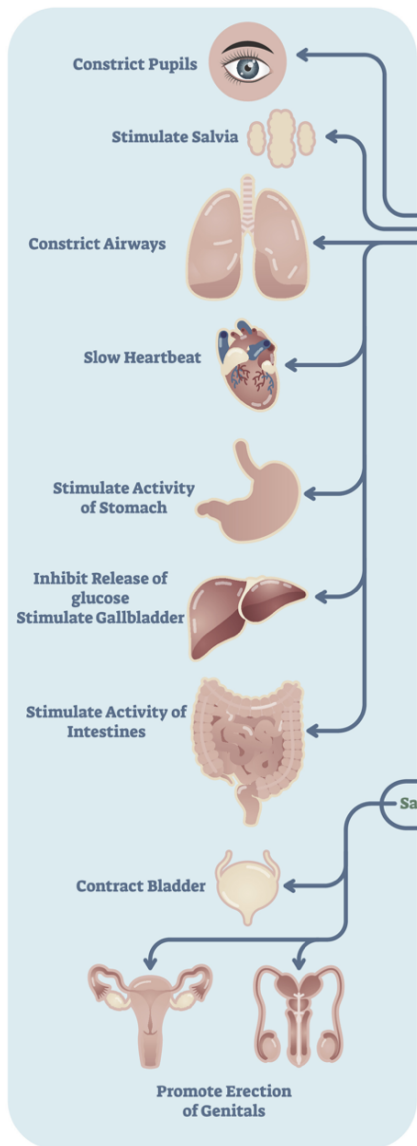


Stress and the body

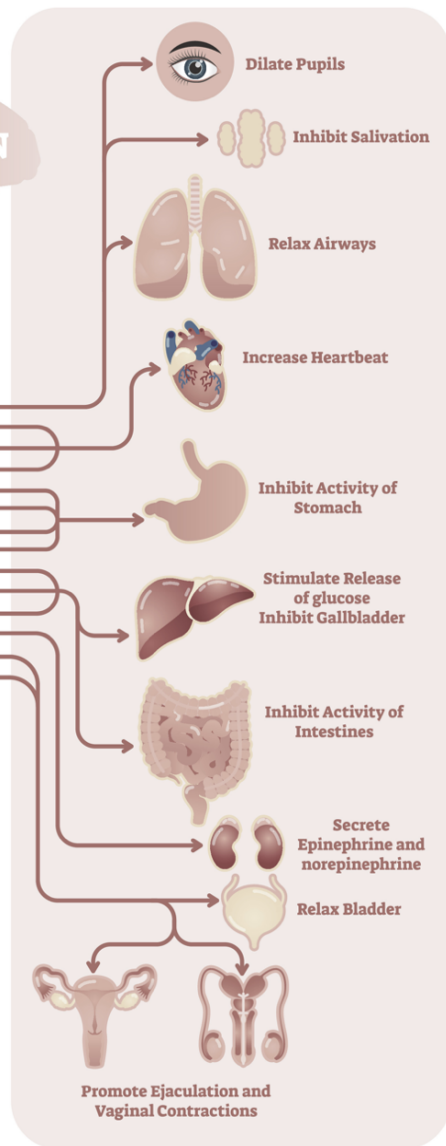
Our autonomic (involuntary) nervous system regulates many aspects of our physiology without our conscious awareness – neural pathways initiate responses automatically depending on what is happening. Our perception of safety or danger has a direct impact on the way many of the functions in our body operate

PARASYMPATHETIC AND SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEMS

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVES



SYMPATHETIC NERVES



Stress symptom checklist

This checklist allows you to detect signs of activation in your nervous system that are a result of **too much stress and overwhelm**.

Sympathetic activation

- ❖ Faster respiration, which over time can become shallow breathing
- ❖ Quicker heartbeat and pulse (to supply blood to the larger muscles)
- ❖ Increased blood pressure (which can lead to high blood pressure symptoms and heart palpitations)
- ❖ Dilated pupils (which can lead to eyesight issues, particularly far-sightedness)
- ❖ Pale skin colour and long-term cold in your extremities
- ❖ Increased sweating
- ❖ Cold, clammy skin
- ❖ Decreased digestive processes (which can lead to irritable bowel syndrome and other digestive disorders)
- ❖ Tingling muscular tension: cramping and nervous tension
- ❖ Startle response: jumpiness and hypersensitivity
- ❖ Increased flexor tension (contracted body, especially in your arms and legs)

Parasympathetic activation

- ❖ Tonic immobility (your system can become limp and lacking in energy)
- ❖ Numbing
- ❖ Dissociation (reduced felt-sense awareness)
- ❖ Analgesia (you don't feel pain in parts, or the whole, of your body)
- ❖ Inability to move a limb, and dreams of not being able to move
- ❖ Inability to perceive the outline of your body
- ❖ Inability to feel your skin as a sharply-defined edge
- ❖ Sense of floating
- ❖ Sense of disconnection
- ❖ Low muscle tone
- ❖ Emotionally, a parasympathetic activation may be experienced as depression, withdrawal, a sense of unreality or not knowing, and lethargy.

Source: Ged Sumner, *Body Meditations*

