



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Adrenaline and Stress – Part 3

Guest(s): Dr. Archibald Hart

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Dr. Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk with your host, psychologist and author, Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh, and as a way of getting started, here's a taste of what our guest these past three days, Dr. Arch Hart, has been sharing.

Dr. Arch Hart: My perception of Satan is a perception of an intelligent enemy who, if he cannot take your foot off the accelerator, will put it down very hard for you.

Roger Marsh: Wise words indeed from Dr. Archibald Hart about how easily the enemy of our souls can use our own busyness to get us off the right path. It also makes me think of the quotation from the author and Holocaust survivor, Corrie ten Boom. She said, "Beware of the barrenness of a busy life." That fits perfectly with the theme of this three-day broadcast series that we're concluding today with our guest, Dr. Arch Hart, on managing stress and adrenaline.

And even though this classic broadcast was recorded some time ago, this is still a hot topic today. I mean, just look at how many books and magazines have been dedicated to helping people who are desperate for advice on how to simplify and organize their hectic lives. But I believe this conversation with Dr. Hart offers something unique to the conversation even today.

Not only does he bring a practical, physical understanding of stress and how it affects your body and your emotions, but he marries that knowledge with the all-important spiritual aspects of the issue. His research shows that if you can learn how to manage your responsibilities in life, you will not only experience better spiritual, physical, and emotional health, it just might save your family as well.

Now, we've already covered two days' worth of advice from Dr. Hart, so if you missed anything from those two broadcasts, you can download the programs at DrJamesDobson.org. And let me quickly reintroduce our guests before we get into part three of our discussion. Dr. Hart is the author of the book, *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline and Stress*. He has also written 25 other highly acclaimed books as well. He is the Dean of Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary.

And now without further ado, let's listen to the conclusion of this very relevant conversation about stress and its link to adrenaline, right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Let's say a woman has been done wrong by her husband. I mean, really wrong. He ran off with other women. She was the last to know. Finally, he dumped her. When they got into court, he tried to take everything away from her. He divorced her, he's left her broken. Now, she's trying to raise his children. She has nothing. Every day of her life when she doesn't get enough money really to pay her bills, she thinks of him and she deeply resents him, even as a Christian. How does she deal with this?

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes, and she resents him and a part of that feeling of resentment, that emotional resentment involves a desire to hurt him back. And so, she fantasizes, you see, and all day she imagines that he has an accident and going to work or that his latest girlfriend dumps him or that some catastrophe will happen in his life, and while she's doing that, she is pumping adrenaline and destroying her own body, and the resentment she is feeling at that time is eating away at her.

Dr. Arch Hart: It was Hans Selye, the greatest researcher in stress who said that of all the emotions, the emotion that is likely to do the most damage is resentment and a desire for revenge.

Dr. Dobson: I studied that in 1956, the first time, in college.

Dr. Arch Hart: And I think that is absolutely true, and those emotions will damage the person carrying them. And this is where the gospel is so wonderful in that it gets to the heart of the matter, and I believe that the antidote for resentment is forgiveness and it's been modeled to us in Christ by God. It is the only opening at the end of the Cul-de-sac. It's the only door out of this room of resentment.

Dr. Dobson: I quoted you many times. In fact, in my book, *Love Must Be Tough*, I quoted you right at this point because you said, "Forgiveness is giving up my right to hurt you back for hurting me."

Dr. Arch Hart: So, rendering it back.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dr. Arch Hart: And we surrender that right as an act of forgiveness. We have the right and we stand there with the ax lifted and ready to bring it down on the head of the one who was hurt us. And we take that ax and we lay it aside and we do it for one reason only and that is that God has asked us to. That He has forgiven us. Now, we must forgive the one who has hurt us. And that is the greatest antidote I know.

Dr. Dobson: There is so much validity in the scripture that relates to what medical science and other aspects of scientific understanding are now coming around to. There is wholeness in the gospel.

Dr. Arch Hart: The gospel is an integrated whole... designed for the whole person, and in it is the most wonderful health that anyone can imagine.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, we've talked about resentment as one of the sources of perpetual adrenaline flow, of perpetual stress or distress. Name some of the other obvious ones that we really ought to be conscious of.

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, closely related to resentment is of course anger. And there are people who are angry all the time. Their personality is angry, they get angry at injustices, they get angry at the president, they get angry at foreigners. They're angry all the time and that puts them in a constant state of emergency.

Dr. Dobson: Name some others. I don't mean to interrupt you, but I'm thinking of potential business failure. A man who is on the edge of bankruptcy, right?

Dr. Arch Hart: The threat of failure hanging over your head.

Dr. Dobson: Medical problems that you're worried about.

Dr. Arch Hart: Threatened illness, threatened disease, worrying, anxiety.

Dr. Dobson: Having an adolescent, maybe.

Dr. Arch Hart: Certain stages of... Even having grown up children. I mean, my children are all grown up now, but problems don't stop then. And then the grandchildren come and later on a grandchild goes off the rails a little bit, and on and on and on. Life is not going to be free of stress. We have to learn to live within it, in a stress-free mode.

Dr. Dobson: Now, I'm sure, Arch, that you have read and studied the book, *The Type A...* What is it? *Type A Personality*?

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. I get the implication from that book that the author feels this is in our genes, that we are what we were born with in terms of temperament, and that

you may learn to cope better with your temperament, but you will have that temperament all of your life. Is that the impression...

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, yes. I think that was the impression that that book gave, but I don't believe that that's altogether true.

Dr. Dobson: [crosstalk 00:07:18].

Dr. Arch Hart: No. I think that we model it. I think that it's our culture that teaches us how to be that way. I've had the privilege of having grown up in Africa, and there are just as many type A people there as they are here. But there, they have not learned the habits, the behaviors, the attitudes, the beliefs, that underlie us. We are a performance-oriented culture, which makes the gospel very difficult for us.

Dr. Dobson: That's right. If it was genetic it would be the same in every culture.

Dr. Arch Hart: It'd be the same in every culture, but we are a performance-oriented culture and competitiveness, achievement... We only prove something to ourselves if we achieve something and that, I think, gives evidence that it is very much a learnt thing.

Dr. Dobson: As far as the national implications, Arch, are we a stronger country for being a nation of achievers? You know, you look at Mexico. Their culture is much more laid back. Perhaps that's more healthy for the individual, but how about the national implications?

Dr. Arch Hart: Again, I'm not making a case for either extreme. I'm making a case for a balance. I think that an individual can achieve very much more if they manage their adrenaline in a sensible way. If they counterbalance the moments of high achievement with moments of relaxation and rest. If they know when to push the work aside and when they know when to go home and be with the family. When the father knows that, "Now is the time I've got to spend with my son and not with the, the bank books." It's that balance, I think, that epitomizes everything that Christ wants in his followers.

Dr. Dobson: You are a dean of a school of psychology at Fuller. You are a professor, you are an author. You are in a lot of different things. You have a private practice. Are you speaking theoretically, Arch, or is this-

Dr. Arch Hart: No, no. I can bring my wife and my children here to testify to the fact that I have learnt to balance these things. There are times when my schedule gets hectic, but the moment that that happens, I pull back. I build in recovery time. I plan it into my schedule.

If I have a series of speaking engagements that are going to be demanding, I make sure that I plan a period of time for recovery after that. If I have a late

night speaking engagement, I make sure that I don't have a commitment at the crack of dawn the next day. That's responsible self-management. That is Christian assertiveness. And the other important to remedy for the problem is improved sleep.

Dr. Arch Hart: I sleep extra time both before I have a heavy commitment of speaking engagements and I sleep extra time after I've had extra speaking engagements because as I mentioned earlier, sleep is a very, very important restorative natural mechanism that God has given to us.

Dr. Dobson: I find also athletics. Exercise for me is very stress reducing and that it pays dividends all day long.

Dr. Arch Hart: Now, exercises, it does a number of important things for us. It helps to burn off surplus adrenaline. That's one of its functions, provided you don't exercise too competitively. There are some people-

Dr. Dobson: "I got to win."

Dr. Arch Hart: Golf has got to be the worst game of all that I know. More anger and adrenaline flows in golfers than anything else. But if you exercise and control the competitive side of it, you can burn off a lot of surplus adrenaline. And then of course there's evidence that it helps to improve the brain tranquilizers. Just natural tranquilizers in the body are enhanced as we exercise, and that all improves our ability to tolerate stress.

Dr. Dobson: They've actually demonstrated, Arch, that the brain releases endorphins or the pleasure substance that the brain-

Dr. Arch Hart: That's right. There's a whole group of hormones that are under that endorphin list. One of them is a tranquilizer, the other is a pain inhibitor. And the more we exercise, the lower is our pain experience. Our tolerance for pain goes up because these endorphins reduce our pain sensations.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, talk about us creative people, those who write, those who perform, those who are musical or creative in other ways. We need adrenaline to get that job done, don't we?

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, no, I think that's another misunderstanding that ministers typically are probably, as a group, are the largest group of creative people who have to do something fresh and novel every week. That sermon, or sermons, that must be prepared and so on.

And there is this misunderstanding that adrenaline, being psyched up is when we do the creative things. That's wrong. In my opinion, creativity is best achieved during low levels of arousal, and I've worked with a number of

ministers in therapy and I've taught them the technique of using low adrenaline arousal to do the creative work.

Dr. Dobson: Let me give you an example of the opposite and you comment on it. One of my favorite authors is Thomas Wolfe. *Look Homeward, Angel, You Can't Go Home Again*, and other books. I think he only wrote four or five before he died at a fairly young age. They said that during the peak of creativity that he would sit down at a typewriter and he wrote by what they call stream of consciousness.

I mean, he just threw down everything that was going on and he would work 14, 16, 18 hours at a time, sleep just a few hours and hit it again while this was on him. And when it passed, he was through. I mean, when it passed, he couldn't create at all. Now, there are people like that. My father was that way. When he painted a picture, my dad was an artist, he would work these long hours of intense work. And when it passed, he could not, even if he had made commitments to people, make himself create. Now, where's the contradiction?

Dr. Arch Hart: I don't think that working long hours necessarily means high level of adrenaline arousal. I think that if we were to have monitored them carefully, I think we would have found that they were operating at very low levels of adrenaline arousal. High levels of arousal usually is needed for physical activity.

Perhaps the pounding of the typewriter needs a high level of adrenaline, but the creative thinking behind that took place during low levels of adrenaline arousal. Most people, creatively function better in the early hours of the morning, shortly after they wake up. The adrenaline is low. I do all my writing before I go to work.

The moment I get to work, the moment I hit the problems, the moment I have the student interviews or all the patients waiting to be seen, my adrenaline starts to come up and I am not very creative at that point. I am productive. So, in the book I make the distinction between creativity and productivity.

Creative thinking is best done during low levels of arousal, but even creativity, the reaping process, is second to the sowing process and there are many people who don't allow adequate sowing to take place. And so in the book I talk about how to sew your mind, how to sew the thoughts.

Dr. Dobson: It's got to cook for me.

Dr. Arch Hart: It's got to cook. Yeah. And often if I'm going to write the next morning, the previous day I will go over some notes. I will review material, I look at some other books. Then I let it germinate, I'll sleep on it. And then the next morning I wake up and my mind is ready to go. The thoughts are there and I can let them flow easily and quickly at that point.

Dr. Dobson: I'm concerned about our time and I don't want it to get away from us without talking about children and stress, and how we can reduce the stress level for children.

Dr. Arch Hart: There is a lot of evidence to show that stress disease begins very early in life, and that the child at the age of even six or seven is beginning to evidence the patterns of behavior that later on will be seen to be linked to the stress-prone person.

Dr. Dobson: All right, let me throw something at you. It is my opinion that the parent who wants to open all the doors for the child and get that youngster into all kinds of lessons and experiences and exercises of various types is setting him up for some problems.

Dr. Arch Hart: Absolutely, and the child who just wants to go to the room and be quiet, read a book is often frowned upon by the parent. The parent says, "No, you've got to be active. You've got to be involved." And drags that child out and forces them into some activity that that parent values, and that is bad. The child needs to learn relaxation. He needs time to be quiet, time to be alone even, and this is how parents can easily train their children and direct their children towards a very distressful life later.

Dr. Dobson: I always surprise people by a position that I take on homework for children because I wrote a book.... Several of them on discipline and the importance of parental authority and school authority and so on, and people expect me to believe that youngsters should have this regimented kind of life.

Dr. Arch Hart: [crosstalk 00:16:44] programmed.

Dr. Dobson: But I don't believe in it. I tell you, when a youngster has sat in school for six hours, they need to get away from it, and to have the whole evening jam packed with these heavy responsibilities, I just... especially in the younger years, I think that's a great mistake.

Dr. Arch Hart: It takes that period of life for the child and turns it into a very unpleasant period. I mean, I think most people look back, most look back on their school years with not very good memories. And the more driven you were, the more someone stood over you with a knuckle duster, the more unpleasant they were.

Dr. Dobson: Having taught school, I remember the youngsters that I'll bet were under adrenaline pressure all day long because they set a standard for themselves that required that.

Dr. Arch Hart: I think as parents, it's not that we want to lower the standards, it's not that we don't want our children to achieve, but somehow we've got to teach them to balance the need to achieve with the need for relaxation. I think we should be

teaching children from a very early age, how to take time for relaxation, how to use relaxation, how to counter-balance exercise with relaxation.

Dr. Dobson: Let me role play with you, Arch. I'm a mother and I come to you and I say, "Boy, you won't believe that son of mine. I mean to tell you he's in sixth grade. He has never made a B. He takes his classwork so seriously when there's a test coming, he goes to work on it days in advance. I don't have to tell him. He does this on his own, and he just is so disciplined in everything." Do you worry about that? What do you say?

Dr. Arch Hart: I do, yes. If I were that father, I'd go to little Billy and say, "Billy, I think we should go fishing for a while. Well, I think we should go to the beach for a while. I think we should go for a drive into the countryside."

Dr. Dobson: "But daddy, I have a report due next week. I can't do that."

Dr. Arch Hart: Then I think, "Billy, you just put that down now and let you and I go and spend some time together." I think it's the rare child who would forfeit an opportunity to go and spend time, perhaps alone with daddy, who'd prefer to stick with the books than do that.

And I think we, by doing that, by us taking the initiative as parents, we would relieve the child's guilt because very often that child is being driven by a feeling that, "I'll only please mommy, I'll only please daddy, if I achieve." And that's the biggest lie that could possibly be perpetuated.

Dr. Dobson: Now, the greater majority say, "How do I get some adrenaline in this kid?"

Dr. Arch Hart: Right.

Dr. Dobson: Most of them. [crosstalk 00:19:16].

Dr. Arch Hart: But then you see, I think as parents also we need to value the low arousal. Now, it's true. Some children are lazy and need to be motivated, but motivation again is not the same as adrenaline arousal, and some children are not being stimulated enough and it's not that we must live every day without being energized. But again, back to that word of balance. The child coming from a high adrenaline demand situation needs an opportunity to counter-balance that with some distraction, with some recreation, with some relaxation.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, would you worry about a 15-year-old, we'll say, who is interested in everything but hasn't cultivated a whole lot of anything? He's a dabbler. He likes this, he likes that, he's interested in astronomy and science, and he's interested in athletics and this, that and the other, but he has no identity in any of those areas and he's just enjoying life and kind of moving from one thing to another.

We're in a day where Jimmy Connors began dragging around a tennis racket when he was three and by the time he was eight he already had this thing, that's who he was and he's turned it into, of course, a career, a life profession. What is our objective, from your perspective, as parents? Is it to expose our kids to many areas or to give them a big head start in life in one particular thing?

Dr. Arch Hart: I believe you should not put all your eggs in one basket. I believe a child should be exposed to many things. The richness of life. A child should be exposed to music and to art and to sports of many sorts. The child who focuses on one thing and one thing only does not develop a well-rounded, a well-balanced personality. You put all your eggs in one basket, you develop only one game, only one sport. If it doesn't work out for you, you have nothing else to fall back on.

And so, the child who is well-balanced and well-read, and a variety of music should be fostered. The child who is the Jack of all trades and master of none is probably better equipped to live life than the person who is the master of one narrow skill and whose ego and self-esteem is based upon that one narrow foundation. That child is living a very, very risky life.

Dr. Dobson: The advice that you've given us in three programs now, that we should take a more laid back approach and not get as uptight over accomplishments and responsibilities is our want, also applies to children.

Dr. Arch Hart: I believe so.

Dr. Dobson: That we shouldn't get too upset if they're making a few A's and B's and C's. They haven't done anything by the time they're 12, 14 or 15 that you can write all the relatives and brag about. They're just ordinary kids coming through life, kind of enjoying it, laid back. You feel better about that?

Dr. Arch Hart: Balance. Balance. You see.

Dr. Dobson: I love that word.

Dr. Arch Hart: Maybe balance is better than laid back. Balance. A child who can balance achieving with recreation, who can balance driven-ness with being able to put the books down, put the pencils aside, and enjoy some recreation. That's the child, I believe, who will be better equipped to live a balanced adult life.

Dr. Dobson: Well, we come to the end of the third broadcast on this extremely important subject. It's been a pleasure having you with us, Arch, and I hope you'll come back.

Dr. Arch Hart: Good to be with you, Jim.

Roger Marsh:

There was so much helpful advice on this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk with our guest, Dr. Arch Hart. In fact, there was so much good material in these three days' worth of broadcast that I hope you were taking notes. Maybe there's someone in your life that you could share this message with as well.

I think we can all think of people who mean very well and they love the Lord, but they have packed their lives so full of things and activities, they're just running themselves and their families ragged. Perhaps they haven't seen this yet in themselves, but they could really benefit from a loving friend to help them learn about this topic. Well, here's my advice to you. Be that friend.

Download or share this message with them today. You'll find it at DrJamesDobson.org. Also on our website we have posted a link to Dr. Hart's book, the title again, *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline and Stress*, and we have so many other great resources online as well. We've got videos and articles answering some of the most common questions related to family life, and you can find all of that and more when you go to DrJamesDobson.org.

When you support this ministry, both through your prayers and also through your financial contributions, you are helping us to create and update these great resources for the family. We couldn't do it without you. So, if you're able, would you consider making a financial contribution to the ministry? 877 732-6825 is the number to call, or you can give a gift online through our secure website at DrJamesDobson.org. Thanks so much for your financial partnership and thanks for joining us today. I'm Roger Marsh and we'll see you right back here next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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