our cognitive function is impaired, our energy is drained, and we are robbed of our effectiveness and clarity.

## Fact #2: Stress can make smart people do irrational things.

Stress causes what brain researchers call "cortical inhibition." The phenomenon of cortical inhibition helps to explain why smart people do irrational things. Simply said, stress inhibits your brain and you can't function at your best. When we are in coherence – a state where we are cognitively sharp, emotionally calm, and we feel and think with enhanced clarity – the brain, heart and nervous system are working in harmony. This state of coherence facilitates our cognitive functioning – we are actually operating at peak performance mentally, emotionally and physically.

## Fact #3: People can become numb to their stress.

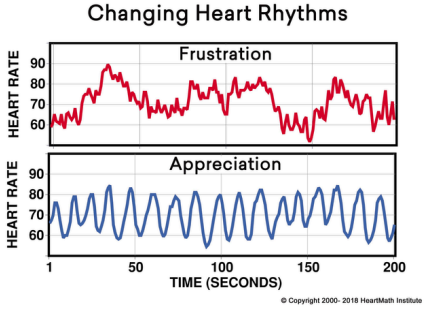
We can be physiologically experiencing stress yet mentally numb to it because we've become so accustomed to it. Some have become so adapted to the daily pressures, irritations and annoyances of life that it starts to seem normal. Yet the small stresses accumulate quickly and we may not realize how much they're impairing our mental clarity, emotional composure, and our overall health until it shows up as a bad decision, an overreaction or an unwanted diagnosis at the doctor's office.

## Fact #4: We can control how we respond to stress.

We don't need to be victims to our own emotions, thoughts and attitudes. We can control how we respond to stress and we can become more sensitive to stressful situations and how they are affecting us before it manifests as a physical, mental or emotional complaint. There are simple, scientifically validated solutions to stress that empower people to rewire their own stress response.

## Fact #5: The best strategy is to handle stress in the moment.

The best way to manage stress is to deal with it the very moment you feel it come up. Millions of Americans unsuccessfully use the binge-and-purge approach when it comes to stress. They stress out all day, believing that they can wait until later to recover when they go to an evening yoga class, go to the gym or chill out when they take the weekend off. Unfortunately, when we put off going for our own inner balance our bodies have already activated the stress response and it's our health that suffers.




HeartMath's research shows how emotions change our heart rhythm patterns. Positive emotions create coherent heart rhythms, which look like rolling hills – it's a smooth and ordered pattern. In contrast, negative emotions create chaotic, erratic patterns. By using an Inner Balance heart rhythm monitor you can actually see your heart rhythms change in real time as you shift from stressful emotions like anger or anxiety to positive feelings like care or appreciation. Coherent heart rhythm patterns facilitate higher brain function, whereas negative emotions inhibit a person's ability to think clearly. For more information, go to http://www.goheartmath.com