



Wellbeing Insights

Don't Forget Eustress!

How is your relationship with the term 'stress'?

For most people, the term stress has an enormously negative profile. When people report they are stressed, they are generally referring to how difficult and challenging things are in their life at the current point in time.

Back in Blog 48, Sue provided a recommendation of Kelly McGonigal's powerful book, *The Upside of Stress*. I invite you to refer back to Sue's blog as she reviews Kelly's book and shares powerful quotes, such as, 'If we can learn to fear stress less and to trust ourselves to handle it, we can actually use stress as a resource'.

This concept of using stress as a resource, brings us to the uncommon term of 'eustress', which has the Greek prefix of *eu*, meaning 'good', added to our everyday term of stress. So eustress can be considered as beneficial stress. We are all far more familiar with the Latin prefix of *dis*, being coupled with the term stress. Distress is defined as extreme anxiety, sadness, or pain. Interestingly, the literal meaning of the Latin prefix of *dis* is 'apart', but it is more commonly used as referring to the 'opposite of', or 'not'. For example, disobey is the opposite of obey, and disagree is not to agree. The opposite that distress is referring to is not being able to adapt to the stressor. This implies that stress is something that humans can often adapt to, and harness and possibly even benefit from.

Researchers from *The University of Wisconsin* explored the impact of an individual's perception of the stress they were experiencing to their overall wellbeing. They [found](#) that the combination of higher levels of reported stress AND the perception that stress negatively affects health were associated with worse physical and mental health outcomes.

Findings suggested that instead of trying to reduce stress, it can be far more effective to change our perception of the stress. Can we accept and embrace stress as a normal and natural part of life, and even more importantly can we perceive stress as a good thing.

To improve your perception of stress, we suggest four questions:

1. How can you view your stress as helpful, as a challenge that will make you wiser or better in some way, shape, or form?
2. What can you learn from your stressful situation?
3. Who can help you manage your stressful situation?
4. How have others dealt with similar stressors?

Please know that we believe that distress is a very real and challenging experience for many, and we have no doubt there are situations where there is no sign of eustress in the present moment or the distant horizon. How people perceive the stress they are experiencing often comes down to the



individual's belief in whether they have the right resources to manage the challenge. Our experience of eustress and distress will depend on our unique perspective and circumstances.

In closing, we remind you to remember that 'eustress' is also a real and possible experience. We invite you to look for experiences of eustress in your life, and we encourage you to establish a healthy relationship with stress, grounded in your strengths and the strengths of those around you.