

Good book review on why zebras don't get ulcers

[Health & Medicine](#), [Stress](#)



Robert Sapolsky, one of the famous professors of neurology and biology and at Stanford University wrote the book “ Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers,” to compare and contrast the stress responses in humans and animals. The book draws attention to experimental science to understand the concept of stress. Sapolsky’s research on animal behavior for several years in the forests of Africa forms the foundation of the book. The book gives an account of the impact of stress in humans and the strategies that enable to cope with the stress. The different chapters in the book explain the effect of stress on memory, immune system, growth, depression, sleep, addiction, aging and many others related to the body and mind. “ Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers” describes the influence of human emotions and personalities on the body cells. The social, physical, emotional and spiritual interaction of an individual helps to understand the details of a dysfunction or disease.

Sapolsky mentions about learned helplessness, a concept in the experiments performed on animals. The main idea behind learned helplessness is the failure of humans to cope with things that are manageable and the reluctance to face things that are preventable. Learned helplessness received a positive response as it is testable in nature. The author describes the importance of certainty and control as major factors that define the amount of stress experienced by humans. Sapolsky explains the various types of stress and the way they affect the humans and animals. The best example is that of the zebra, which lives peacefully in the jungle eating, drinking and wandering with its folks. However, in some situations, the zebra faces extreme stress, such as running from a hungry lion. In such cases, the zebra requires neurological and second hormonal activities in order to

survive. The function of the nervous system is similar in both animals and humans.

Similar to animals, humans also perform certain actions for their survival. While men employ the action of “flight or fight” as a response to stress, women employ the idea of “tend and befriend.” In the earlier years, diseases such as polio, flu and cholera were nightmares that scared a majority of the individuals. However, in the recent years, people are losing their lives due to chronic stress, which lead to the occurrence of ulcers. Sapolsky explains the consequence of good stress and bad stress on the minds of the individuals. The author gives his view of Fibromyalgia and its relation and its relation to low stress hormones. In order to impress the readers, Sapolsky uses humor in certain chapters. Sapolsky mentions the term “homeostasis” to explain the concept of constancy through change. Whenever a change occurs in the body, the hormones and chemicals act in such a way to adapt to the change rapidly.

For example, whenever humans stand, the brain detects the movement rapidly and secretes the hormones to narrow the blood vessel, thereby preventing the drop down of blood pressure to avoid dizziness. However, there is a possibility that certain medications and sleep deprivation interfere with this mechanism. The book “Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers” describes about the natural balance of hormones and chemicals in the human body. When compared to other animals, the human brain has the capacity to anticipate a change in the body and get ready to compensate the same. Though the process is ideal, stress in anxious individuals lengthens the period of brain reaction. The alert nature results in an anxious state, which

affects the individuals in several ways both on the mind and body. However, in the case of zebras, the tendency to recover after escaping from the lion is faster due to the activity of the brain.

The levels of stress and the ways to handle stress differ from one individual to another individual. For example, aging differs in each individual in a unique way depending upon the stress levels, lifestyle choices and genetics. Chronic stress suppresses the immune system and increases the chances of aging. The book “ Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers” is an ideal guide for laymen who do not possess the knowledge of neurophysiology. The book helps to understand the concept of stress and cope up with the stress levels to live an optimal life. Sapolsky gives an account of the possible disorders and mental adversities caused by chronic stress, including ulcers, depression, heart diseases and many others. Childhood stress leaves an echo of vulnerability, including irritable bowel syndrome and abdominal pain. Childhood stress increases the chances of depression for the rest of the life. It also results in dwarfism and poor skeletal growth. Single-parent households, childhood bullying, sexual abuse and drug addictions leave a negative impact on the memory.

The book “ Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers” explains about the social and psychological disruptions that lead to stress. Social stress is a key factor that causes hypertension, which affects the brain and the nervous system.

Individual stress responses decide the extent of damage caused by stress in humans. The ulcers encountered in humans are a result of psychosocial factors. Sapolsky explains the loss of bone mass due to chronic stress. In children, social isolation leads to social isolation. Social sub-ordination in

females affects the estrogen hormone. The life expectancy of humans depends on the quality of social relationships, such as marriage, friends and affiliations. Social stress in turn results in the suppression of the immune system. The influence of stress is the same universally, regardless of the country. It is the responsibility of the people to cope positively against the stress.

In order to reduce stress in the kids, the parents should follow effective parenting methods. Creating a positive atmosphere in the schools also helps the children to enjoy a lively childhood. Poor-quality sleep is another reason for stress. In the book " Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers", Sapolsky experimented with a group of individuals to understand the relation between stress and sleep. Stress-hormone levels rise due to lack of proper sleep.

Uninterrupted sleep for a long amount of time helps to maintain a balance of the stress levels. In order to live for a longer amount of time, it is important to reduce immune suppression. Social networks are the best places to make friends as they lend a hand to hold and shoulder to cry when one experiences higher levels of stress. Maintaining a cordial relationship with the spouse and friends increases the life expectancy.

Addiction to drugs, alcohol, cocaine and other substances adversely affects the thought process of the brain and the body system. The author assumes that humans, especially westernized humans possess strange sources of negative emotions. It is necessary to overcome the negative emotions and come up with positive emotions. Another factor that leads to higher levels of psychological stress is poverty and low social economic status. Poverty leads to reduced chances of coping with stress due to lack of social support. A

crime-riddled neighborhood also leads to increased levels of stress. To conclude, author Sapolsky focused on several key issues, such as the effect of stress on heart, metabolism, memory, immune system, sex and reproduction, sleep, aging and death. The author gives a detailed account of his experiments to prove his views and ideas.