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# Managing & Preventing Stress Around Cultural Expectations



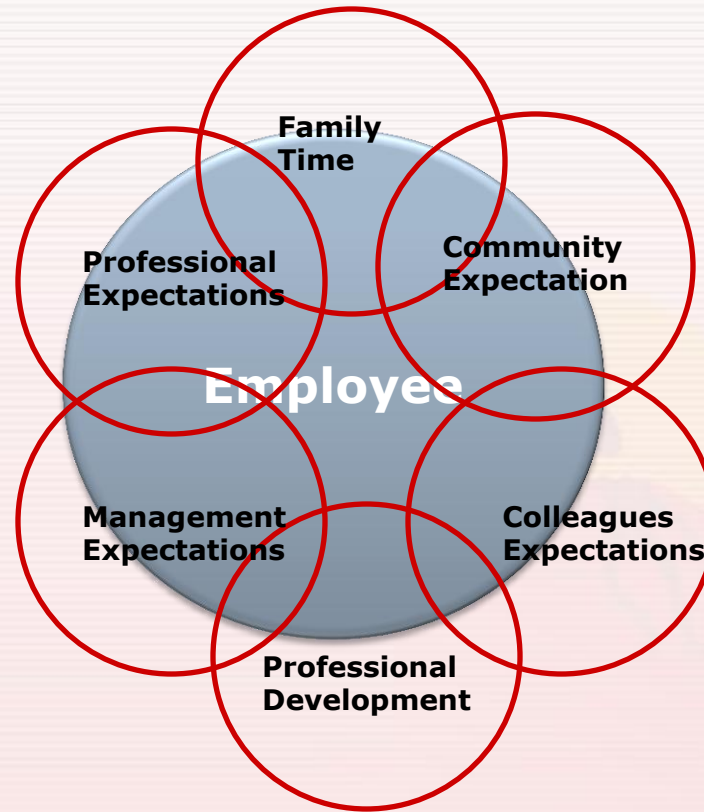
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Glenn Williams  
State Mental Health Coordinator  
AH&MRC

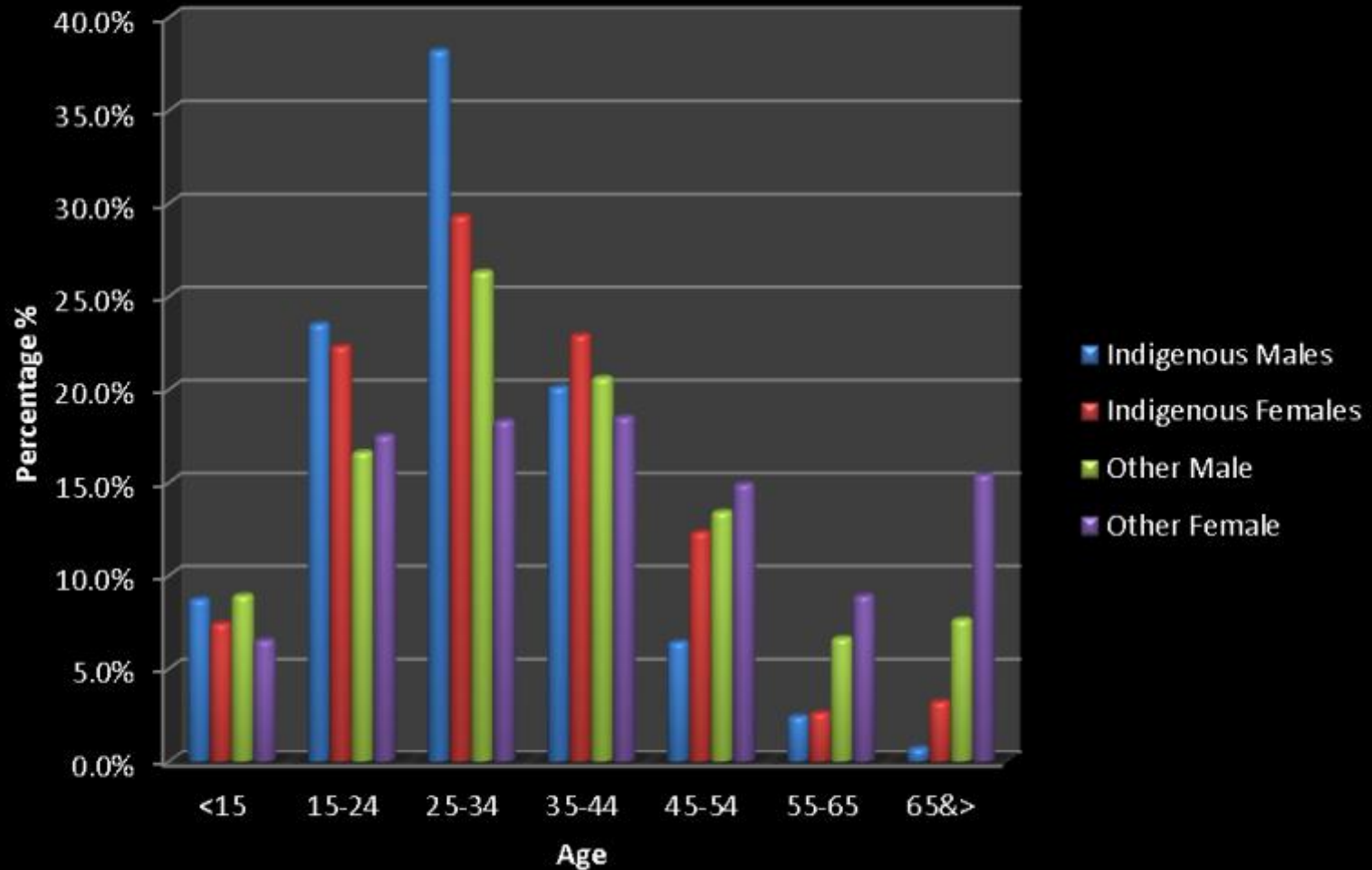


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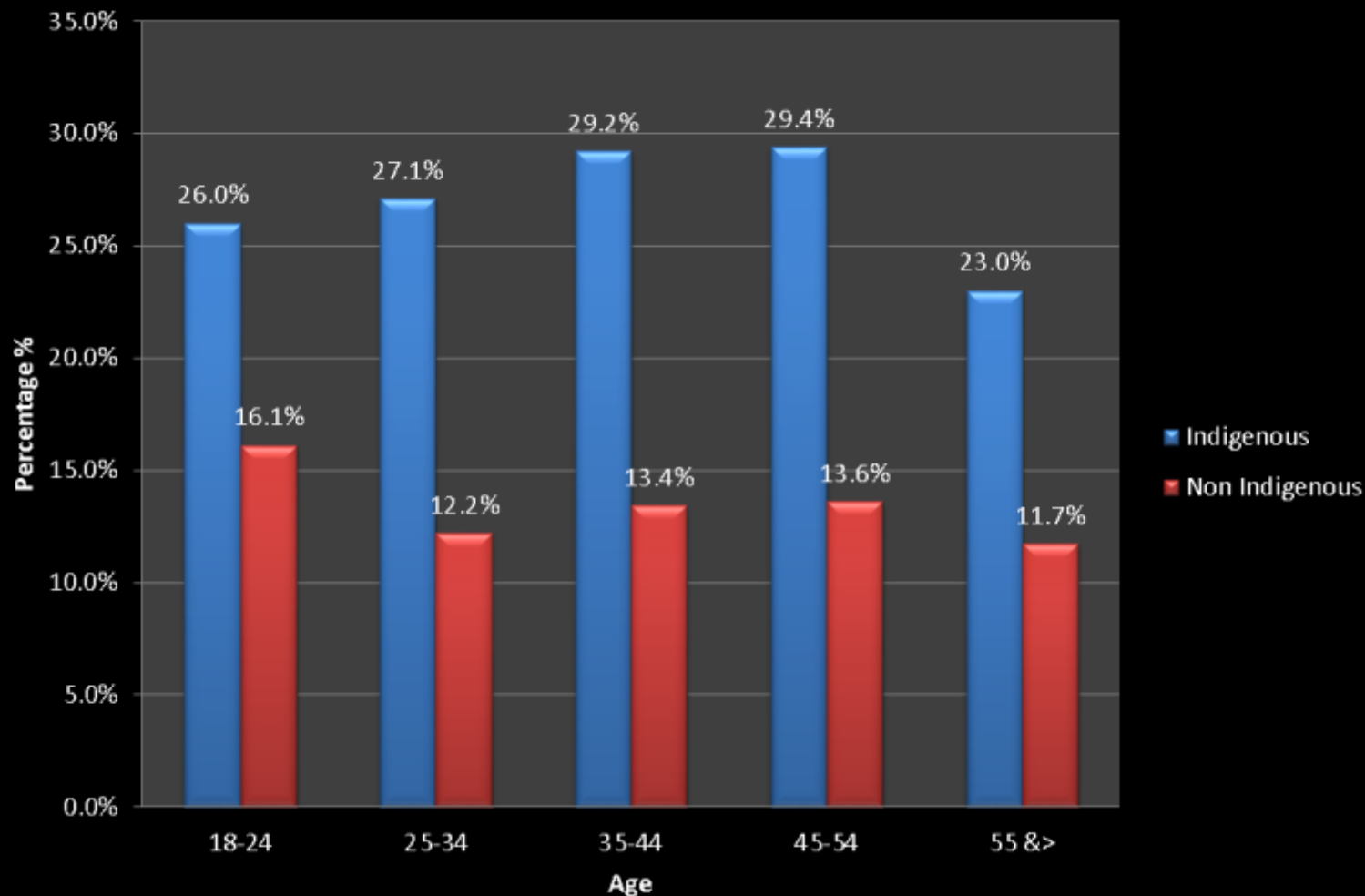
# Expectations



## Community Mental Health Service Contacts



## High / Very High Psychological Distress

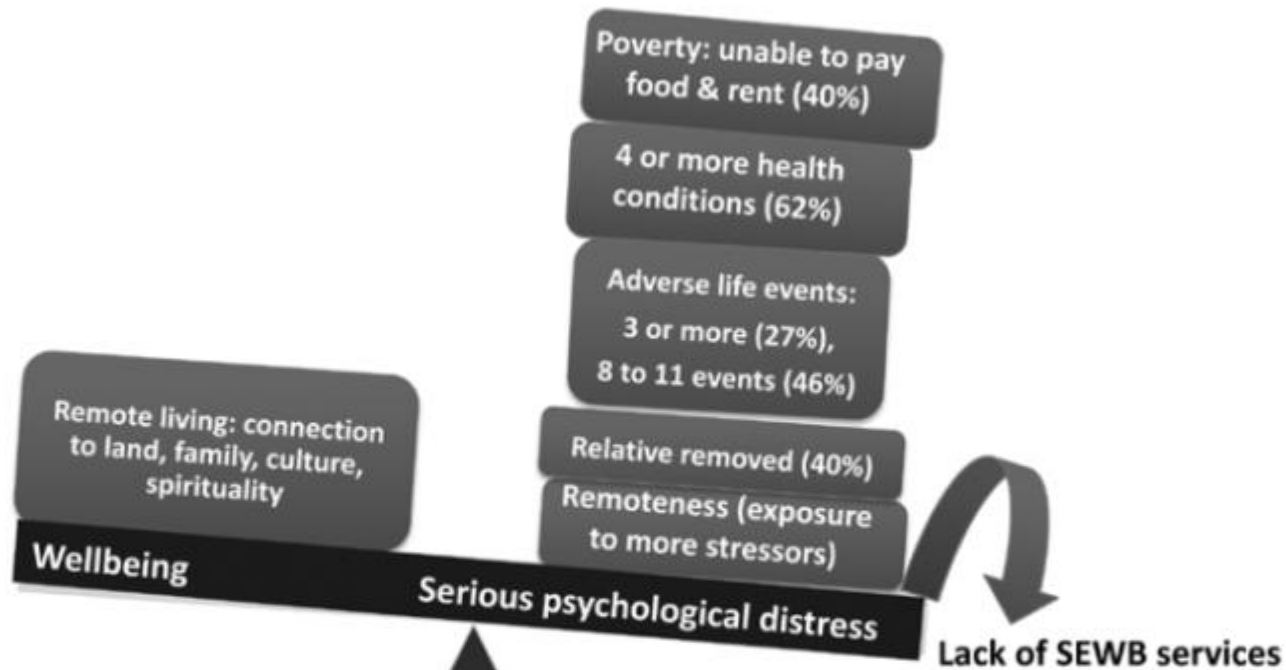


### Protective factors

### Stressors or predictors for serious psychological distress

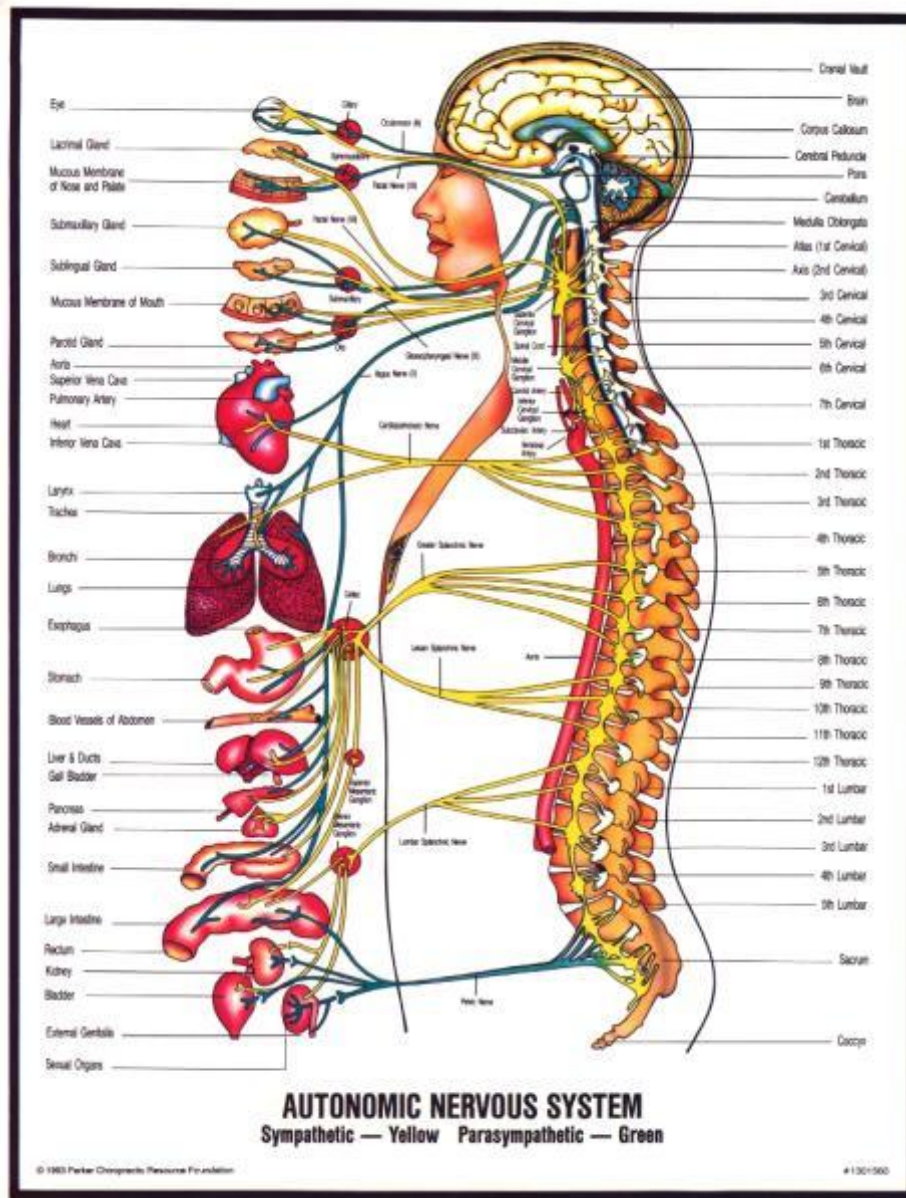
#### Adverse life events:

- Loss of loved one;
- Serious illness, disability;
- Alcohol related problems;
- Drug related problems;
- Witness to violence;
- Gambling problems;
- Trouble with police;
- Subject to violence or abuse;
- Serious accident;
- Family member in jail;
- Crowded housing;
- Discrimination.



Increased mortality from heart disease & stroke.  
Health risk behaviors: obesity & smoking, anger, aggression, conflict, violence, gambling, poor SEWB, suicide, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, disability, child removal.

© Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association  
Source: National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05



Here are ways in which some key body systems react.

**1 NERVOUS SYSTEM**

When stressed — physically or psychologically — the body suddenly shifts its energy resources to fighting off the perceived threat. In what is known as the “fight or flight” response, the sympathetic nervous system signals the adrenal glands to release adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones make the heart beat faster, raise blood pressure, change the digestive process and boost glucose levels in the bloodstream. Once the crisis passes, body systems usually return to normal.

**2 MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM**

Under stress, muscles tense up. The contraction of muscles for extended periods can trigger tension headaches, migraines and various musculoskeletal conditions.

**3 RESPIRATORY SYSTEM**

Stress can make you breathe harder and cause rapid breathing — or hyperventilation — which can bring on panic attacks in some people.

**4 CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM**

Acute stress — stress that is momentary, such as being stuck in traffic — causes an increase in heart rate and stronger contractions of the heart muscle. Blood vessels that direct blood to the large muscles and to the heart dilate, increasing the amount of blood pumped to these parts of the body. Repeated episodes of acute stress can cause inflammation in the coronary arteries, thought to lead to heart attack.

**5 ENDOCRINE SYSTEM**

**Adrenal glands**

When the body is stressed, the brain sends signals from the hypothalamus, causing the adrenal cortex to produce cortisol and the adrenal medulla to produce epinephrine — sometimes called the “stress hormones.”

**Liver**

When cortisol and epinephrine are released, the liver produces more glucose, a blood sugar that would give you the energy for “fight or flight” in an emergency.

**6 GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM**

**Esophagus**

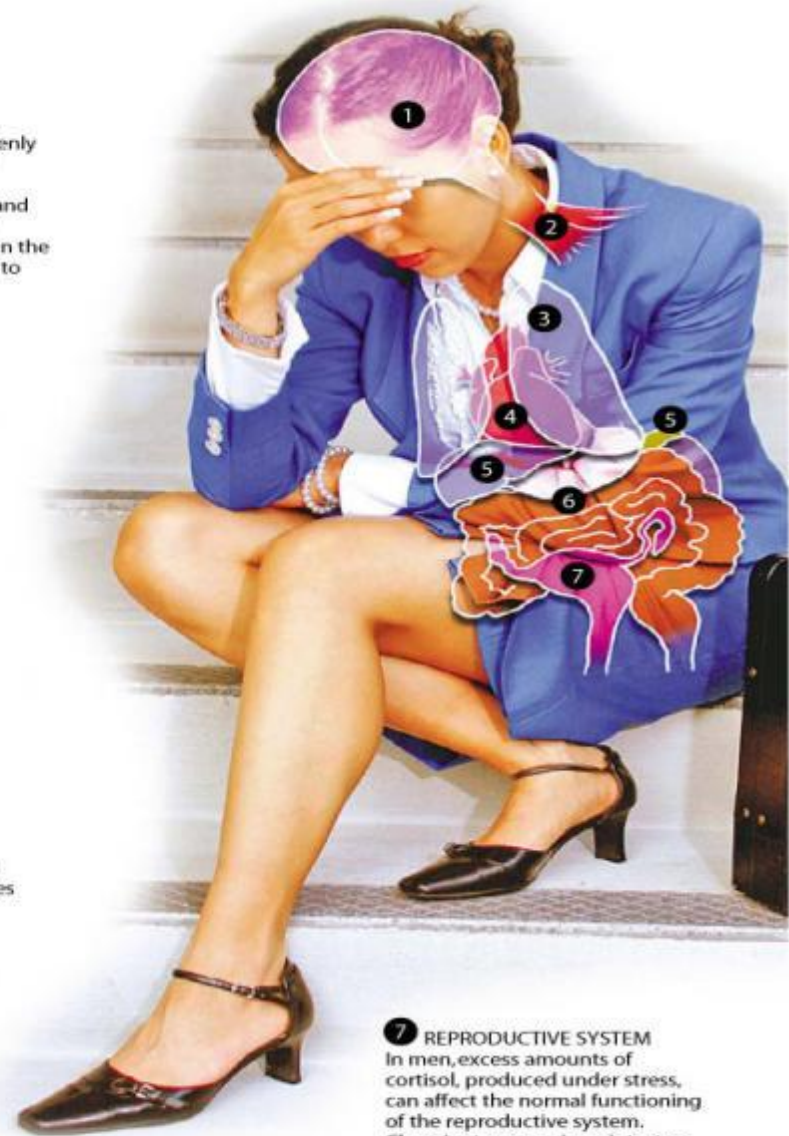
Stress may prompt you to eat much more or much less than you usually do. If you eat more or different foods or increase your use of tobacco or alcohol, you may experience heartburn, or acid reflux.

**Stomach**

Your stomach can react with “butterflies” or even nausea or pain. You may vomit if the stress is severe enough.

**Bowels**

Stress can affect digestion and which nutrients your intestines absorb. It can also affect how quickly food moves through your body. You may find that you have either diarrhea or constipation.



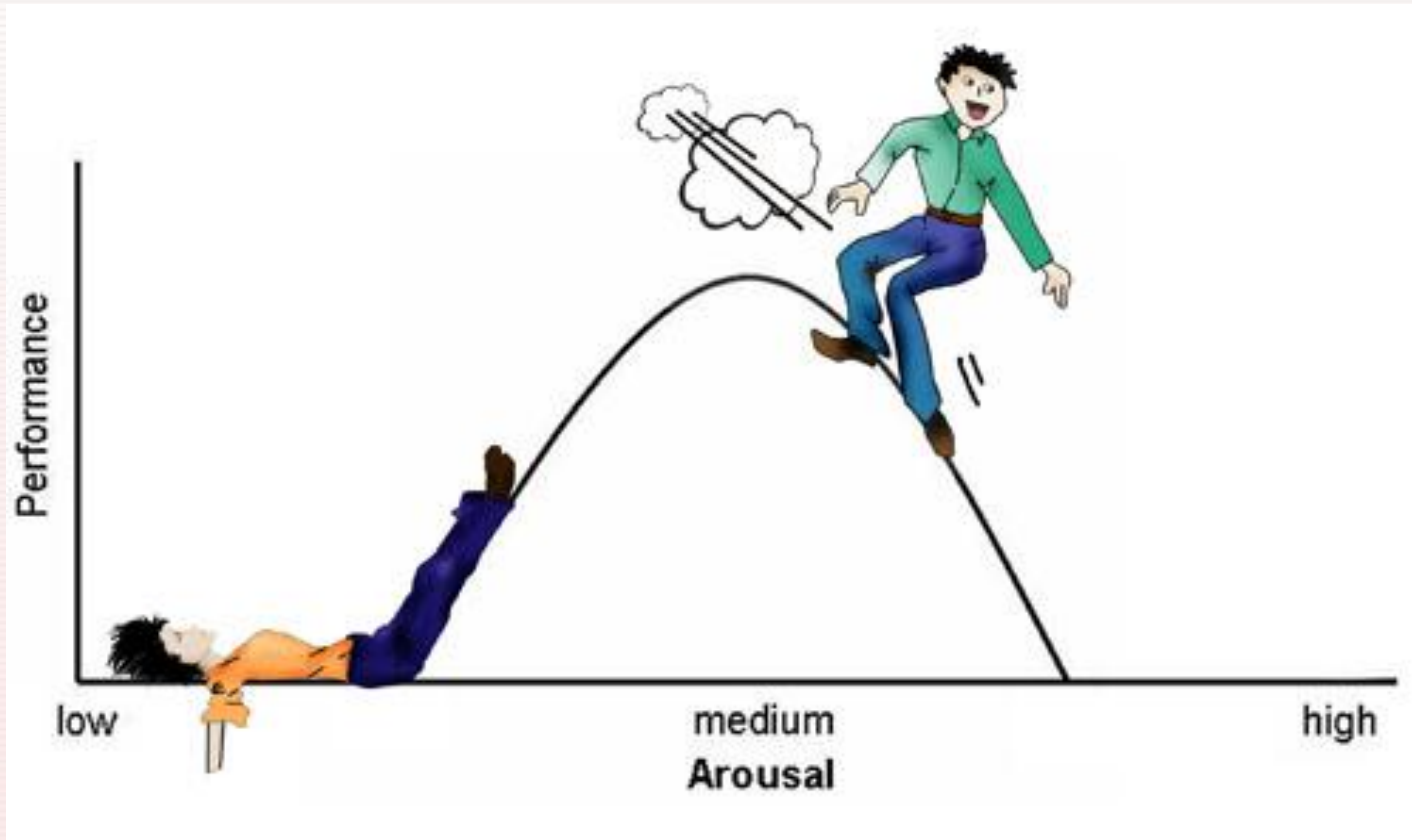
**7 REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**

In men, excess amounts of cortisol, produced under stress, can affect the normal functioning of the reproductive system. Chronic stress can impair testosterone and sperm production and cause impotence.

In women, stress can cause absent or irregular menstrual cycles or more-painful periods. It can also reduce sexual desire.



# Optimal Performance



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# Beyond Optimal Performance

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# Burnout



# The dark side of burnout

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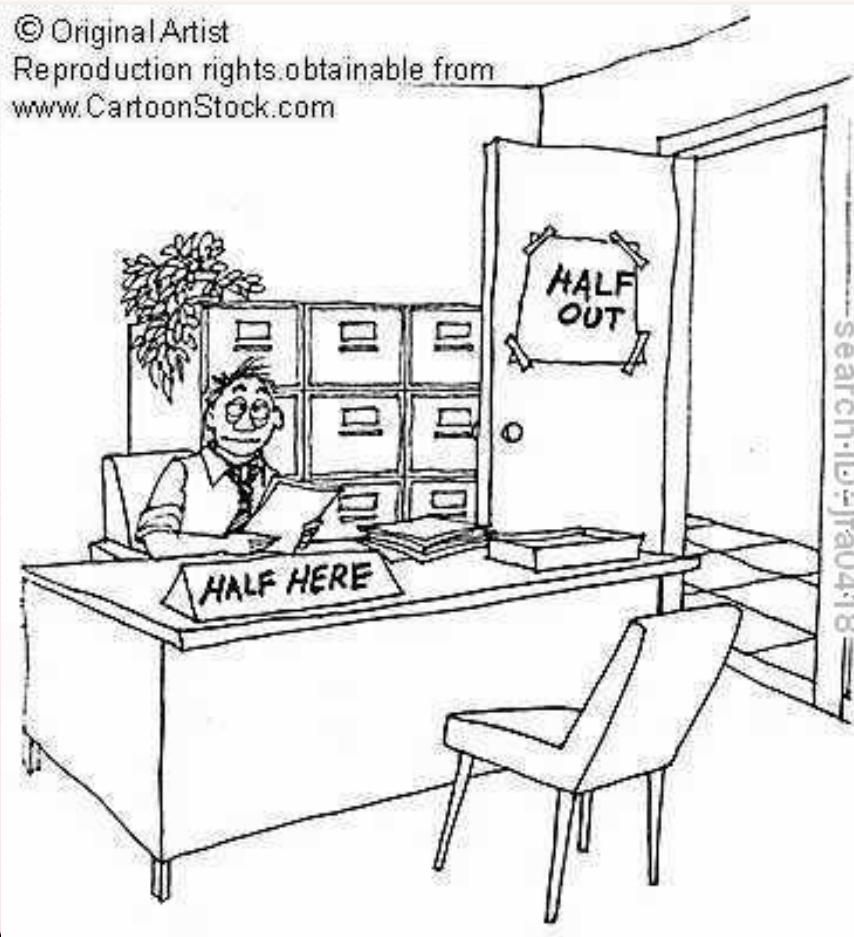


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# Aboriginal Australia



# Individualism

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# Collectivist Society

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# Developing Boundaries

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How do you say no in a collectivist society?



# Debrief

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# Self Care

