

## How the Stress of Disaster Brings People Together

Ever feel that stress makes you more cranky, hot-headed or irritable? These are words that come to most people's minds when thinking about stress. On the other hand, in past situations of extreme stress, such as natural disasters, we heard moving accounts of people going out of their way to help others. An example of such a gesture: last Friday morning at 8.45 AM (CET) lots of radio stations all over Europe started to play the football hymn '**You'll Never Walk Alone**' as a sign of hope and unity against the coronavirus.

New studies suggest that acute stress may lead to more cooperative, social and friendly behavior. One reason why stress may lead to such behavior is our profound need for social connection. Human beings are fundamentally social, and it is the protective nature of our social relationship that has allowed our species to thrive. Decades of research show that social connection is a fundamental human need linked to both psychological and physical health. Social connection may be particularly important under stress because it naturally leads to a sense of vulnerability and loss of control.

If stress leads to bonding, then why do we sometimes experience stress as making us cranky? The cause may be explained by a difference between acute and chronic stress. Acute stress prepares the body for resistance (physiological readiness, increased immune response, heightened awareness), whereas, chronic stress slowly beats down the body.

The Dentsply Sirona Team in the Netherlands showed us their idea of positivity in times like these. Very spontaneously our colleagues started sharing positive pictures of themselves and their home office set-up. A great reminder that despite being physically distant we are still all together as #OneTeam, not isolated and we "never walk alone".

Another great project is the crowdfunding initiative called "**Coronavirus, rafforziamo la terapia intensiva**" ("Coronavirus, let's strengthen the intensive care"), started by Chiara Ferragni, a famous Italian influencer, that is working to help the intensive care unit at the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan.

These initiatives show that acute stress may help remind us of a fundamental truth: **our common humanity**. Understanding our shared vulnerability may be frightening, but it can **inspire kindness, connection, and desire to stand together and support each other**. Acute stress, as unpleasant as it may be, may also be an opportunity to experience the most beautiful aspects of life: **social connection and love**.

**#OneTeam #StayHome #StaySafe**