

Jenny Evans: Fast Facts & Micro-Strategy Challenge

Fast Facts

- Your stress is not a psychology problem, it's a chemistry problem. Whenever we experience stress, chemicals are released that radically transform our chemistry and physiology.
- One of the most important hormones produced is cortisol.
- Cortisol puts our primitive, caveman brain (I like to call him Sneaky Pete) in charge. Sneaky Pete is highly reactive and very emotional. He's negative, pessimistic, hates change, is lazy, always assumes the worst, and is constantly looking for problems and danger.
- Change also triggers our caveman brain - he doesn't like it. He loves the comfort, safety, and security of habit and routine. We've been under non-stop, massive change for weeks now.
- The last thing I want to do is add more stress, so Micro Strategies are a better way to effectively make behavior change: we need to shrink the change and make it so easy a caveman could do it.

Micro Strategy Challenge

Challenge yourself to try each of the micro strategies below over the course of a week. Schedule time, do it, and notice how you feel as a result.

- **Micro Strategy #1:** 30-60 seconds of high intensity physical activity burns off cortisol and releases the "bliss molecules" that neutralize the stress response. The short bursts also get Sneaky Pete out of the driver's seat.
- **Micro Strategy #2:** Stress and cortisol trigger the body to crave sugar, salty snacks, and high fat foods. It also might be tempting to turn to alcohol, caffeine or nicotine to manage stress. All of these things actually increase stress, so try and keep them to a minimum. (Doing Micro Strategy #1 makes Micro Strategy #2 easier!)
- **Micro Strategy #3:** eat about every 3-4 hours all day long, alternating between moderately-sized meals and small snacks of 100-150 calories. When we go too long without eating and then overeat because we got so hungry, it creates stress on the body and the mind. Micro Strategy #3 keeps our blood chemistry in more of an ideal state.
- **Micro Strategy #4:** Sense of purpose is essential for resilience. Get connected and grounded in your beliefs by completing this statement at least 5 times (by using pen and paper - it's important to write by hand as it changes how we process information in the brain): "I believe...." When we think about, write about and talk about our beliefs it transforms our chemistry by producing serotonin, dopamine and endorphins that make us feel focused, productive and goal oriented.