

TITLE OF THE SEMINAR

Date of the seminar

Name and title of presenter

Location of the seminar

ABSTRACT BODY--precise and concise, but complete, summary of the presentation. Focus on the main points and conclusion(s)

EXAMPLE:

"Stress, Social Rank and Personality: Studies of Wild Baboons"

December 11, 1991

Dr. Robert Sapolsky

Department of Physiology, Stanford University

The olive baboons of the Serengeti in East Africa were chosen for this study for a number of reasons, one being that it was possible to study these baboons in the wild. Furthermore, these baboons have an organized system of socialization both behavioral and psychological, including a hierarchical ranking system similar to human beings. The initial purpose of this study was to explore the mechanisms that enable bodies to deal with stress. The original question was to determine if the baboon's health and stress levels were connected to their social rank.

Glucocorticoids are hormones that in abundance cause diabetes, hypertension and ulcers in humans, as well as increase the opportunities for other diseases. The amount of glucocorticoids in the baboons was measured by taking blood samples. The results indicated that lower ranking baboons had increases in the levels of glucocorticoids in their bloodstreams. In addition, they were sluggish in turning these compounds on and off. In contrast, the higher-ranking baboons in a troop had lower levels of glucocorticoids and were able to turn them on and off faster. Therefore, it might follow that the lower ranking baboons had a higher level of stress due to increased levels of glucocorticoids in the bloodstream.

However, another aspect of this study involved identifying different personality types among the baboons. Knowing when or when not to fight, knowing when you have won or lost a fight, being successful at making allies, having friends and displacing aggression are categories which all deal with the individual personalities of the baboons. Even while a baboon may be at the top of his troop, life could still be extremely stressful. For example, if a troop is unstable and constantly fighting within themselves to obtain a rank, surely this is more stressful than a troop that is relatively stable and peaceful. Therefore, the study concluded that personality precedes rank in determining a baboon's ability to deal with stress and thus, remain healthy.

(Actual student abstract, submitted 1991-1992.)

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