



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

Psychology

Spring 2021 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

The Psychology Department is pleased to announce:

Introductory remarks by John Allen

A New Perspective on Stress: The Generalized Unsafety Theory of Stress (GUTS).

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Friday, January 15th, 2020

3:00 p.m. MST

<https://arizona.zoom.us/j/96088133842>

Prolonged physiological stress responses form an important risk factor for disease. According to neurobiological and evolution-theoretical insights the stress response is a default response that is always 'on' but inhibited by the prefrontal cortex when safety is perceived. Based on these insights the Generalized Unsafety Theory of Stress (GUTS) states that prolonged stress responses are due to generalized and largely unconsciously perceived unsafety rather than stressors. This novel perspective necessitates a reconstruction of current stress theory. I will discuss a variety of very common situations without stressors but with prolonged stress responses, that are not, or not likely to be caused by stressors, including loneliness, low social status, adult life after prenatal or early life adversity, lack of a natural environment, and less fit bodily states such as obesity or fatigue. I will argue that in these situations the default stress response may be chronically disinhibited due to unconsciously perceived generalized unsafety. Also in chronic stress situations such as work stress, the prolonged stress response may be mainly caused by perceived unsafety in stressor-free contexts. Thus, GUTS identifies and explains far more stress-related physiological activity that is responsible for disease and mortality than current stress theories.

With questions about access or to request any disability-related accommodations for this talk, please contact Vanessa Noonkester, vnoonkester@email.arizona.edu