



## **Leadership Barometer 190 See the Big Picture** **Robert T. Whipple, MBA CPTD**



When faced with a high-pressure situation, we need to consider the big picture before taking action. Pause for a moment and try to envision the context around what is going on.

When we focus on only the point of stress, our body takes over and releases a number of chemicals.

They create the famous “Fight or Flight” response.

### **Take time to view the big picture before taking action**

Step back from the urgent issue and contemplate the panoramic view of what is happening. Our bodies have a natural reaction to stress that is pretty complex.

### **How the stress response works in the body**

The stress response is controlled by the sympathetic nervous system in the body. It triggers the release of several hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream.

These hormones prepare the body for action by increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration. They also divert blood flow away from non-essential organs and towards the muscles and brain.

Adrenaline causes the liver to release glucose into the bloodstream, providing the body with immediate energy.

Cortisol helps to maintain blood pressure and cardiovascular function during times of stress

In addition to these hormonal changes, the stress response also activates the amygdala. That part of the brain is involved in the processing of emotions, particularly fear and anxiety. The amygdala sends signals to other parts of the brain, including the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland. These glands then release additional stress hormones into the bloodstream.

Overall, the body's response to a high-pressure situation is a complex and coordinated set of physiological changes. These changes happen automatically, and we have little control over them.

They help us respond quickly and effectively to perceived threats or challenges. They also cause us to become more myopic and focus intently on the threat. Therein lies the challenge.

### **Making good decisions requires us to see the big picture**

It is easy to let the “Fight or Flight” reaction cause us to miss important contextual factors. That is why it is important to take a deep cleansing breath and pause for a moment to consider the bigger picture.

Maybe you are consumed trying to save the life of a child who was hurt in a car accident. That focus might cause you to miss a car coming from the other direction.

Let's take an example from work. Suppose we are focused on the failure of a prototype system in our new product. All our energy is focused on what went wrong. We fail to recognize that the designer has been out taking care of a relative for several days.

### **Conclusion**

Making good decisions requires us to get an accurate view of the whole situation. Do not focus exclusively on the bright shiny object in front of you. Consider the big picture of what is going on.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.