

Optimal Psychosocial Health

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Objectives

- ❑ Describe the effects of positive and negative attitudes on health
- ❑ Describe the effects of social engagement on health
- ❑ Describe positive sexuality and aging
- ❑ Describe the role of spirituality and health
- ❑ Describe the effects of stress on health
- ❑ Describe the effect of depression and grief on health

Chicken and egg question

Attitudes and Health

- Consistent link in research between positive attitudes &/or emotions and health
 - Fewer risk factors
 - Fewer negative events (e.g., heart attacks)
 - Faster or more complete recovery from events
- The experience of “gratitude” or “appreciation” is particularly linked to well-being

Gratitude

- “The habitual focusing on and appreciating the positive aspects of life.”
- Strongly linked to positive outcomes
 - Positive emotional functioning
 - Positive social functioning
 - Less anger & hostility
 - Less depression
 - Higher success in life activities



Gratitude Interventions

- PTSD – low gratitude scores
 - If gratitude practice is used – better functioning
- Sleep
 - Better sleep latency, duration & quality
- Simple interventions:
 - Write down 3 things you are grateful for at bedtime
 - Tell someone one time a day something you are grateful for



Social Engagement

- Clear connection between social engagement and:
 - Development of depression
 - High social engagement scores in all centenarian studies
 - Lower rates of dementia
 - May be as important as exercise
- “The necessity of being necessary” (W. Bortz)

Social Activities and Health

- 13 yr study of 3000 people over age 65
- Tracked 14 activities – exercise, social, daily chores
- Regular social activities (volunteer, getting together with friends, playing bridge) fared as well as those exercising
 - Stronger factor in survival than exercise, blood pressure, and cholesterol



Social Activities and Dementia

- Long term prospective study of 4000 Japanese American men in Hawaii
- 5 measures: marital status, living arrangements, group activities, social events, close friends
 - Highest scores developed less dementia
 - The greater the decline the greater the dementia



Physiologic Connections

- Improved brain repair mechanisms
- Lower cortisol levels
- Lower atherosclerosis
- Improved immune responses
 - Increased lymphocyte killer cell activity
- Better glucose metabolism

Marriage and Health

- Strongly correlated with better outcomes
 - Unmarried women – 50% increased mortality
 - Unmarried men – 250% increased mortality
 - Probably related to # of social connections
- Positive effects related to a positive marriage (duh!)
 - Negative marriage not only negates the positive effect, it accentuates risks



Low Marital Quality Studies

- ❑ Increased periodontal disease
- ❑ Increased heart disease
- ❑ Increased behavior problems in dementia
- ❑ Increased pain and pain-related disability
- ❑ Increased blood pressure
- ❑ Many, many more adverse effects



High Marital Quality Studies

- ❑ 100s of studies show better health outcomes when patient is in a healthy marriage (compared to single people)
- ❑ Crosses multiple conditions (heart, arthritis, neurological conditions, etc.)
- ❑ Effect is stronger on men than women
- ❑ Smaller number of studies showing couples who work on relationship improve health

Sexuality

- 70% of men sexually active at 68, but 25% at 78
- Survey of 80 to 102 year olds – 63% of men and 30% of women sexually active
- Key issue is partners – at 80 there are 39 men for every 100 women
- Sexual desire and intimacy remains high in spite of medical conditions

Does Sexuality Promote Health?

- ❑ Chicken and egg question
- ❑ 1997 Welsh study – men who had 2 or more orgasms a week had half the risk of various cancers
- ❑ Duke – intercourse (for men) and enjoyment of sex (for women) was linked to longevity
- ❑ Masturbation in women as effective as vaginal estrogens



Male Sexuality

- ❑ Testosterone decreases with age
- ❑ Taking testosterone increase risk of heart disease, hair loss, and accelerates prostate cancer
- ❑ Regular, short, intense bursts of exercise raises testosterone
- ❑ Decreased rate of erectile dysfunction in regular exercisers

Women's Sexuality

- Most common reason for decreased activity is partner problems
 - Lack of, physical health, lack of interest
- Most common change is dryness of the vagina
 - Regular sexual activity is best treatment
 - Extended foreplay
 - Water-soluble lubricants
 - May need short term hormone treatment



Questions

- Use of Viagra and similar medications
 - Male
 - Female?
- Use of herbal products – no clear evidence
- Risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI)

Depression and Grief

- Grief and bereavement are normal states
 - No evidence they are helped by medications
 - Some evidence that medications interferes with resolution
 - Loss of a spouse is the highest on stress scales
- In an older person, grief after a significant loss can last a long time, and be severe
- Even dramatic symptoms are still normal
 - “Hallucinations” of the loved one being present



Passing Through Grief

- ❑ Consciously acknowledge the depth of your feelings (no judgment)
- ❑ Talk to others, especially to good listeners
- ❑ Watch for warning signs – appetite loss, isolation, intrusive thoughts
- ❑ Remember the positive (effect of positive thoughts on brain function)
- ❑ Exercise

Depression

- A medical problem
- Often experienced differently by older people
 - More “non-emotional” symptoms – appetite loss, memory problems, sleeplessness
 - May be written off by providers
 - May not be admitted by patients (“weakness”)
- Responsive to multiple types of interventions

Depressions

- Symptoms
 - Loss of interests, sleeplessness, appetite loss, concentration loss, lack of energy, hopelessness, feeling down
 - Suicide is the greatest risk
- Three equally effective treatments
 - Cognitive-behavioral therapy
 - Exercise
 - Medications

Depression Medication Treatment

- Treat until person feels better – then 9 more months
- Attempt slow withdrawal from medication
- If another episode develops – 2 years of treatment
 - The attempt withdrawal again
- If another episode occurs – lifelong treatment may be necessary

Holmes- Rahe Stress Scale

- Death of spouse (100)
- Divorce (73)
- Separation (65)
- Imprisonment (63)
- Death of a close family member (63)
- Personal illness or injury (53)
- Marriage (50)
- Fired from work (47)
- Retirement (45)
- Marital reconciliation (45)
- Change in health of a family member (44)
- Change in financial status (38)
- Death of a close friend (37)



Reducing the Effects of Stress

- Progressive relaxation
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction
- HeartMath



The Stress Zone

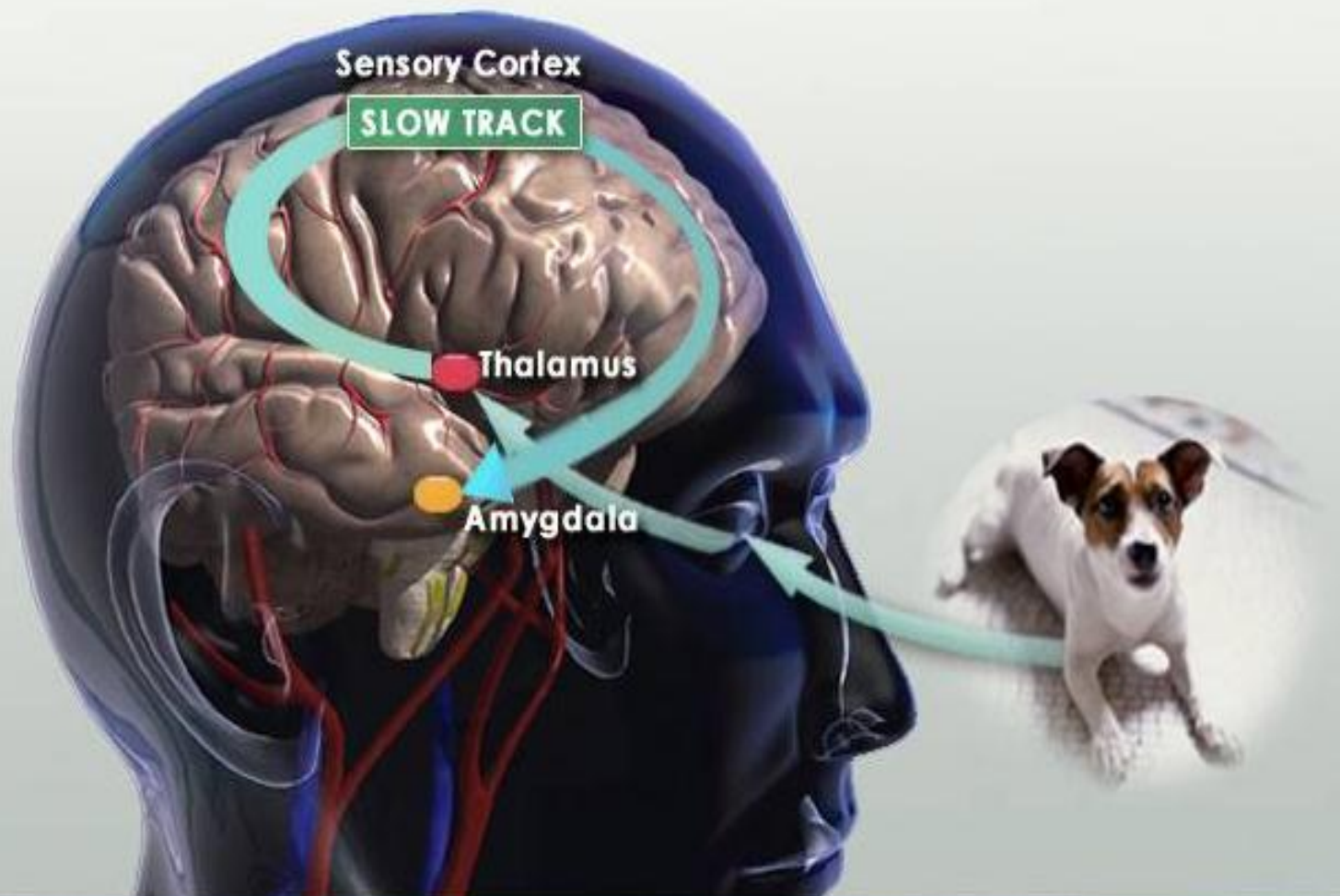
- ❑ Stress is almost always an *emotional reaction* to a situation.
- ❑ Stress impacts your ability to think clearly, respond appropriately and perform at your best.
- ❑ Your stress level directly impacts how you feel at the end of the day, your health and your relationships.



Warning signs

- Loss of focus and mental clarity
- Lack of ability to relax and sleep
 - Loss of self esteem
 - Feeling tired and on edge
- Struggle to motivate yourself and others

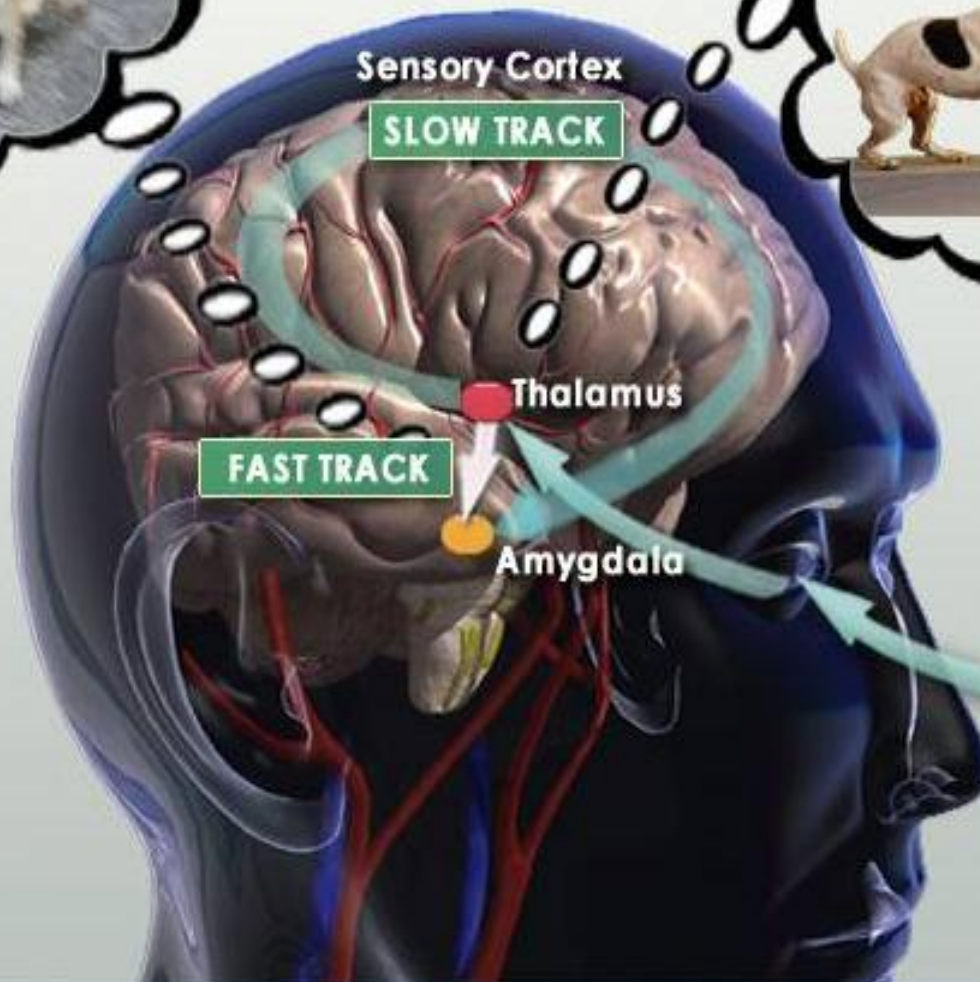
Emotional Memories



Emotional Perception

Trigger Memories

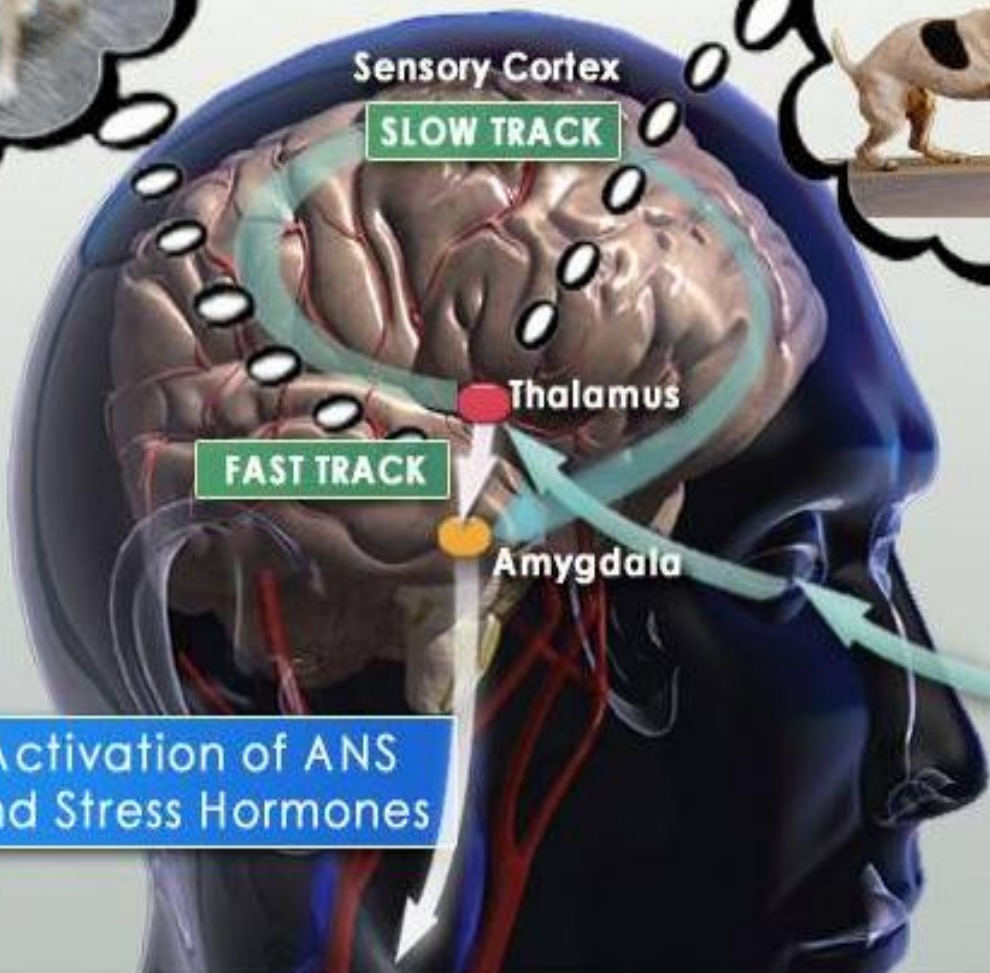
Emotional Memories



Emotional Perception

Trigger Memories

Emotional Memories



Autonomic Nervous System

Sympathetic Pathway—Accelerator

High Effort

Adrenaline

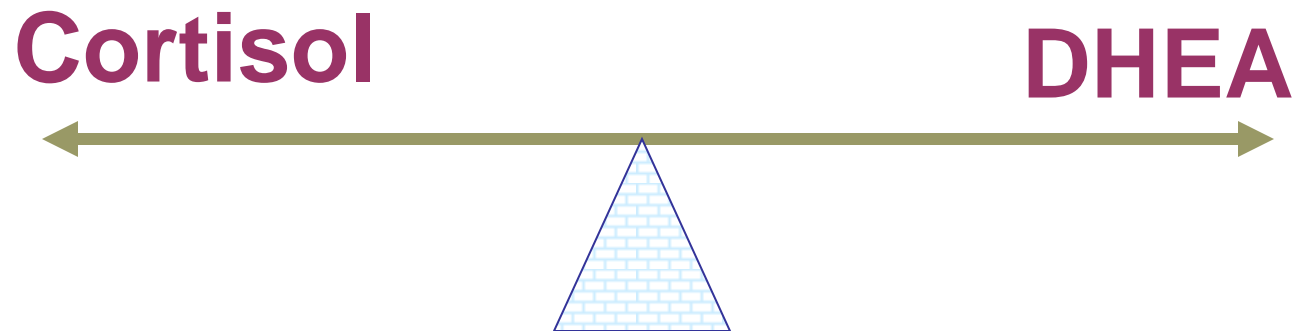


Parasympathetic Pathway—Brake

Low Effort/relaxation

Acetylcholine

Hormonal System

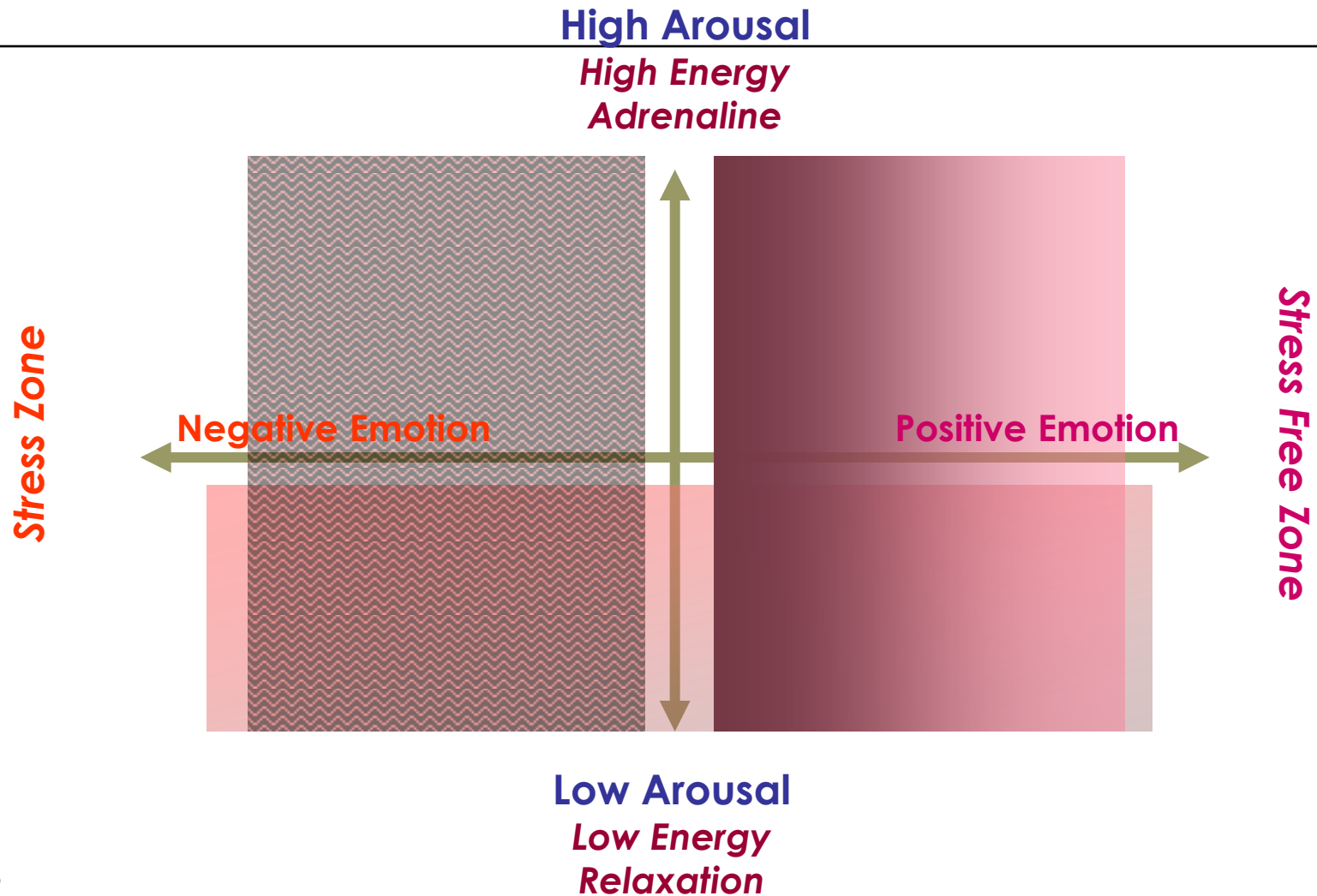


High Cortisol:Low DHEA

- ❑ Impaired memory and learning (*Kerr et al., 1991; Sapolsky, 1992*)
- ❑ Decreased bone density; increased osteoporosis (*Manolagas, 1979*)
- ❑ Reduced muscle mass (*Beme, 1993*)
- ❑ Reduced skin growth and regeneration (*Beme, 1993*)
- ❑ Impaired immune function (*Hiemke, 1994*)
- ❑ Increased blood sugar (*DeFeo, 1989*)
- ❑ Increased fat accumulation around waist / hips (*Marin, 1992*)

Chronic stress=excess cortisol=accelerated aging.

Your Emotional Landscape

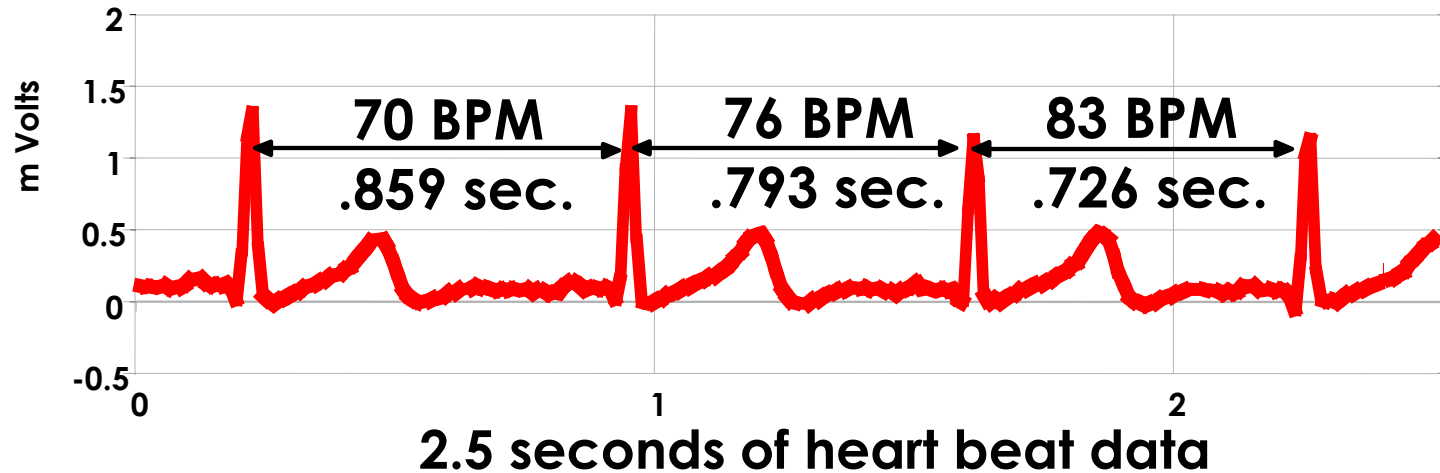




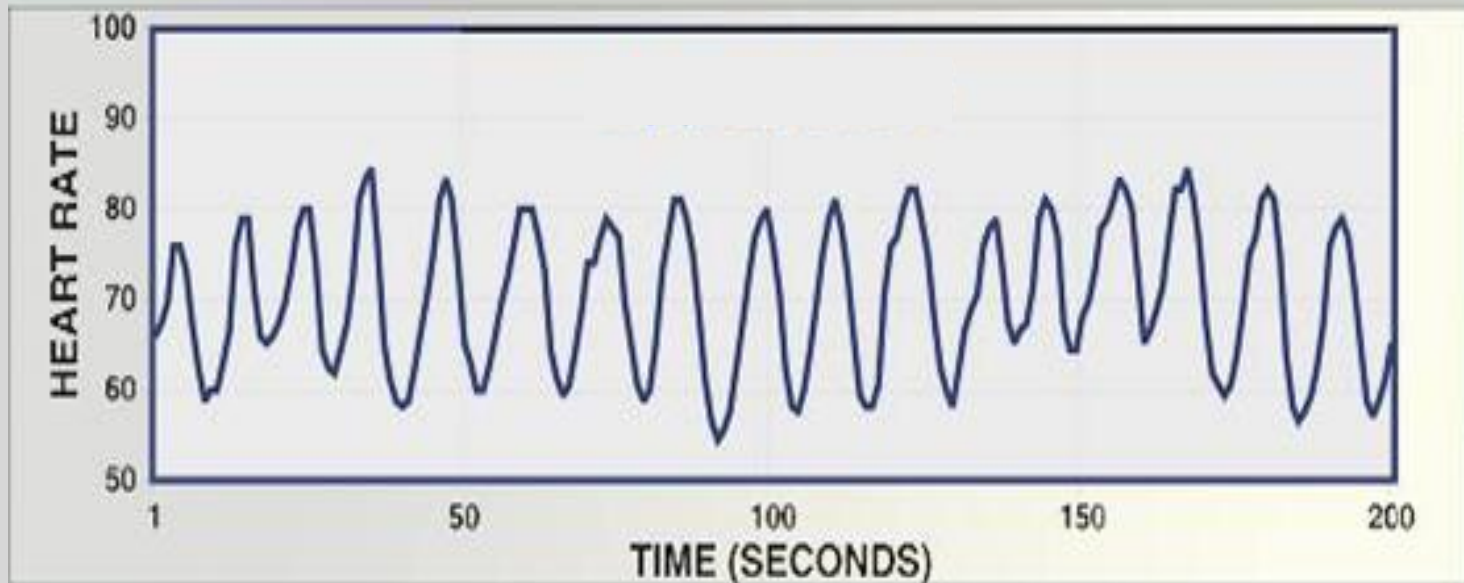
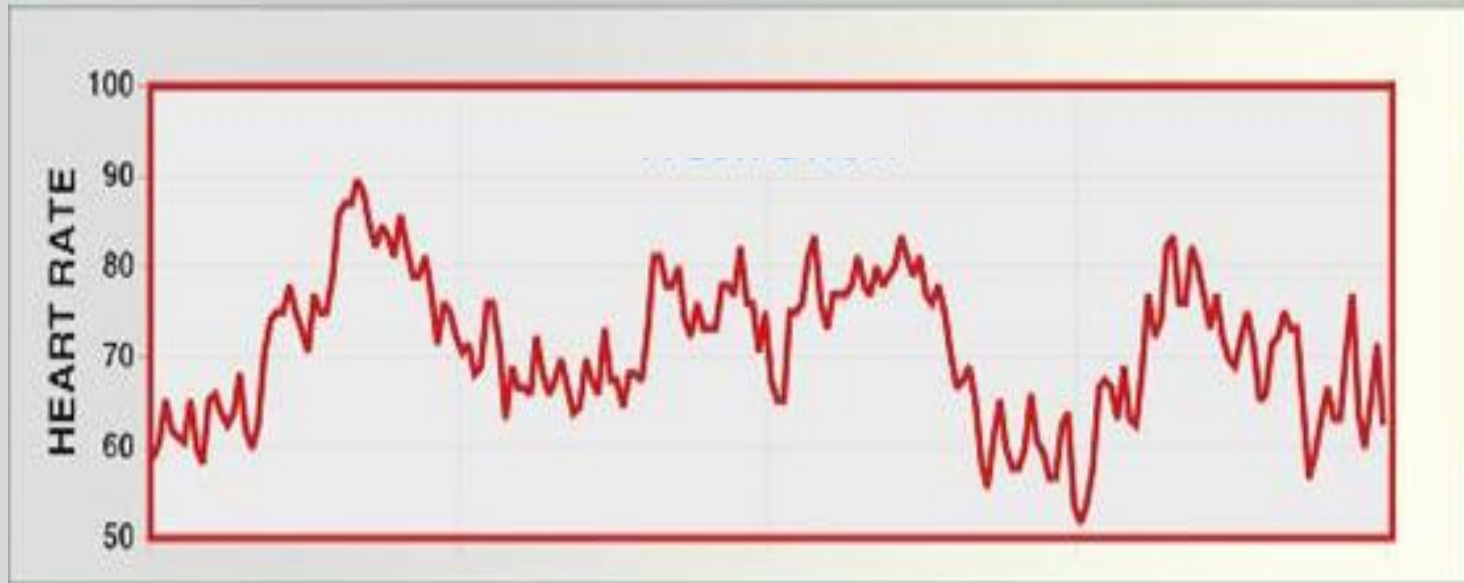
Benefits of Physiological Coherence

- Reduced blood pressure in hypertension *(McCraty, 2001)*
- Increased functional capacity in CHF patients *(Luskin, 2002)*
- Improvements in asthma *(Lehrer, 2000)*
- Increased calmness and well-being *(Friedman, 2000)*
- Increased emotional stability *(McCraty, 2001)*
- Improved cognitive performance *(McCraty, 2001)*

Heart Rate Variability (HRV)



Changing Heart Rhythms



The Power of Positive Emotions

- Increased longevity (*Danner et al., 2001*)
- Reduced morbidity (*Goldman et al, 1996; Russek & Schwartz, 1997*)
- Increased cognitive flexibility (*Ashby et al., 1999*)
- Improved memory (*Isen et al., 1978*)
- Improved decision making (*Carnevale & Isen, 1986*)
- Increased creativity and innovative problem solving (*Isen et al., 1987*)
- Improved job performance & achievement (*Wright & Staw, 1994; Staw et al., 1994*)
- Improved clinical problem solving (*Estrada et al., 1997*)



Quick Coherence® Technique

- Heart focus
- Heart breathing
- Heart feeling



emWave® Technology

