

Four Keys to the Natural Anabolic State

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The Pathway to Health, Fitness, Faith,
and a Huge Competitive Edge

William G. Alston, PHD



Universal-Publishers
Irvine • Boca Raton

*Four Keys to the Natural Anabolic State: The Pathway to Health, Fitness,
Faith, and a Huge Competitive Edge*

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Universal Publishers, Inc.
Irvine • Boca Raton
USA • 2023
www.Universal-Publishers.com

ISBN: 978-1-62734-453-1 (pbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-62734-454-8 (ebk.)

ISBN: 978-1-62734-455-5 (aud.)

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Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India
Cover design by Ivan Popov

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Alston, William G., 1940- author.

Title: Four keys to the natural anabolic state : the pathway to health,
fitness, faith, and a huge competitive edge / William G. Alston.

Description: Irvine : Universal Publishers, [2023] | Includes
bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023022298 (print) | LCCN 2023022299 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781627344531 (paperback) | ISBN 9781627344548 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Mind and body. | Mind and body--Religious
aspects--Christianity. | Performance. | Performance--Religious
aspects--Christianity. | Stress management. | Stress
management--Religious aspects--Christianity.

Classification: LCC BF161 .A58 2023 (print) | LCC BF161 (ebook) |
DDC 128/.2--dc23/eng/20230606

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023022298>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023022299>

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Preface

Do you recall a moment in your life when you faced a daunting challenge—one that would normally defeat you—but in that moment, you were strong, confident, and fearless, and you came through with flying colors? If you have experienced even one event like this, you know what immediate anabolic empowerment feels like, and you crave to have that feeling again. This book will explain how you can choose to experience empowered moments like this and how you can enhance every aspect of your life by achieving the natural anabolic state.

The natural anabolic state is not an emotional high, positive thinking, mental readiness, or some fluffy new trend. This powerful biochemical state stems from the human stress-response system, and it is measurable, achievable, and scientifically irrefutable.

The human stress response system is a God-given physiochemical force that continuously reacts to everything we do and everything we think. Based on signals from our cognitive brain, this powerful system can release a chemical mix that will help us win or one that will help us endure the consequences of losing. One of these chemical brews will boost our energy and strength, increase our chances of winning, and improve our health; the other will dull our senses, weaken us, increase our chances of losing, and make us sick. The choice is up to you, and the difference will blow your mind!

If you are an athlete in any sport this book can help you attain a sharper focus, a quicker response, greater energy, greater confidence, and enhanced performance. If you are a student at any level, this book can show you how to instantly improve your learning and test-taking skills. If you are a young adult competing for success, this book can help you focus on purpose, increase your motivation, interact more effectively, and succeed at a

higher level. If you are in the twilight of your life, this book can energize you and give you lasting peace. In fact, regardless of your age, occupation, or status in life, this book can guide you to better health, greater peace, and maximum performance.

Sounds way too good to be true, doesn't it? I understand your skepticism, but the natural anabolic state is a matter of science, not intuition, and I assure you that it is within your grasp. I also assure you that, by the time you finish reading the third chapter of this book, you will fervently wish you had read it much earlier in your life.

Key Thoughts:

We are all blessed with God-given biochemical resources that can empower us to extreme levels of performance, but for most, these resources go largely untapped. WGA

When you learn to control your stress response system, every aspect of your life will be enhanced. WGA

CHAPTER 1

The Worried Mind—The Anthesis of Anabolic Empowerment

In this chapter, we will deal with the preventive thought process—that unhealthy mentality that dwells on the consequences of failure rather than the benefits of success. This fretful mentality comes in many forms and is generally referred to as “worrying.” As you may have gleaned from the title of this chapter, worrying and the natural anabolic state are at opposite ends of the spectrum, so the more you know about the nature and chemistry of worrying, the better you will understand the nature and chemistry of the natural anabolic state.

What It’s Like to Be a Chronic Worrier

The worried mind is unreceptive to empowerment because it is miserably preoccupied with impairment. The chronic worrier tends to lie awake at night thinking of bad things that might happen and get up in the morning with uneasy feelings about something or everything. The worrier fears the future, turns small problems into big problems, has a hard time making decisions, and often leaves a conversation feeling that she may have said or done something that offended someone.

The chronic worrier over-thinks, over-plans, and over-analyzes pretty much everything, and on his way to work will worry that he left the coffee pot plugged in or the lights turned on. If the chronic worrier hasn’t heard from a friend for a while, he will suspect that the friend is angry and could be pulling away, and if two of his friends are seen talking, he will assume that they are talking unfavorably about him.

If you’re a chronic worrier, you may already know that worrying is interfering with your productivity and happiness and possibly damaging your health, but you may not know that the worried mind will also

interfere with your potential to experience pinnacle moments, boundless energy, and blazing success. As you read on, you will learn the specific aspect of worrying that is so harmful and the powerful counter-process that can change everything. That counter process will replace your worries with Key-One—the Key to Immediate Anabolic Empowerment.

Reasons to Worry

Ask any chronic worrier why he worries, and you might hear something like this: “How could I not worry! Just think of all the stuff that’s on the daily news. There’s political unrest in the middle east! There’s crime and rioting in the streets! The stock market’s down! The glaciers are melting! A bunch of idiots are trying to erase our history! And Lord only knows what’s coming next! The whole world is going nuts! On top of all of that, I think my best friend has dumped me, I feel like I’m catching a cold, and the vacuum cleaner is not working! And, by the way, my clothes don’t fit! ... Oh lord, I think I’m getting fat!”

I think we can agree that we live in turbulent times, life can be tough, and there is cause for concern, so why do some people manage to live peacefully, while others worry, fret, and strain? We’ll get to the bottom of this soon. But, for now, let’s clarify what worrying is all about.

To begin, I want to make it clear that there is nothing good about worrying. Some writers have proclaimed that worrying can help us solve problems, be more productive, avoid bad decisions, and prepare for the future, but nothing could be further from the truth.

In reviewing the literature on worrying, I have found that most writers view worrying solely as a cognitive/psychological matter, and from that perspective, it might make sense to believe that worrying could somehow be useful. This book views worrying from a biochemical perspective, and when you understand what worrying does to your blood chemistry, you will know beyond any doubt that it cannot be good for you. To better understand what worrying is, let’s first consider what it is not.

What Worrying Is Not

- **Worrying is not anxiety.** Worrying causes anxiety. In fact, it causes the worst type of anxiety, but the cognitively initiated process of worrying

is vastly different from the reactive force of anxiety. In Chapter Two, we will discuss anxiety in much greater depth, and I will explain how anxiety can be extremely helpful.

- **Worrying is not concern.** Worrying is a fearful reaction; concern is a thoughtful reaction. When we get bad news or find ourselves in a frightening situation, we can react prayerfully, calmly, and thoughtfully, or we can react fearfully. The prayerful, calm, thoughtful reaction solves problems and eases the mind; the worrisome fearful reaction creates additional problems including harmful changes in our blood chemistry. When we learn to deal with our problems in a way that eliminates worrying, our thinking processes become more effective, our blood chemistry becomes healthier, and we can resolve our issues much more easily.
- **Worrying is not planning.** Planning for your financial future can bring great rewards. Worrying about your financial future just wears you out and damages your health.
- **Worrying is not a demonstration of caring or compassion.** A woman once said to me, “I love my children, so how can I not worry about them?” My response was, “If you teach, guide, communicate with, and pray for your children, you’ve done all you can do, so why worry?” Her comeback was, “I don’t think I’d be a good mother if I didn’t worry about my children.” It is fruitless to argue with logic like that, but I assure you that worrying about your loved ones will not protect them.
- **Worrying does not prevent bad things from happening.** I’ve found that some chronic worriers feel obligated to worry as if their worrying might somehow stave off an accident or prevent a catastrophe. This type of compulsive thinking is extremely burdensome. It can induce a harmful blood chemistry and make you sick, but it will not prevent bad things from happening.
- **Worrying is not solely a cognitive matter.** Worrying begins as a cognitive matter but quickly escalates into a biochemical matter. Within milliseconds, a worry can trigger threat sensors in the brain, ignite the human stress response system, and alter our blood chemistry in a harmful way. I am convinced that the chemistry and physiology of worrying have never been fully addressed, which explains why chronic worrying has defied positive-thinking techniques, psychoanalysis, and other remedies for thousands of years.

What Worrying is—the Simple Facts

- Worrying is a counterproductive, fear-based thought process that wastes time and energy and triggers the most harmful forms of stress and anxiety.^{2,3,4,5,7,13,17}
- Every aspect of a chronic worrier's life would be better if he or she could stop worrying.^{2,3,4,17}
- Heredity may influence one's tendency to worry, but research has yet to uncover hard evidence of this.^{8,12}
- Childhood environment can, and often does, influence one's tendency to worry.^{6,8,12,18} If you come from a broken home, were abused as a child, had a mother who was unavailable or inconsistent, or were over-protected, your odds of becoming a chronic worrier increase, but don't use childhood environment as an excuse for worrying. As you read on, you will discover that anyone can learn to stop worrying.
- Worried people have higher levels of the potentially harmful stress chemical cortisol in their bloodstream than non-worriers.^{2,16} I will explain the role and hazards of cortisol in Chapter 2.
- Worrying is closely related to stress, anxiety, and depression.^{2,3,4,10,13,15,16,17}
- Worrying is a chief cause of chronic anxiety and can lead to various anxiety disorders including Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD).^{1,3,5,9,13,15,17}
- According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, "Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by persistent and excessive worry about a number of different things. People with GAD may anticipate disaster and may be overly concerned about money, health, family, work, or other issues."^{3,10,13,15}
- Chronic worrying can cause, aggravate, or increase the risk of the following conditions, disorders, and diseases: depression, muscle tension, difficulty swallowing, dizziness, dry mouth, decreased bone density (osteoporosis), rapid heartrate, drowsiness, fatigue, headaches, irritability, hostility, forgetfulness, sexual dysfunction, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath, excessive sweating, trembling, suppression of the immune system, digestive disorders, ulcers, short-term memory loss, chest pain, premature coronary artery disease, colds, flu, heart disease, anxiety disorders, and certain types of cancer.^{2,4,10,11,17}

- Chronic stress can cause or aggravate precisely the same group of conditions, disorders, and diseases as chronic worrying.^{2,4,10,11,17}
- Chronic anxiety can cause or aggravate precisely the same group of conditions, disorders, and diseases as chronic worrying.^{2,4,10,11,17}
- Chronic fear can cause or aggravate the precisely same group of conditions, disorders and diseases as chronic worrying.^{2,4,10,11,14,17}

NOTE: It is this indisputable connection between worry, stress, anxiety, and fear that will lead us to Key One—The Key to Immediate Anabolic Empowerment.

Chronic worrying, chronic stress, chronic anxiety, and chronic fear all result in the same batch of illnesses because they all trigger threat sensors in the autonomic brain. A host of studies show that worrying is perceived by the autonomic brain to be a threat.^{2,4,10,11,14,17} Other studies show that many people perceive feelings of stress and twinges of anxiety to be a threat.^{1,2,14,17}

Okay, pause for a moment and ponder this thought: Stress and anxiety are God-given biochemical processes that were intended to protect and empower us, but when we perceive them to be a threat, they weaken and harm us.^{1,2,14,17} Please remember this thought as we move on, because this fact is crucial to understanding the nature and purpose of stress and anxiety and will lead to a better understanding of immediate anabolic empowerment and the natural anabolic state. Bottom line: when threat sensors in the brain are triggered, they set off a powerful chain reaction that results in an unhealthy blood chemistry, dulls senses, and impairs productivity.^{2,3,4,12,14}

In the next chapter, I will discuss the human stress response system, describe the five types of stress, and explain the thought process that can immediately dispel fear, change our blood chemistry in a positive way, and empower us to higher levels of energy, strength, endurance, and mental acuity. For now, I will simply tell you that when fear is removed from the equation, both stress and anxiety can become extremely powerful allies!

In summary, we can always find reasons to worry, but there is nothing good about worrying. Worrying is a counterproductive, fear-based thought process that begins as a cognitive matter and quickly escalates into biochemical matter. Worrying impacts our stress response system in a harmful way, leads to the worst forms of stress and anxiety, and can cause a

host of related illnesses. In the next chapter, you will learn how the human stress response system works and how you can make it work for you, not against you.

Key Thoughts:

Worrying never solved a problem, made anyone richer, made anyone a better person, provided a solution, or prevented a disaster, but worrying has led a good many people to ill health and an early grave. WGA

“A day of worry is more exhausting than a day of work.” John Lubbock

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CHAPTER 2

The Worry, Stress, Anxiety, Anabolic Connection

To understand anabolic empowerment, you must first understand the human stress response system. This intricate system performs a multitude of tasks on our behalf without conscious effort on our part but is highly sensitive to our cognitive thoughts. All of this will become clear as you learn more about the Cause/Effect Model of Stress and its five specific types of stress.

The Cause/Effect Model of Stress

The five types of stress are biological stress, acute stress, eustress, fear stress, and chronic stress.

When you understand the nature and purpose of these stress types, you will better understand the chemistry and power of immediate anabolic empowerment and the natural anabolic state.

Biological Stress

Biological stress is a biochemical process that enables our bodies to meet basic needs such as digesting a meal, adapting to heat or cold, responding to physical exercise, regulating blood glucose levels, or fighting off an illness. When a biological need occurs, neurological signals are sent, appropriate chemicals (mainly hormones) are released, and the need is met.

Biological stress occurs continuously throughout the day and night, and generally goes about its work unnoticed, but it is important to understand that every form of stress requires energy, and the energy drain is cumulative. The energy drain from biological stress is most noticeable when your body is dealing with a specific biological stressor such as a bad cold or the flu and your energy is so drained that you can barely drag yourself out of bed.

Acute Stress

The acute stress response only happens during moments of stunning fear and is the most sudden, powerful, and dramatic form of stress. For example, if you were strolling through a forest, suddenly came face-to-face with a grizzly bear, and it immediately headed in your direction, you would experience acute stress.

In milliseconds, your autonomic nervous system would be activated, a flood of powerful chemicals would be released, and you would be stronger, faster, more alert, more decisive, and more energized than at any other time in your life. Please be aware that none of these empowerments will make you capable of out-fighting or out-running a grizzly, so let's hope they give you the mental acuity to think of another solution.

The acute stress response (sometimes called the fight-or-flight response) is a God-given process that is designed to give us the best possible chance of surviving a life-threatening event. This form of stress is extremely empowering, but its chemistry is highly specialized and its effects brief, so it is not the form of biochemical empowerment that leads to Key One.

Each activation of acute stress rapidly depletes our biological reserves and rushes a host of stress chemicals into our bloodstream. If there is an actual fight or flight, the physical activity of fighting or fleeing can burn off those stress chemicals. If there is no fight or flight, those stress chemicals can linger in the bloodstream and become harmful. In today's world, most of the things that fret or frighten us cannot be solved by a fight or flight reaction, so the removal of excessive stress chemicals can be problematic.

The immediate after-effects of an acute stress response may include rapid heartrate, weakness, fatigue, nausea, and lingering anxiety. Some people also experience slow-motion recall of the life-threatening event.

Eustress

Sometimes called "positive stress," eustress occurs when we approach events, tasks, or dangers purposefully, fearlessly, excitedly, and aggressively. When we face a potentially menacing situation with a definite plan of action and a clear focus on what we want to achieve, we can replace fear with excited purpose and induce eustress. The chemistry of eustress is high

in testosterone, growth hormone, and insulin and low in cortisol and results in a positive form of anxiety that increases strength, energy, and mental alertness. Later, I will name this empowering form of anxiety, describe its chemistry, and explain it in greater detail.

You might experience the powerful force of eustress as you prepare to compete in a sport, make a public speech, or take an exam, but the activation of eustress is relative, so a situation that exhilarates and empowers one person may intimidate and impair another. Please understand that it is not the event that determines whether your blood chemistry will empower you or impair you. It is your attitude regarding the event that will determine your fate.

For example, you might be excited about an upcoming tennis match with a rival but also fearful of losing. As you prepare for the match, if you dwell more on your fear of losing than on the excitement of winning, you will experience a negative form of stress that will cause your blood chemistry to shift in a harmful direction. If this happens, you will enter the match in a biochemically weakened state. On the other hand, if your focus on purpose and excitement outweighs your worries and doubts, you will experience eustress, your blood chemistry will become more anabolic, and you will enter the match in a chemically empowered state.

Always keep eustress in mind, because understanding the nature and power of eustress will help you understand how your mindset will determine the type of stress you experience; the type of stress you experience will determine the type of anxiety you experience; and the type of anxiety you experience will determine whether you will be empowered or impaired.

Key Thoughts:

Eustress is induced by a fierce, eye-of-the-tiger mindset that focuses precisely, aggressively, and excitedly on immediate purpose, expects to succeed, and never considers failure. WGA

When you learn to control your thoughts in a way that induces the purest form of eustress, you will possess Key One—The Key to Immediate Anabolic Empowerment. WGA

Know what you want to do; know how you want to do it; focus clearly, excitedly, and aggressively on your purpose; and you will be empowered to succeed. WGA

Fear Stress

Fear stress is a biochemical reaction to troubled, fearful, doubtful, preventive, or worried thoughts. When we worry or harbor feelings of indecision, doubt, or dread, threat sensors in our autonomic brain are activated, and our stress response system releases a chemical mix that is high in cortisol and causes testosterone levels to drop. This chemical blend is designed, in part, to deaden pain, repair tissue, and reduce blood loss, but it can also slow reaction time and impede performance in any physical or mental task. If left in the bloodstream too long, this chemical mix can also cause an extensive list of illnesses.^{1,3,8,17,18,28} Briefly stated, fear stress is caused by fear-based thought processes such as worrying and is the most harmful form of stress.

Fear Stress appears on very few stress-type models. Some models list “distress” as the fourth category and describe it in much the same way that I describe fear stress, but I believe that fear stress is the only scientifically accurate name for the fourth category of stress for the following reasons:

1. Numerous studies confirm that fear is the specific emotion that is most closely associated with the prolonged and excessive release of cortisol.^{3,5,12,13,14,17}
2. Cortisol is the specific stress hormone which, when released in excessive amounts, has the most detrimental effect on the mind and body.^{2,16}
3. Worry is a fear-based emotion that causes the excessive release of cortisol and induces a harmful form of anxiety.^{1,2,13,15}
4. Extensive research dealing with the cause of anxiety disorders is based on the observation of fear circuits in the brain.^{1,3,9,12,13,17}
5. Research on both human and animal responses to emotional stimuli is also based on fear circuits in the brain.^{4,5,12,13,14,15}
6. Fear in any form causes the release of a cortisol-heavy catabolic chemical mix.^{1,2,3,4,5,12,13,14,18}

When you consider the related research, it is abundantly clear that “fear stress” is the only appropriate name for the fourth category of stress. The use of the term “distress” in this category probably dates to the 1970s, when Dr. Hans Selye identified two types of stress and named them “distress” and “eustress.” Dr. Selye’s extensive description of “distress” is a close match with today’s conception of chronic stress but does not match the nature of fear stress.

Everyone will experience episodes of worrying and other forms of preventive thinking, so everyone will occasionally experience fear stress, but a specific mindset can turn fear stress into eustress, activate an empowering type of anxiety, and improve every aspect of our lives. I will describe and explain that mindset shortly.

Chronic Stress

Chronic stress is the cumulative result of all types of stress and is sometimes referred to as “overload stress.” We can all recall times when we were momentarily overloaded.

Chronic stress can be caused by any combination of job responsibilities, tiresome commutes, maintaining a home, personal problems, health issues, bills, taxes, parenting issues, relationship issues, sleep deprivation, and so on. Life is complex, sometimes perplexing, sometimes frustrating, and sometimes fearful, and sooner or later we will all experience some degree of chronic stress, but worriers, by dwelling on negative or preventive thoughts, tend to magnify the harmful effects of all of life’s stressors.

As I mentioned, fear stress is the most harmful form of stress, and this explains why the most severe levels of chronic stress occur in situations where fear stress is activated most often. Soldiers, police officers, health-care workers, search-and-rescue teams, and others who operate in danger zones for prolonged periods of time may be exposed to unrelenting stress in all its forms. Prolonged exposure to high-risk situations can cause a massive depletion of mental and biological resources. Such continuous pressure can lead to any or all the physical maladies previously listed as well as psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).^{1,2,3,5,8,9,11,12,15}

NOTE: The scientific community has yet to reach consensus regarding the nature, purpose, and types of stress, so a review of scientific studies on stress will lead to a confusing array of wildly diverse opinions and models. If you are interested in learning more about stress, please refer to the Appendix wherein I list twelve radically different and scientifically indefensible examples of current stress models and suggest the adoption of the Cause/Effect Model of Stress.