EFFECTS OF STRESS

ON THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) controls involuntary body functions, including those related to stress. The ANS has two branches, the sympathetic nervous system, and the parasympathetic nervous system.

The sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for rapid reactions to stress by releasing energy. The parasympathetic nervous system promotes energy-saving behaviours and brings the body into a resting state.

Negative stress, or distress, can be caused by different stressors, including external, internal, psycho-mental, and social stressors. Negative stress can lead to physical symptoms, such as headaches, fatigue, and muscle tension, as well as emotional symptoms, such as anxiety and depression.

Relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, yoga, and biofeedback, can activate the parasympathetic nervous system and counter the effects of the sympathetic nervous system. When the parasympathetic nervous system is activated, the body enters a resting state characterized by a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure, reduced metabolism, decreased attention, and relaxation.

If you have difficulties coping with stress, do not hesitate to seek medical advice.

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