

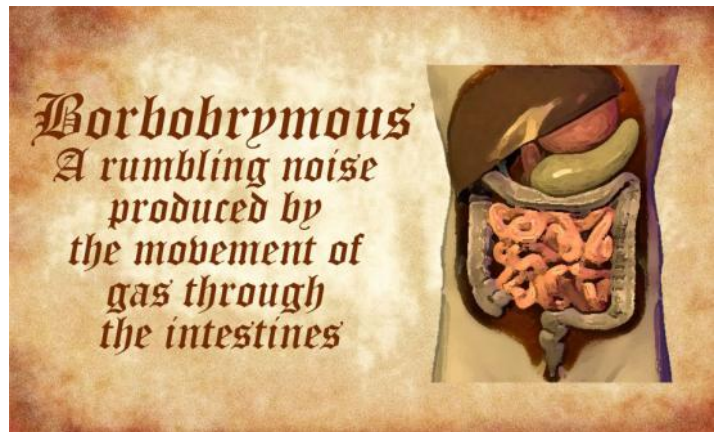
# *Borborygmous*

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Borborygmus (plural borborygmi) (from Greek βορβορυγμός) also known as stomach growling, or rumbling, is the rumbling sound produced by the movement of gas through the intestines of animals, including humans. (from Wikipedia) It is viewed as a common and natural occurrence that happens as fluids and gasses pass through the gastrointestinal tract. But I learned this word in a slightly different context.

A number of years ago, as I lay on an acupuncture table, my stomach started to rumble. It happened 10-15 minutes into the session and I did what I think many of us do in a similar situation; I apologized for the untimely noises that my stomach was making. The acupuncturist, who was also a nurse, put me at ease. First she informed me that in Eastern Medicine, such sounds are considered a compliment. In Western Medicine, such sounds are known as borborygmus. I think many of us can relate to my experience, both as a practitioner, who hear the sound begin a short while after a session begins, as well as the client who experiences borborygmus. I loved this concept, as well as the word borborygmus.

It is well established that during the fight or flight response there is an inhibition in stomach and upper digestive tract action. This is a function of the autonomic nervous system and is, in essence, a stress response. Essentially, all energy is sent to the parts of the body that are needed most for action (for fight or flight), such as the heart, lungs, and skeletal musculature. This action is triggered by the sympathetic nervous system. When the stress is gone, stomach motility, as well as other functions, resume (triggered by the parasympathetic nervous system). With humans, the fight or flight response may have played a stronger role earlier in our evolution. The need to respond/react to attack may have been daily occurrences. As we moved into more modern times the emergency responses that require



huge amounts of physical effort and our need for full-fledged fight or flight responses lessened, but the tendency for our bodies to act (or over react) continued. The stress response halts or slows down various processes such as sexual responses and digestive systems in order to focus on the stress situation, typically causes negative effects like, constipation, anorexia, erectile dysfunction, difficulty urinating, and difficulty maintaining sexual arousal. Prolonged exposure to stress responses can cause a chronic suppression of immune system function. I believe that many are walking around each day in a partial or full state of fight or flight. Clients arrive daily at my office after fighting traffic, fearing of being late for their appointment, bad news on the radio, etc. It is only after they have softened into the treatment table and the treatment begins that they come down from the perceived stress of the outside world. Good hands-on manual care can allow the feeling of threat and stress to diminish. It is then that their digestion restarts. It is then that the borborygmus kicks in.

Enjoy the compliment!

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