



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Adrenaline and Stress – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Archibald Hart

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Dr. Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, the 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: Most of us who live constantly in a state of adrenaline arousal, we never know when to come down.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk with your host, bestselling author and psychologist, Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh, and if your life is anything like mine, sometimes doesn't it feel like we're living at a breakneck speed? I mean, we all have responsibilities that we have to handle, bills that have to be paid, errands that have to be run, kids who got to get off to school, et cetera, et cetera. Most of that is simply just the reality of being an adult, and especially if you're a parent and you've got kids. But on top of all that, doesn't there seem to be a tendency in our culture to simply over pack our daily lives until you kind of get the feeling you're like a hamster on that treadmill, on that spinning wheel, running and running, trying to keep the speed up just so you can maintain the kind of life that you are trying to live.

Now, if this sounds like you, if that really strikes a nerve with you, I'm glad you have tuned to the right place today. Today we are going to feature a classic interview with Dr. Dobson and a man who is very qualified to speak on this topic, Dr. Arch Hart. He's a Christian clinical psychologist who is an expert researcher. He's a writer in the area of stress management. He's written a book on this topic called *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline and Stress*. He's also the Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. So as you can imagine, he's got lots of great practical advice on managing stress. So let's get right to it. Here now is Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dr. Arch Hart on this Family Talk broadcast.

Dr. Dobson: Well, we're going to talk today about stress and its consequences with an authority on that subject. His name is Dr. Arch Hart. Hey, as a matter of fact, the last time I saw you, you were under stress.

Dr. Arch Hart: I was under a lot of stress.

Dr. Dobson: Do you remember the situation?

Dr. Arch Hart: I was right on the street in front of your building in a light rain.

Dr. Dobson: I was sitting at my desk. It was raining outside, as Arch said, and I heard a siren. And it was came from a long way off, and you just kind of are aware of that in the background. I suddenly realized it had stopped right in front of our building. So, I went to the window and I cranked it open. Just a little rain falling, and I looked down and there was a minor traffic accident going on on the street right below me, and somebody was obviously injured, and I was just standing there looking down at the people. And I realized that the woman in the car is the one that was injured. She was just sitting there, didn't seem badly injured, but the paramedics came over and talked to her. And my personal assistant came and we were just standing there looking down, and they finally got the woman out of the car and I couldn't believe it. It was Arch's wife.

Dr. Arch Hart: [inaudible 00:02:57] my wife, Kathleen.

Dr. Dobson: And we went running down the stairs to see how she was. Explain what happened.

Dr. Arch Hart: She's fine. She injured her neck slightly, and they wanted to take precautions, didn't want her to move her neck or something, so they strapped her on a board and took her to the emergency room. But she's doing fine. She's all over that now.

Dr. Dobson: What kind of stress were you feeling at that moment?

Dr. Arch Hart: Oh, I was under a lot of stress. A lot of anger because we were in a long line of traffic, and I had stopped waiting for the traffic ahead of me to move when someone rear-ended me. I was doing nothing. I was innocent completely.

Dr. Dobson: Just sitting there.

Dr. Arch Hart: Just sitting there. But boy, my adrenaline shot through the roof. I was angry. I was frightened, and it was a very upsetting time for me. A very stressful time.

Dr. Dobson: How can you tell when your adrenaline shoots through the roof?

Dr. Arch Hart: Oh, I know. I know that feeling, that surging. The heart pounds. My hands start to get cold. I can just feel them clamming up. I sweat a little bit, and I get fidgety and edgy. I start to move very rapidly. I speak very fast.

Dr. Dobson: All right. Let's talk a little bit about that subject. There is a direct relationship between adrenaline, which is a hormone put out by the adrenal glands, and stress. Let's start by defining stress in the context that you're using it.

Dr. Arch Hart: In the context I'm using it, of course, I'm defining stress as anything that puts your body into a fight or flight response. It's a very fundamental approach, but whenever the body is alarmed, alerted, mobilized, aroused to the point where it has to protect you, that puts you into a state of stress.

Dr. Dobson: That's not necessarily bad, is it?

Dr. Arch Hart: It's not necessarily bad. Most of us live in that state of arousal or that state of emergency all day. The one type of person, we refer to them as a type A person, that person who is very driven and very highly motivated, very competitive, that person lives in the state of emergency all the time. It's a constant state of existence.

Dr. Dobson: And that does wear out systems.

Dr. Arch Hart: That's the person who will get ulcers, who will develop heart disease, and who will die a premature death.

Dr. Dobson: The type A personality.

Dr. Arch Hart: The type A personality.

Dr. Dobson: I read someplace in your materials that one physician said he rarely sees anyone who dies of old age.

Dr. Arch Hart: Yeah. That was Hans Selye. He's the grandfather of all stress. After performing thousands of autopsies he was convinced no one in our day and age died of old age. People wore out some part of their system before they died of old age. Dying of old age implies that every part of the body would uniformly age and wear away, but most of us wear out certain parts of the body ahead of everything else.

Dr. Dobson: All right. Let's go a little further in defining the difference between the system as it's supposed to function and the way it functions when it malfunctions, where you have a flow adrenaline in a healthy sense is that emergency situation, maybe not life and death, but where you need a little extra juice, where are you need to turn up the heat a little bit, if you're in an interview situation like this.

Dr. Arch Hart: Like this broadcast.

Dr. Dobson: Some additional adrenaline ought to be flowing.

Dr. Arch Hart: That's correct, yes. And that's why I introduced the concept of adrenaline management. I think that good stress management should help us to manage our adrenaline. And managing it means that when I need it, when I have an emergency situation, when I have a deadline that's got to be met, when a kid is ill and has to be rushed to the hospital, in those situations where I need my adrenaline, I should know how to let it go. I give it its head. I let it surge and flow. Good adrenaline management, though, also knows when to conserve that adrenaline. So if I've been in a state of high demand, such as preparing for and doing this broadcast, I should allow myself, afterwards, to come down off that adrenaline. Most of us who live constantly in a state of adrenaline arousal. We never know when to come down.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, in trying to evaluate ourselves in coming to an understanding of our own physiology, how can we tell? You indicated that you know when you're in that alarm reaction state. How can others know that?

Dr. Arch Hart: Yeah. That is a very important thrust in the book, because I think that most of us, if we were to be assessed very carefully, would not be able to tell when we are in a state of stress. For most of us, adrenaline arousal feels good, so we see that, we feel so good when our adrenaline is up that we interpret that as a good state to be in. We don't see it as stress.

Dr. Dobson: We call it being up or high.

Dr. Arch Hart: We call it being up, and most of us when we get up in the morning, we feel lousy. We may have our few cups of coffee. We may jog or do some exercise to get up so we can feel good. In other words, we don't feel good unless our adrenaline is up. Now with the adrenaline being up, it can be super up. That, we know, that's the accident, the mugger confronting you. Your heart pounds. It's very easy to tell that your adrenaline is surging there. The dangerous time is the lower level, the ordinary rum drum routine, everyday existence. Knowing whether your adrenaline is up under those conditions or not, that is very, very critical. And I suggest in the book a number of ways we can do that.

Dr. Dobson: Some fascinating ways. Tell us.

Dr. Arch Hart: Some fascinating ways. The most interesting one, I think, has been the development in recent years of ways in which we can measure our skin temperature, the temperature of our hands. Typically, when we have an adrenaline arousal, our hands start to get cold. Maybe they only drop one or two degrees, or perhaps they may drop as much 10 or 15 degrees. Right now, as I sit here in front of this microphone, I'm aware of the fact that my hands are about 20 degrees colder than they usually are.

Dr. Dobson: You know, mine are too. When you have cold hands that means the blood is being redirected to the brain.

Dr. Arch Hart: The blood is being withdrawn from the hands and shunted elsewhere for the emergency response, you see? The fight or flight response, either to the brain to get ideas going quickly, or action oriented to the muscles, to the heart so you can pump faster, to the stomach so it can digest the food faster. So the blood is needed elsewhere during the emergency, and so the blood is withdrawn from the hands. I should hasten to add, though, that there are a few individuals who have a congenital problem here. Ever since they were born, their hands have typically been cold. I would hardly say that these people are constantly under stress.

Dr. Dobson: Women are more likely to be that way, yeah.

Dr. Arch Hart: Women are more likely to. And surprisingly also, or perhaps not surprisingly, it is very common with the cold hands phenomenon for women to experience migraine headaches, and for these migraine headaches to be experienced typically just before the period. And it's a very common and sometimes a very uncomfortable period for a woman. And the more they have been under stress through the month, the more likely they are to experience the migraine headache just before their period and that cold hands phenomenon.

Dr. Dobson: Following your analogy there, is there's too much blood being redirected into the brain?

Dr. Arch Hart: Too much blood. Engorgement is taking place not only in the brain but also in the important critical parts of female-

Dr. Dobson: Cardiovascular system, yeah.

Dr. Arch Hart: ... female physiology involved with reproduction, you see? And there's too much blood there, and consequently they experience the discomfort that follows.

Dr. Dobson: You started to explain the new developments. In fact, we all have them on our hands at this moment.

Dr. Arch Hart: Yes. [crosstalk 00:10:51] skin temperature. A temperature sensitive dot has been manufactured in recent years, and is available from a number of different companies. And this little dot you can wear on the hand. And from the color of the dot, you can tell what the temperature of your hand is.

Dr. Dobson: It looks like a little Avery label, just a little green-

Dr. Arch Hart: It's like a little Avery dot. Yeah, about a quarter of an inch diameter, and it changes color depending on how warm your hand is. If it's a nice dark blue, your hands are warm. If it goes green, you're starting to get colder, and if it goes black then you are pretty cold in your hands. And for the average person, that is a fairly reliable indicator of when you are experiencing an acute stress reaction.

Dr. Dobson: Now we put this on my hand. All of us did, actually, in my office. And my dot was green when we began talking-

Dr. Arch Hart: When we started.

Dr. Dobson: ... about 45 minutes ago, and we were just sitting there chatting. It is now fully black. So, I'm obviously-

Dr. Arch Hart: Right. [crosstalk 00:11:48] your adrenaline is up, as it should be. Now is the time you need your adrenaline. So we would not label this as a negative stress. We'd see it as a positive stress. You're experiencing arousal because a task has to be performed, and this is appropriate. Now distress, which is the damaging side of stress occurs when we are in this state of arousal all the time. If we don't allow it to come down, if there's no relief for that system, then you're likely to begin to develop the symptoms of distress.

Dr. Dobson: Generally speaking, the person with perpetually warm hands can be thought of as a person who is handling stress fairly well.

Dr. Arch Hart: Generally speaking. However, I think that before you put that dot on today, Jim, you would have believed that your hands were constantly warm.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dr. Arch Hart: There's an interesting fact about stress is that it eludes recognition. We get used to our hands. Whether they warm or cold, we feel comfortable with whatever they are. My concern, however, is not so much with these extreme states of arousal, but for the everyday. I think that stress is killing us, not because the major life traumas are damaging to us, but that the everyday existence is too high arousal. We are living in a day and age where we are adrenaline addicts. We live on our adrenaline. We only feel good when our adrenaline is up, and that is not how we were designed. That's not what God intended for us.

Dr. Dobson: Jesus did not live his life that way, did He?

Dr. Arch Hart: The whole life of Jesus was a life of unhurriedness.

Dr. Dobson: He got in the boat and got away-

Dr. Arch Hart: He got away.

Dr. Dobson: ... even though there were people who needed Him.

Dr. Arch Hart: "[crosstalk 00:13:30] and rest a while," He said. Thousands needed to be healed. He said, "Let's go and rest." He modeled a life of unhurriedness. And if there's one characteristic that this so-called type A person has that is very damaging, it is the sense of urgency, time urgency. I've got to do it now. Now, now, now.

That's the sense of time urgency. And I believe very, very strongly... And you see, I'm that way, Jim. I am a type A person.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. I'm afraid I am, too.

Dr. Arch Hart: And unfortunately, most people who accomplish anything in life are type A people.

Dr. Dobson: You think most people in the Western world live too hectic a pace?

Dr. Arch Hart: Absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: And live on this adrenaline, they're almost addicted to it.

Dr. Arch Hart: They are addicted to it. And I'm addicted to it, and I'm very aware of it. For me a weekend is usually a less active period. It feels like an adrenaline let down because we are so driven and so addicted to our adrenaline.

Dr. Dobson: You talked about the type A personality, the executive and so on. But in your book, in your manuscript, you talk about homemakers. Mothers with two or three children around their feet can also live on an alarm reaction state.

Dr. Arch Hart: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Let's make no mistake about it. It's not just the bank executive, or the senior pastor, or the missionary right on the front line who is the stressed person. I think one of the most stressful existences a person can live is to be a homemaker.

Dr. Dobson: Or a single mother, perhaps.

Dr. Arch Hart: Or perhaps a single mother. But those sorts of responsibilities are... The reason they can be more damaging is because they're constantly there. There's no let up. In a business situation or even the Pastor, sure, he or she will get into the pulpit on a Sunday morning and preach the sermon, but then it's over for a while. There is some relief. Whereas the homemaker, the single mother, some of those people are constantly-

Dr. Dobson: You never get away from it.

Dr. Arch Hart: ... being stressed.

Dr. Dobson: Talk about stress and disease, Arch. What is that relationship?

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, I think that there is abundant evidence now that stress, constant low grade persistent stress, reduces our ability to fight off disease. The immune system becomes depleted. Our white blood cells, all the components that fight disease are reduced from this constant bombardment of stress, and that makes

us more prone to sickness, and more prone to the more serious forms of sickness.

Dr. Dobson: Including heart disease.

Dr. Arch Hart: Including heart disease.

Dr. Dobson: There's some reason to believe that prolonged stress is related to cholesterol levels in our body.

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, I think that we have over interpreted the involvement of cholesterol. There's a missing ingredient that has been overlooked, and this is a major thrust of my book, is to point out that controlling cholesterol through diet, through exercise and many other ways is only one side of that coin. There is another side, and that other side is controlling your adrenaline. Everyone I know who has died from a heart attack has enjoyed the experience right to the last minute.

Dr. Dobson: Overworking themselves?

Dr. Arch Hart: They are thriving on their arousal. And the evidence is clear that cholesterol can be controlled through diet only to a maximum of about 10%. Only 10% of our cholesterol comes from our diet. The rest comes from the body, and the higher you are aroused in your adrenaline, the higher is your level of cholesterol. That evidence is [crosstalk 00:17:09] now.

Dr. Dobson: Is it irrefutable?

Dr. Arch Hart: I believe so. And I have worked clinically with a number of men who have had heart attacks and then had open heart surgery, and their diets, all they do is munch lettuce all day for six months, and their cholesterol is still too high.

Dr. Dobson: And it's still [crosstalk 00:17:26].

Dr. Arch Hart: But when we start what we call type A counseling, or counseling them to get their adrenaline down, their cholesterol begins to drop. So in my opinion and the research evidence is to support that, that high levels of adrenaline is what pushes the cholesterol up. There's an important link between the two, which is why the type A person is three times more likely to get heart disease than the other type, the more relaxed person.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, you said in your book, again, that the greatest sources of stress are not the life threatening things as you mentioned before, a burglar puts a gun in your back, but they're the minor hassles of everyday living. Explain that.

Dr. Arch Hart: Well, it is having an ongoing conflict with the neighbor.

Dr. Dobson: Or a mother-in-law.

Dr. Arch Hart: Let me illustrate from my own personal life. We have neighbors at the back who recently acquired a dog. Which then the dog makes a lot of noise, typically one o'clock in the morning, and there must be at least half an hour before the owners wake up and go and take care of the dog. But for me, that sort of hassle lying there, one o'clock in the morning, steaming, wondering why don't they take care of the dog, is much more stress producing than when I get to the office and have a very difficult- or a threatened suicide, a patient who's threatened suicide or something like that. It's minor, and it doesn't get our attention. We don't always pay attention to it, but it's there raising our adrenaline and keeping us in a state of arousal.

Dr. Dobson: Having a green light change on you at the last minute and you've got to sit there-

Dr. Arch Hart: Driving on the freeway to work every morning. If you have an hour's drive on a freeway every morning to work, you're under a lot of stress, which is why it's in those minor life situations you have to learn to control your adrenaline.

Dr. Dobson: And that's where the stress dots can come in handy. You just look down at it and you see the color.

Dr. Arch Hart: The value of the stress dot is to simply alert you to what situations are threatening. Now, if you know that driving on the freeway every day is stressful for you because you get angry. The type A person is always in a hurry, doesn't like delays, frustration is anger producing, then you can sit back and relax, pray a prayer of contentment at that moment. Ask God's peace to come over. Move over to the slow lane of the freeway. Use the time to commune with God. Get your thoughts off the bad drivers around you. That will bring your stress down.

Dr. Dobson: Can you change? Can you change?

Dr. Arch Hart: I have changed, Jim, so I think that if I can change, anybody can change.

Dr. Dobson: And yet many Christians don't change when they come to the Lord. That doesn't automatically turn you into a laid back, easy going kind of guy.

Dr. Arch Hart: If anything, our evangelical world is even more adrenally dependent. We are committed to the great commission, and obviously that means work for most of us. But somehow in all of that, we have lost sight of the importance of being able to rest in Christ. Christ is our Sabbath rest, and we must learn to not usurp His work.

Dr. Dobson: We had Marilee Pierce Dunker here in the studio. She is the daughter of the Bob Pierce who started World Vision. Of course, he's deceased now, but she described how he got into the difficulties that he faced. He burned himself out very, very early in life. And I remember she said that it was his belief that it was his obligation before God to give 100% of his effort 100% of the time. And he

was on the road nine or 10 months out of the year, and he just felt like God was obligated to take care of his little family at home, and that he was obligated to go solve the problems of the world. Boy, that's a trap, because that almost looks biblical, doesn't it?

Dr. Arch Hart: It almost looks biblical. But you know, 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. And if he can't stop you, he'll race you to an early demise. And either way he's going to make you ineffective sooner or later.

Dr. Dobson: Arch, this is so helpful. And we haven't gotten into the really practical details of how people can warm up their hands a little bit, how they can redirect the blood flow, maybe bring down blood pressure, and hopefully prevent some of that damage of distress that you talked about. So I think we've just better keep on going, and we'll do it again next time.

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

Roger Marsh: You know, it's really incredible. Even though this program with Dr. Arch Hart and Dr. James Dobson was recorded some time ago, listening to the content of their discussion right now makes it clear that what Dr. Hart had to share back then has never been more timely today. If we want to save our families and maybe even our own lives, we've got to learn how to balance the stresses of life and the demands of adult responsibilities with God's command for us to find rest and peace in Him. Now, if you want to learn more, you can find a link to Dr. Hart's book on our website. It's drjamesdobson.org. Again, the title of Dr. Archibald Hart's book is *The Hidden Link Between Adrenaline and Stress*. As you just heard, Dr. Hart has much more to say about this topic, so be sure to tune in next time for part two of this message. And if you can't join us on your favorite local radio station, remember you can always listen online, or you can download the broadcast at drjamesdobson.org.

In the meantime, I encourage you to think about who in your life might benefit from this message, whether a family member, maybe a close friend, or a colleague. You can download a copy on our website as I mentioned, drjamesdobson.org, or ask about how you can get an audio CD when you call us at (877) 732-6825. While you're on the line, thanks for keeping in mind that we are a listener supported broadcast outreach. Your donations will help us to continue to be a primary resource for families in the years to come. Again, our number is (877) 732-6825, or you can give a gift online at drjamesdobson.org. Thanks so much for listening and we'll see you right back here again tomorrow for part two of our conversation with Dr. Arch Hart. That's on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

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.O-R-G. That's drjamesobson.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.

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