

# The Love Response Approach™

Eva M. Selhub, MD

Love in all its forms and the affection we exchange with others are more than emotions or feel-good gestures. Love, and the affection that flows from it, regulates the body's stress system. As Dr. Herbert Benson's years of research has proven, the stress system manages all of the body's other systems such as the immune, nerve, muscular-skeletal, endocrine, circulation, hormonal, metabolic and cardio-vascular. Love and affection balance the stress system which in turn acts in concert with other bodily systems to maintain health.

By deliberately and consciously shifting into a place of love and proactively creating the bonds we need to do so— with others, with ourselves, with the divine, to improve health on every level, physical benefits can result. Individuals can find that by following a set of simple practices, they can achieve – in mere moments – an inner peace, enabling the neurobiology of love to bring the body and mind into a state of flow, and resilience, counteracting the effects of the stress response system.

The approach is based on the “Love Response” - the chain of bio-chemical processes that occur in the mind and body when a person operates from love – and its complement, the stress response – the chain of bio-chemical processes that occur when a person operates from fear or stress. The two are meant to co-exist in a fine balancing act. When they do, the stress system remains regulated, resulting in health and wellbeing. However, when the stress response dominates too often and for too long, the stress system becomes dysregulated, resulting is a physical make up conducive to illness and disease.

The stress system can be thrown out of balance with the accumulation of allostatic load, whereby the individual's ability to adapt effectively to life's challenges is hindered, ultimately leading to a breakdown of the system and pathological problems, both physical and psychological. The ability to cope or adapt effectively is determined by multiple factors including genetic variability, socioeconomic status, life-style behaviors, culture, belief system, environment, emotional development, presence of love and support, and critical events that have occurred at any given point in life, especially early life.

Many studies show, for instance, that negative emotions are associated in the development of major diseases and physical conditions. Science links hostility and anger to worsening heart disease; increased worry, depression and fear with overactive blood clotting, which leads to heart disease and strokes; hostility and shame to increased inflammation; bereavement and depression to a lowered immune functioning . Children living in a family with neglect and abuse have a higher incidence of asthma. Among the elderly, the hospitalization of a spouse increases the risk of death in the healthy partner.

Whether it is children's exposure to an angry adult or someone who has lost a love one, the end result are fear and stress.

Fear occurs when we meet with a threat or challenge and perceive that we lack the tools to handle or adapt to that challenge. Fear and its effects on the stress system and therefore our health are deactivated when we feel secure, supported, and honored—when we feel love. For instance, we all know that a mother's touch can calm an infant. But in fact the mother is doing more than stopping the baby from crying. Studies show that her body contact and love also help stabilize the newborn's body temperature, energy conservation, acid-base balance and adjustment of their breathing rate. This love and

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affection not only helps the infant's stress system stay regulated, but also the mother's. The receiving of love and affection creates a positive loop.

So too as adults, loving touch, affection and nurturance regulates our stress systems. When the system is in balance and the stress response in check, we can better respond to our circumstances, problems solve and cope. Our minds adopt perspective, becoming aware of the body's needs. Our hearts move toward positive emotions so we can face a threat with confidence, knowing that we have the resources to affect a satisfactory outcome. Our bodies respond with hormones, peptides, endorphins, and other chemicals that promote a state of emotional and physical well-being.