



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Adrenaline and Stress – Part 2

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.

Dr. Arch Hart: ... and in our culture where we use adrenaline so much, we can decide whether we going to use it or not and to switch it off usually takes some form of relaxation. That's the most powerful antidote we have for arousal.

Roger Marsh: Thanks for choosing to be with us for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk with your host, psychologist and author Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh and yesterday, we started a fascinating and highly practical conversation about managing stress. Now, let's be honest. We all have some level of stress in our lives. Some have more than others, but it's a very common trait of the human experience. The question is, how do we choose to deal with the pressures of our adult responsibilities? Now that can have a great impact on our physical health and our family life too, and that's why it's important for us to address this topic today here on family talk with a classic broadcast from our archives.

Dr. Arch Hart, who is an expert in the field, is our guest. Dr. Hart has done years of research into this topic and written a book about what he has discovered. The book is called *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline And Stress*. Now the broadcast in part one, of course, was full of great advice about managing stress, so if you did not have a chance to listen to the first part of our conversation, you can get caught up at drjamesdobson.org where we have an archive of the program. Dr. Arch Hart has written 25 other books. He's the Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. And with those credentials, you know he's got great advice to share. So let's rejoin the conversation right now here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, again, we're glad to have you here.

Dr. Arch Hart: It's good to be back again, Jim.

Dr. Dobson: You have completed what I consider to be a very exciting and a potentially very helpful book for all of us, related to the hectic lifestyle that we live and what that does to our bodies. It's called *Adrenaline And Stress*, and you've spent a good part of your private practice dealing with stress management, haven't you?

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes. I think that's because I'm so concerned about stress in my own life that I've paid an awful lot of attention to how it affects other people so that I could learn a little bit myself.

Dr. Dobson: We spent most of our time on the last broadcast talking about one symptom of adrenaline flowing in the body and that is cold hands, but there are a number of other symptoms. Why don't you run down those that list real quickly?

Dr. Arch Hart: I think the most common symptom we have today of stress is headaches. Tension headaches primarily. Although many people go around believing they have migraine headaches, which they don't have. What they have are tension headaches.

Dr. Dobson: What's the difference?

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, the migraine headache is a vascular headache. It has to do with the veins in the brain, whereas the tension headache has to do with the muscles on the outside of the body. A tension headache implies that you don't have your life together. Migraine headaches usually is seen as a straightforward physiological reaction, so you're not to blame for them, there's less stigma. But in actual fact, many migraine headaches are also stress-related in the sense that the migraine headache is triggered by stress.

Dr. Dobson: What are some of the other symptoms? Stomach distress-

Dr. Arch Hart: Stomach trouble, discomfort, the ulcer of course, but just general stomach disturbance, diarrhea, constipation, colitis. These are all symptoms of stress. Then we have the heart and the vascular system. Rapid heartbeat. Panic disorders, so to have a high level of anxiety is a symptom of stress and then of course the high blood pressure, which is so prevalent in our day and age.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, another a symptom of distress, too much stress, is sleep problems. Interference with good deep satisfying sleep. You talk about that in your book.

Dr. Arch Hart: I talk about it because it used to be a problem in my life. I think we've been conned, Jim, into believing that we don't need as much sleep as we get, that most of us are sleeping our lives away. And I remember that years ago there was some research that insurance companies did that tried to prove that if you slept too much, you lived a shorter life and that has totally been debunked now. There's no truth to that whatsoever.

Dr. Arch Hart: But you see what happens is as our adrenaline comes up, our need for sleep comes down, and the person who is living on a lot of adrenaline does not need as much sleep as the person who has low adrenaline.

Dr. Dobson: And yet they may be damaging their body.

Dr. Arch Hart: As a consequence of that, they are damaging their bodies. So, to exist, believing you don't need as much sleep, may be a very, very important symptom that you're under too much stress.

Dr. Dobson: Or the person who is not sleeping well, the insomniac, he is getting a clue perhaps that he's pumping too much adrenaline?

Dr. Arch Hart: That's right. Pumping too much adrenaline. Either you've got too much adrenaline when you go to sleep, so you can't fall asleep easily, or the typical pattern is three or four o'clock in the morning, you're wide awake because your adrenaline, after having switched off for a short while, suddenly rebounds, comes alive again and you ready to go for the day.

But either way, either not falling asleep easily or waking up early in the morning, is a symptom that you are experiencing too much adrenaline arousal. I have some research going right now looking at the sleeping patterns of men who have suffered heart attacks and the preliminary evidence is quite clear that people who suffer heart attacks sleep much less than people who don't, and to me that is symptomatic-

Dr. Dobson: Before or after?

Dr. Arch Hart: Before the heart attack. In other words, the people who live on their adrenaline don't sleep as much as people who don't live on that adrenaline and those who live on adrenaline have a greater incidence of heart disease. So in my opinion, two things. The amount of sleep you get is symptomatic of too much adrenaline arousal, if you don't have enough sleep, if you don't need enough sleep. The second thing is that one of the antidotes for too much adrenaline is to increase the amount of time you sleep.

Dr. Dobson: This is a vicious cycle. You can see how you're burning the candle at both ends when all day long you're on this alarm reaction state and then you extend the day and shorten the night so you're back at it again after four or five hours and you wake up at 5:30 in the morning and get up and hit it.

Dr. Arch Hart: That's right. And you're feeling good. You see, I'm not suggesting that you don't feel good. Often, that's how we thrive. We love that that go go go feeling, but sooner or later you will pay for it and you'll pay for it later in your life with the ulcers, and particularly the heart disease, which is the most serious disease facing us today. A million people every year die of heart attacks. It's more than

all the other causes of death put together, and in my opinion it's primary cause is the living in the emergency mode, too much adrenaline.

Dr. Dobson: Even more than the things that we hear about, such as smoking and a sedentary life-

Dr. Arch Hart: Even more than that.

Dr. Dobson: ... bad diet and other ...

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes, even more than that. I think the person who smokes is needing a tranquilizer and is using the smoking to counteract the effects of the adrenaline. I believe that there is a relationship even there.

Dr. Dobson: And there's data to back that up.

Dr. Arch Hart: Not a lot of it. A lot of it ... I'm suggesting that from my clinical experience that that is so, that people who smoke a lot tend to sleep much less and when you measure the amount of adrenaline they are producing, it is very much higher than the average person.

Dr. Dobson: How many hours per night would you recommend for men and women? Is it the same?

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes, I believe it's the same and I recommend an average of about nine hours of sleep as a goal to be achieved.

Dr. Dobson: And if a person can't stay asleep that much, they need to look at that total-

Dr. Arch Hart: Then you've got to work at bringing your adrenaline down. Do relaxation exercises. Change your thinking. Do better adrenaline management. Go for a walk in the evening before you go to bed. In my book, I have a whole chapter devoted to how you can sleep better, and for many of us improved sleeping habit is easy to achieve if we'll just change the sequence in which we do some things. And I certainly do not advocate using sleep medication.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that. You obviously, and I agree with you, do not recommend tranquilizers and Nembutals and all of those things.

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, there are appropriate uses for them and I have sent patients for medication, for tranquilizers and for sleeping medications and so on, but those are rather desperate measures.

Dr. Dobson: They're masking the real problem.

Dr. Arch Hart: They're masking the real problem, but particularly in sleep, artificial sleep does not serve the same function as natural sleep.

Dr. Dobson: The rapid eye movement dreaming that needs to occur does not happen when you're medicated as much, does it?

Dr. Arch Hart: Not as much, and when it does happen, it's not the same. It is artificially induced. Sleep is a mysterious thing. We don't understand it fully, and there are some things that go on in sleep, psychologically speaking, that cannot go on when you are drugged in a sleep. People who have been on sleep medication for a long time invariably develop some sort of emotional turmoil and getting back to natural sleep has to happen as soon as possible.

Dr. Dobson: All right. We're talking to people who recognize themselves at that moment.

Dr. Arch Hart: I mean, probably 100%.

Dr. Dobson: I wouldn't be surprised. It's sort of like telling us we ought to eat better and you go into a restaurant and there's not a thing on the menu that's without salt, fat, and sugar and the other stuff that people complain about.

Dr. Arch Hart: Yeah, right.

Dr. Dobson: What do we do in a country that has as its cultural centerpiece that kind of hectic lifestyle?

Dr. Arch Hart: The model that I present in the book is not one in which we withdraw and all go and live in a monastery somewhere or on a desert island where there's no one else to bother us. The model I present is a mountain and Valley model. In other words, we go up the mountain into the hectic, busy, demanding life that we're in, but that we must make sure that that is followed by a valley. A valley of rest, a valley of peace, a valley of quietness, a valley of non-arousal. And I see this mountain and valley as occurring perhaps every minute, every hour, every day, every week. Every hour of my day, I try to find the moment in which I can experience the valley, the switch off. At the end of the day, I want to ... time at the end of each day when I can experience that valley. Certainly at the end of every week, I ought to experience such a period of rest.

Dr. Dobson: Tim Hansel was here on the program talking about his book *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, and he talked about instant vacations, or one minute vacations, where he just all of a sudden sits down and he says, "For a minute or two or three minutes, I'm on vacation here."

Dr. Arch Hart: That's an excellent idea. I think that that's how we've got to think. Of course, that only pays attention to one aspect of it. The other is the one I deal with in my book, which is adrenaline management. In other words, we have to decide when we need our adrenaline and when we don't need it, and some of us are using high powered, high octane adrenaline to chase mice.

Dr. Dobson: Now that implies that adrenaline can be brought under the control of the conscious processes instead of being part of the autonomic nervous system.

Dr. Arch Hart: Except for the emergency reactions when you are confronted with a life or death situation, our adrenaline is under conscious control. I can choose whether I want adrenaline to flow or not. Of course, it's programmed into my beliefs, into my attitudes, but I can reprogram those beliefs. I can slow down my thinking, my behaving and choose, "do I need my adrenaline now or don't?"

Dr. Dobson: Jesus said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Boy, that is incredibly insightful, isn't it?

Dr. Arch Hart: It is incredibly insightful. What we think can determine how our body reacts and so part of the solution is learning how to manage your adrenaline. And in our culture where we use adrenaline so much, we can decide whether we're going to use it or not. And to switch it off usually takes some form of relaxation. That's the most powerful antidote we have for arousal.

Dr. Dobson: Now, Arch, you gave quite a bit of attention in your book to meditation and obviously you're concerned about the discrediting of meditation because of what's taken place with transcendental meditation in the Eastern religions and so on, and that we may be losing some of the benefits for fear that we're going to fall into some Eastern mystical interpretation.

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes, that's true. I don't support transcendental meditation-

Dr. Dobson: Nor I.

Dr. Arch Hart: ... or yoga or any of those practices because they are embellished with religious connotations, and so I don't encourage Christian people to get involved in any of that. But at the same time, I think we must be careful that we don't throw the baby out with the bath water. In other words, transcendental meditation and these practices have merely picked up on the God given ability we all have to relax and I think that there's a Christian meditation, there's a Christian resting, that can be very beneficial to the body.

Dr. Dobson: The Psalms refer to it.

Dr. Arch Hart: Constantly. "Be still and know that I am God." But caught up as we are in our adrenaline addiction, most of us don't even know how to worship in stillness and quietness. We want entertainment and we want adrenaline arousal when we go to church and some of that is good, but it has to be balanced by the quietness, the peaceful, the still waters, the valleys.

Dr. Dobson: Okay, let's talk to the busy person who is just racing and running and has for 30 years and, "You don't understand Dr. Hart. I have built this a business that depends on me and I just don't have the leadership there and the staff to take

care of it and if I take off one or two days a week, I mean the thing will just turn and go downhill. And what can I do about this? How do I change a lifetime pattern? The river's flowing in that direction. I don't know how to stop it."

Dr. Arch Hart: That argument I hear again and again, and it's not until that person has had his or her first heart attack that they are willing to pay the price to change it and then-

Dr. Dobson: what a price.

Dr. Arch Hart: What a price to pay when you can prevent that so readily, so easily. I think we have to change our attitudes, our thinking about ourselves. We are not indispensable. Hebrews 11 reminds us that all those great men and women of faith all died in faith, not having received the promises. God is in not the business of finishing things but really in the business of not finishing things, and most of us will die with our tasks not finished and others will have to come along and pick up where we've left off and move on from there.

Dr. Dobson: You made that point in the book. I think that that's incredible, that the Christian life involves never finishing the task.

Dr. Arch Hart: You will never finish the task in this life. We live by faith and we will finish our lives by faith and we will leave behind the task to be picked up and carried on by the next generation.

Dr. Dobson: Let me tell you my weakness. I talked a few minutes ago about something I did right. Let me tell you something that I do wrong. I can live with unfinished creative tasks. I probably drive some publishers crazy because I don't get my book finished when they'd like it to be finished, but when I look at a stack of debris on my desk, I can't help it, man.

Dr. Arch Hart: You've got to finish it.

Dr. Dobson: I don't care what time of day it is. I'll attack it. That unfinished paper, that clutter, is like for some women, I'm sure, a house where things aren't put away.

Dr. Arch Hart: The sink piled high with dirty dishes.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. I can't stand it.

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes, but you see, I'm not saying don't finish, don't tackle that pile of dishes, don't tackle that pile of paper. I'm saying sit back, relax. Don't use adrenaline to do-

Dr. Dobson: To get it done.

- Dr. Arch Hart: ... to get it done. You see, I think it's the mismatch. That is the message of my book, that we're using high octane adrenaline to do what is... stuff that can be done with very little energy. Don't sit all tensed up. Don't drive the car with the adrenaline surging. And this raises an interesting point relating to the emotions. You see, there are certainly emotions that demand adrenaline. When you're angry or resentful or frustrated, your adrenaline is pumping. Don't work with anger. Don't work with frustration. If sitting there doing that pile of papers is going to make you angry and frustrated, set it aside. Leave the task. Come back when your mind is at peace and when you can do it without it.
- Dr. Dobson: Now I see the linkage with the subject we talked to you about the first time you were here, having to do with resentment and unforgiveness and carrying that burden around with you for another person. That also puts you in an alarm reaction state, perpetual-
- Dr. Arch Hart: An emergency response, yes. Those are the adrenaline emotions and those emotions must be avoided at all costs. You don't need adrenaline. It's a signal. You see, part of the adrenaline system is a signal. It's telling you "emergency." It's warning of an impending danger, but a pile of papers on your desk is hardly something you have to be afraid of or be angry at, because you can choose whether you want to do it or not right there and then.
- Dr. Dobson: Review what you said on that day here, particularly as related to stress. 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 a 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 that?
- Dr. Arch Hart: Yes, and she resents him and a part of that feeling of resentment, that emotion of resentment, involves a desire to hurt him back. And so she fantasizes, you see, and all day, she imagines that he has an accident going to work or that his latest girlfriend dumps him or that some catastrophe will happen in his life. 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. It was Hans Selye, the greater 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've 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 has 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 and 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: You know, 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're out of time, but we're not out of subject matter and so I'd like to just continue talking here in the studio and then we'll just air that tape next time and allow people to hear what we're about to say. Is that all right?

Dr. Arch Hart: Great. Good idea.

Roger Marsh: And what a wonderful way to bring this second day with Dr. Arch Hart to a close here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk broadcast. I'm Roger Marsh, and if these broadcasts have you thinking about the pace of your life and if you're ready to make some changes in that pace, we have some resources to help you. You'll find them at drjamesdobson.org.

First up, we have a link to Dr. Arch Hart's book. It is titled *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline And Stress*. You'll find that at drjamesdobson.org. Also, Dr. Dobson's classic book just mentioned a moment ago, *Love Must Be Tough*. You'll find that information as well at drjamesdobson.org. You can also ask about those resources when you call us at (877) 732-6825.

Also, if you would consider a tax deductible gift while you're on our website, we would certainly appreciate that as well. Please remember that we are a completely listener supported ministry and your generosity means so much. Thanks so much for spending time with us today and don't miss our third and final day with Dr. Arch Hart coming up tomorrow. That's on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Dobson: I've had some bad days in my life, but I can't remember one quite like the day Chippy the parakeet just had. It all began when Chippy's owner decided to clean his cage with a vacuum cleaner. She was halfway finished when the phone rang, so she turned to answer it. Before she knew it, Chippy was gone. In a panic, she unsnapped the top of the vacuum and ripped open the bag. There was Chippy covered in dirt and gasping for air. She carried him to the bathroom and rinsed him off under the sink. Then realizing that Chippy was cold and wet, she reached for the hairdryer. Chippy never knew what hit him. His owner was asked a few days later how he was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippy doesn't sing much anymore. He just sits and stares."

Have you ever felt like that? One minute you're whistling through life, and the next you're caught up in a whirlwind of stress. You're running frantically through the airport and arrive just at the gate in time to see your plane take off. The table is set for guests when you see smoke curling out of the kitchen. The annoyances of life strike when you least expect them and they always leave us dazed and disoriented. The next time life sucks you up and it's vortex, just do what Chippy did. Hang on and make the best of it, and don't let the song go out of your life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This is Dr. Tim Clinton, executive director of the James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks for listening today. We hope you found this program helpful and encouraging. Please remember that our ministry is here to serve you and your family. For more information about our programs and resources or to learn how you can support us, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org or call us toll free, (877) 732-6825. I pray that God will bless you in 2020. We're so grateful for your partnership. We ask you to stand with us and to continue to defend the Christian values in an ever changing culture. Thanks again for joining us. We hope you'll join us again on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.