

What we have learned in this chapter	Your reflections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how stress affects our body can help us decide to do something about our stress levels. • Our stress response is the same as that of any other mammal and evolved to help us survive in the demanding conditions of life as a hunter-gatherer several thousand years ago. • Humans have the capacity to produce ideas, fantasies and images in the mind, which they then can ruminate on. This is a very common source of stress. • Humans create loops in the mind where a negative emotion or a frightening event can trigger a series of thoughts, which in turn maintain and strengthen the emotion. • In the Compassionate Mind Approach, it's helpful to think of at least three basic types of emotion linked to different functions. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The threat and self-protection emotion system * The incentive and resource-seeking emotion system * The soothing and contentment emotion system • The stress response activates all the emotion systems in our body that are needed to stand and fight, or run away – for example, our heart beats faster, our blood courses through the body more quickly, energy is released into our bloodstream and muscles. • At the same time, many of our other systems shut down under stress because they are not needed for short-term 	

survival – for example, this can affect digestion, fertility, the immune system, and growth and repair of the body.

- However, in modern times we may experience stressful situations several times every day and so the stress response is activated over and over again. Added to this, we live much longer than we did as a hunter-gatherer and our bodies can get worn out by the repeated response to stress.
- There is a lot of research into the relationship between stress and illness. It appears that the stress response itself could become a factor in our susceptibility to disease.
- A connection between hostility and heart disease has been firmly established.
- The more we can notice our own behaviour and how we respond to stressful situations, the better we can get a handle on how to work with it.