

Quantum

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HEALTH

A close-up portrait of a man with grey hair, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a white shirt. The background is plain white.

Searching the
World for CAM
Breakthroughs

**An interview with
Ferdinando Pisani
Massamormile**

Have You Heard of This?
Sampling of CAM Therapies

Special Report on Spontaneous
Remission from Cancer

Fight or Flight Therapy

By M. Stuart Tessler, OD, FCSO

Due to the cumulative stresses and traumas of life, our nervous system can get permanently stuck in a protective survival posture, called fight or flight. This limits our ability to function, especially under stress, and is the underlying cause of many stress-related conditions. Fight or Flight Therapy is the first modality to treat this condition directly. In Fight or Flight Therapy, specific wavelengths of visible light are viewed daily for twenty minutes over the course of two to four months, permanently resetting the nervous system to a calmer place. Both objective and subjective measures clearly demonstrate the dramatic quality-of-life changes routinely seen in cases of stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other stress-related conditions.

What Is Fight or Flight?

In the 1920's, Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon was the first to coin the term "fight or flight" to describe our innate defense mechanism in the face of a threat or danger. The classic example is a caveman's physiological response to seeing a tiger in the bushes. The imminent danger triggers subconscious reflexes that instantaneously recruit his resources to ensure his survival. His body prepares to *fight* to the death or *flee* for his life.

Physiologically, adrenaline and other hormones, such as cortisol, are released into his bloodstream. His liver releases stored sugar for an immediate energy boost. Blood flow increases to his brain, heart, lungs and large muscles (at the expense of less immediate needs such as digestion, immunity, reproduction, tissue repair, etc.). His heart beats

faster and his blood pressure rises. His breathing becomes more shallow and rapid to obtain more oxygen. Perspiration increases to keep his body cool. His senses become heightened: his pupils dilate to let in more light and his vision tunes out extraneous peripheral information so he can focus on the tiger or zero in on his escape route. His muscles become tensed, ready to fight or flee.

Getting Stuck in Fight or Flight

Unlike the isolated stressors of our caveman ancestors, modern humans experience something quite different. With work, family, health, finances, traffic, pollution, worry, and other influences, modern life tends to be perpetually stressful. This constant strain on our physiology revs our nervous system into an idling fight-or-flight posture, which triggers a wide variety of behavioural and quality-of-life symptoms that have the potential ultimately to affect our health.

Robert Sapolsky and other stress researchers have done remarkable research into the stress response and how it affects our behaviour and, ultimately, our health. Sapolsky, who wrote the book *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, makes it clear that our innate stress/survival response, the fight-or-flight response, although a life-saver for early man, has not evolved adequately for the rigours of twenty-first century life. His pioneering work is clarifying how our overactive stress response is affecting our ability to function and actually destroying our brain cells and our health, and shortening our lives.

Not surprisingly, it can now be clinically measured that due to the stresses and traumas of our lives

nearly everyone is, to some degree or another, stuck in a constant state of fight or flight. And once stuck we are no longer able to function normally. We come to accept this heightened state as our new “normal,” with new stresses and challenges only aggravating the problem. Everyone adapts differently, but some of the more common symptoms of being stuck in fight or flight include:

- difficulty handling stress
- reduced concentration and/or mental performance
- feeling anxious, depressed, or overwhelmed
- feeling frustrated, angry, irritable or stuck
- difficulty with everyday tasks, especially when stressed or attempting to multi-task
- being more reactive, sensitive, or defensive
- being less receptive to or capable of change
- having a limited perspective and difficulty seeing the “big picture”
- sleep problems
- having limited success with other therapies

Fight or Flight Therapy

Many people have found help with an innovative new light therapy called Fight or Flight Therapy. Designed as a home programme, specific wavelengths of light are viewed comfortably in an otherwise darkened room for twenty minutes, once or twice daily, over a period of two to four months. It is hypothesised that the light travels directly into the nervous system via the optic nerve through non-visual pathways, affecting the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal pathway and gently shifting aspects of fight or flight back toward normal.

Within weeks, most people feel more relaxed and less stressed, and they are functioning more

effectively. What is remarkable is that to whatever degree the nervous system has been re-set, the results tend to be permanent, requiring no long-term maintenance.

Objective Measures

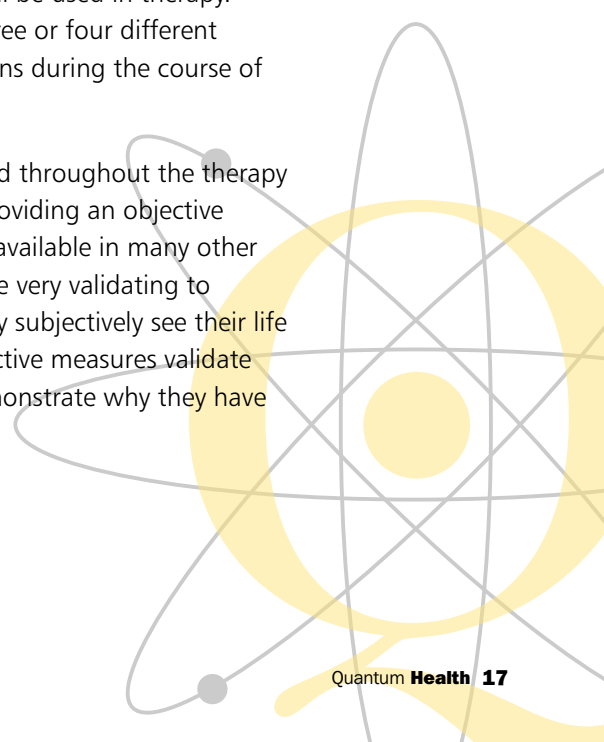
We have all experienced how small our world gets when we are stressed, angry, or scared. In the face of an immediate threat, stress, or challenge, we instinctively narrow our focus, creating a sort of visual and mental tunnel vision zeroed in on our survival.

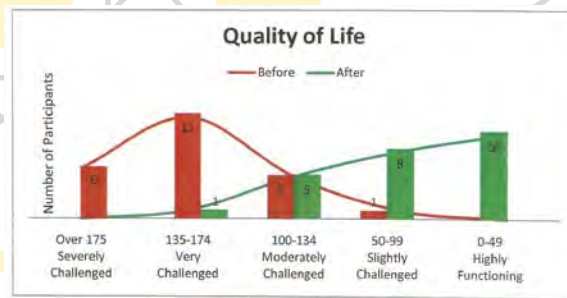
Using simple, yet specialised, visual field testing we can measure certain aspects of fight or flight through our eyes. By measuring how much peripheral visual information is chronically being suppressed (creating a subtle imperceptible tunnel vision), we can get a measure of the extent to which someone’s nervous system is skewed into a constant state of survival.

For many people, this visual field testing alone can be enlightening. Not only do they get an objective measure of the severity of their problem, but also an explanation for many of their most frustrating symptoms and behaviours. Quite often, the test results will also explain why previous therapies or techniques may have failed or plateaued with limited success.

The test results also help determine which wavelengths of light will be used in therapy. Most people require three or four different wavelength combinations during the course of their programme.

This same testing is used throughout the therapy to monitor progress, providing an objective measure of change (unavailable in many other therapies), which can be very validating to clients. Not only do they subjectively see their life changing, but the objective measures validate those changes and demonstrate why they have changed.





Subjective Measures

The graph above demonstrates self-scored symptom improvement for 24 consecutive clients who met all criteria for data collection. Each participant filled out the Fight or Flight Therapy symptom screener both before commencing and after completing their programme.

Each symptom or behaviour was graded on a scale of 0-5 in terms of severity or degree of difficulty, with the worst possible cumulative score being 350. Each person's total score was then grouped into arbitrarily defined categories based on severity of challenge to daily functioning. Most high functioning people scored 50 or less.

Note that each participant improved, with the least improvement being 19 points and the most being 251. The average percentage reduction in score was 58%, with the median reduction being 62%, all in a matter of two to four months.

This shift to higher functioning is particularly impressive considering that for the vast majority of participants these symptoms were long-standing and resistant to a wide variety of conventional and alternative interventions over many years (see case report).

Conclusion

We are learning more and more how stress has become a major determinant of our health and quality of life. Yet in today's world, stress is inescapable. Many of us seek the aid of practitioners and therapies in an effort to remediate a wide variety of symptoms, which are all too frequently caused or aggravated by just one thing: our stress response, our fight or flight response.

There are some very effective techniques for reducing daily stress, such as exercise, meditation, yoga, breath work, biofeedback, behaviour modification, and so on. When practiced regularly, these techniques can be very effective. But that is the key: you have to keep doing them, and most of us do not.

What if we could simply reset our nervous systems to a calmer place? And what if we could do that with something as simple as a short course of light therapy? That, indeed, is what appears to be happening with Fight or Flight Therapy.

Case Report: G. G., a 61-year-old business manager, in her own words

I went to Dr. Tessler seeking help with LIFE!!! Now, after Fight or Flight Therapy, I could be his poster child! I was 61 years old and ever since a very stressful childhood had been struggling to just make it through each day. I was overwhelmed with life and everything was hard for me. It felt like I was always walking through mud. I'd been in various forms of therapy for almost 40 years. I even became trained in several so I could treat myself and others. Despite all that work, for all those years, I still showed up on Dr. Tessler's doorstep scoring 299 out of 350 on his questionnaire. I told him after all the things I've tried, if he could drop my score just 50 points, to 249, I'd be thrilled. That's how desperate I was.

First progress evaluation:

The first three weeks of therapy were quite remarkable. All I did was look at my therapy light for 20 minutes once or twice a day. But during those three weeks amazing things happened:

- I was able to talk to my husband about some very traumatic things in my life without getting overly emotional about them.
- There was a problem with our HOA board of directors and instead of getting upset I was able to see it all with a new perspective and deal with it.

- I was able to negotiate the price on new furniture. I could never have done that before, fearing what people would think.
- Normally, I hated change, but suddenly I was open to and looking forward to it.
- A core issue came up with my husband, and I was able to stop in mid-argument and see a new perspective on the problem.
- I was stopping, thinking, considering, and acting, instead of 61 years of reacting.

It would have been interesting if I'd filled out the [symptom screening] questionnaire at that point, because in just three weeks, I was a different person already!

Second progress evaluation:

Part of me couldn't believe I was getting better so quickly. I could not believe something as simple as looking at a light was really working and I was truly changing. Here's what I had to admit:

- I was living with less regret and more in the moment, which I had never done before.
- I'd normally hold my breath when I got stressed. Now I was breathing!
- It took three visits to the store dealing with a new cell phone. Previously, hating change, this would have sent me over the edge. But this time I took it all in stride. Amazing!
- I noticed that in conversation I was actually listening instead of thinking of what I wanted to say to get my two cents in.
- I was taking better care of myself and setting better boundaries in dealing with appointments and deadlines.
- I was a totally different person in dealing with the stress of my job.

Third progress evaluation:

- I was able to watch and see the difference between the 'old me' and the 'new me.' Oh, how much I liked the 'new me' better.
- I was very excited to report that my cranial sacral therapist said my whole nervous system was entirely different.
- Previously, I had never wanted to improve my eating habits. All of a sudden it was just happening easily and naturally.
- Because of the horrid fall I had taken, I had been walking like a 95 year old. One day I realized I was walking, not just as the 61 year old that I was, but rather like a 20 year old. How wonderful!
- With the changes in me and my brother (who had also started Fight or Flight Therapy), my normally divisive family enjoyed one of the nicest Christmases ever.

Final progress evaluation:

It was my busiest time of year at work, which would have previously been overwhelming and made me exhausted and grouchy. This year I had energy and was dealing with it so very differently. In just four months, my score had dropped from 299 to 48. Remember, I would've been thrilled to be 249! To say the least, I am a *totally different* person! Thank you Fight or Flight Therapy!

Dr. M. Stuart Tessler built a successful optometric practice in Denver, Colorado, and in 1990 was introduced to a little-known esoteric light therapy useful in the treatment of vision problems. As his work with light progressed over the years, it became apparent that his patients were often experiencing more than just changes in their vision; their lives were changing. That work has evolved into Fight or Flight Therapy. To learn more about how Fight or Flight Therapy is changing people's lives, visit www.FightorFlightTherapy.com. You can e-mail Dr. Tessler at drtessler@FightorFlightTherapy.com.