

STAYWELL

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WHEN STRESS IS HEALTHFUL

When we hear the word stress, most people conjure up images of a shaky, nervous person pulling his/her hair out or throwing a tantrum. However, stress is not always bad. Stress is simply when the body has to adapt to a stimulus either positively or negatively. Even bad stress, can be healthy if it does not become chronic or overwhelming. Often people focus on the bad stress, but this newsletter focuses on the health benefits of stress.

Good stress can also be referred to as eustress. This is the type of stress a person feels when he/she doesn't have fear, but feels more excited. This type of stress creates excitement because it is perceived as manageable and can actually help provide motivation and focus to improve a person's performance or action.



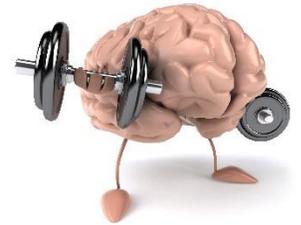
Bad stress can even become good stress depending on how the stress is handled. One successful way of helping bad stress become good stress is reframing. Reframing is replacing the negative aspects of the stress with positive aspects. For example, ask yourself these questions:

- What can I learn from this?
- How can this or that situation help me to become stronger?
- How can I help others going through similar experiences?

- What do I need to improve in or change to become better or stronger?

Good stress has been shown to help the body become healthier. Research demonstrates that good stress can help the body in many ways.

Good stress can boost brain function. Studies have demonstrated that brain function can improve because stressors produce and release neurotrophins. These in turn fuel the development and function of neurons. This helps the brain to become more efficient and function at a higher capacity. It literally becomes healthier.



Good stress can boost the immune system. Stress also releases interleukins which control the immune system. Bad stress can cause wounds to heal 25 percent slower. A different study showed that good stress can shorten healing time. This study looked at dental students and compared how well they healed from a small cut during finals compared to summer break. The wound took 40 percent less time to heal during summer break than during exam week.

Good stress helps a person become more resilient. In other words, each time a person overcomes stress, he/she adapts and is better prepared to handle the next stressful situation. Poor management of stress can lead to compromised and more difficult dealings in the future. It has often been said that it is not what we face but how we face it that is the real test.

Good stress can actually be helpful in achieving success. Having requirements, deadlines, timelines, goals, etc., that are uncomfortable but challenging can help a person become more motivated. This awareness can heighten the desire to perform and become productive and be beneficial in becoming successful.



Good stress can enhance child development. Stimulating young children from the time they are born is helpful. Some studies suggest that a mother's stress during pregnancy can improve child development. Books, puzzles, and problem solving activities can help the child learn to adapt and become better at dealing with stress. Of course, the way parents deal with stress can also play a role and set the example of how to deal with stress which can improve or impede healthy stress outcomes.



What type of things can consistently stimulate good stress?

- Travel
- Falling in love or reconnecting with a loved one

- Starting something new
- Exercise
- Buying something new like a home, car, boat, RV, ATV, etc.
- Starting a new job or being promoted
- Going back to school or taking a class
- Moving or buying a new home
- Marriage
- Having a child
- Starting a new hobby
- Holidays
- Retirement

Imagery can also be an important part of good stress. This includes wishing, dreaming, setting goals, and striving to achieve them. It can be something as simple as planning a family vacation or as big as relocating because of a major job promotion. Imagery can help us work through solutions by taking time to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. This can have big benefits on our health. Spending time focusing on calming, relaxing activities rather than focusing on the negative can be just as beneficial as doing the activities.



Sources

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