



A Perspective On Mind/Body Response To September 11

1.) Quick Quote to Consider

"When we are embodied, we become learners." Richard Strozzi Heckler, The Anatomy of Change

2.) Leading After September 11 Dialog

During Northwood's October 16th tele-session on Leading After September 11, the participants discussed many aspects of the aftermath: fear of traveling, drop in employee productivity, lower response rates for direct mail campaigns and decrease in profits. The group then identified some emerging solutions, such as using video conferencing, more conference calls and developing Internet presentations as substitutes for in-person meetings.

Fear has entered our lives. We all are struggling with how to translate these events into meaning. We concluded during our dialog that one of the most important actions we could take was reaching out to both employees and clients.

Here are 5 recommendations on actions you can take to increase communication within your organization:

1. Show appreciation. Thank people — your staff, customers and vendors.
2. Invite everyone within your organization to share ideas on possible solutions to your current issues. Conduct an organizational town hall meeting.
3. Create opportunities to let your staff express themselves and show that you care about them.
4. Visit your clients. They appreciate it even more now that you overcame your fears to travel to see them and show that you care.
5. Find some good in all of the recent happenings. What can you do to turn around your situation or help your clients reverse their situations? Look for the opportunities, not at the problems.

Reflective Exercise

What actions can you take to increase communication within your organization?

List 5 issues you're currently facing. What three actions can you take to turn these issues into possibilities for solutions, action and value?

Northwood wants to continue our dialog with other leaders. Since every day we pick up the newspaper there's a new development, it's important that we as leaders continue sharing our ideas and solutions. Just jot your observations, insights or ideas down and e-mail them to us at info@northwoodconsulting.com. We'll then share them in the next issue of The Leading Edge.



3.) Now may be the best time for your free 1 hour coaching session

We're all experiencing moderate to drastic changes in our personal and work worlds these days. How can you best deal with these unexpected changes?

Northwood Consulting is helping to make profound differences in people's professional and personal lives through one-on-one executive coaching that gets results. The best way to appreciate the power of coaching is to experience it for yourself.

As a friend of Northwood, here's your opportunity to see how effective coaching can be without spending a dime.

Jot down three current business concerns. Now estimate how much time and effort you spent last week thinking about, worrying or dealing with each one. If you could learn how to solve your issues more efficiently and effectively, would it be worth trying coaching?

Call Karen at (301) 990-6331 or Marti at (301) 650-4160 to schedule your FREE 1-hour session and find out.

Not ready for coaching but know a colleague who is? Feel free to pass this special offer on to your associates who could benefit from coaching NOW.

4.) 911—Emergency!: A Perspective On Mind/Body Response To September 11

By Dee Gold, MA, DTR, Inner Reaches

On September 11, Americans were unexpectedly catapulted into high-alert mode. We were in shock, frozen in terror, literally paralyzed by life threatening events out of our control. Our way of life had been attacked. Our sense of security was destroyed as we helplessly watched our foundation shudder under the weight of collapsing debris that was the mighty World Trade Center and powerful Pentagon.

Most of us experienced a parallel collapse in our own minds and bodies. Temporarily weakened by the shock of such traumatic events, Americans everywhere found themselves heading for the nearest chair. Our knees gave out. Our heads fell. Our bodies literally sank. It is deeply ingrained in our mind/body system to respond to shocking news by bringing our bodies closer to the earth. The energy of the earth is supportive, sustaining and nurturing.

Flight/Fight or Freeze

Each of us had a unique and individual response, but the following 2 mind/body patterns were most prevalent:

1.) The most well-known mind/body response to threat or high level stress is "fight-or-flight": increased hormonal output, heightened adrenaline flow, increased blood flow to the periphery of the body, muscle tension and intense focus on the object representing the threat. Many of us experienced these symptoms, consciously or unconsciously, immediately upon hearing the news of the terrorist attacks.



Think of your own response that day. Were you aware of your heartbeat, your breath, tension in your musculature, a desire to act, fight or flee?

2.) A less known physiological reaction to stress, the "freeze response," follows closely on the heels of fight-or-flight when it becomes evident that no amount of action will change the threat. The freeze response is easily observed in animals who instinctively know there is no escape from their predator. We say they "play dead." More accurately, their physiological processes simply "freeze." They actually lose consciousness and appear dead. Although a primitive survival technique, it can cause a predator to lose interest in its prey. When this is the case, the prey is left alone and alive. The body then slowly revives itself until the animal returns to consciousness.

In people, the freeze response takes a psychological turn. When we begin to realize that the threat continues to exist regardless of any physical action we might be able to take in the moment, our psyches become "stuck" or "frozen."

Did you find yourself compulsively watching the attacks repeatedly on television? Did your mind constantly replay the images of the attacks? Were you troubled by nightmares or insomnia? These are all "Freeze" responses that are being felt, becoming chronic and leading to even more troublesome conditions and behaviors.

Since September 11, my clients have reported a variety of physical ailments: achy joints, re-activation of old injuries, loss of balance, loss of concentration, general weakness, fatigue and gastro-intestinal symptoms.

Just as any electrical appliance needs a proper balance of energy to work, so does your mind/body systems. When energy becomes stuck or frozen in any one energy center, the entire system is affected and wellness gives way to dis-ease.

With the increased terrorist threats, such as biological warfare and suicide bombings, Americans are facing even greater levels of stress. Are we doomed to live our lives in "fight-or-flight" or suffer the long-term effects of the "freeze response?" The answer lies in the animal kingdom.

Shaking It Off

Remember the prey left alone and alive by the predator, following the freeze response? Studies have shown that biological processes return to normal for the traumatized animal only following a very important physiological reflex: "shivering." The prey must literally "shake off" the effects of the trauma in order to return to a state of healthy functioning.

There is a human counterpart to the "shiver" of the animal kingdom. However, it's slightly more sophisticated and infinitely more challenging to stimulate. With our intellect and ego, we humans do not like to admit to being out of control. This interferes with the natural, instinctual urge to "shiver" or release energy causing us to rigidify rather than release.

What can we do?

1. Crying (even sobbing) serves as a cleansing and creates a natural flow of negative energy out of the system, while absorbing positive energy through the breath.
2. Physical exertion, such as punching a bag, taking a jog, or dancing.
3. Shouting into a pillow.
4. Writing a letter-to-the editor. (The Internet has become a wonderful tool for self-expression.) It's important to take a stand when shaking off the effects of trauma. Be seen, be heard, validate your experience.
5. Laugh. Laughter clears your energy channels and creates a natural positive flow by awakening your sensuality and heightening your appreciation for the inherent "goodness" of life.
6. Pray or meditate.
7. Commune with Nature.
8. Help others.

Anything that touches your spirit in a positive way will bring relief and keep your energy moving in a way that promotes your well-being.

When our knees weaken in fear and we drop instinctively to the ground, it is important to recognize that we are physiological/psychological/spiritual creatures whose wellness depends on proper energy flow through our systems. Moving from shock, through "fight-or-flight," into "freeze" and finally "shivering" mobilizes our energies from the ground upward, bringing us into harmony and promoting growth. One way to approach that task is to become aware and mindful of ourselves, where we get stuck and how to "shake" ourselves into healthy functioning so that we might all live up to our highest potential.

Dee Gold, president and founder of Inner Reaches, prepared this article specially for the readers of The Leading Edge. Dee is a body and yoga therapist with degrees in Clinical Psychology and Education in Creative Arts Therapy. To learn more about the mind/body connection or body therapy, you can contact her at 301.987.0884 or dcgold@aol.com.